REGIONAL AGM

Saturday 14th November 2020

9.30am – 10.15am

via Zoom

Annual Conference follows the AGM

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of AGM 14 Dec 2019 (in following pages)
4. Matters Arising
5. Report from Chair (in following pages)
6. Report from Treasurer – Accounts to year ended 31st Dec 2019 (attached)
7. Treasurers Report to AGM 2020 (attached)
8. Elections to WM Exec – Report of Returning Officer (see file attached)
9. Parliamentary Reports
10. Dates of future General and Exec meetings
11. Next Exec – Sat 12 December – by zoom
12. AOB

**Minutes AGM 14 Dec 2019**

# The Priory Rooms, Birmingham

## **Beverley – Chair report (left post in October 2019)**

Great to see you all. Thank you for coming today.

I’ve had privilege of being chair for best part of 3 years; tremendous opportunity to learn and engage with our activities in the region. Huge patch of 59 constituencies and a lot of local council seats. Very early on we got together on why we exist: Campaigning, communicating, connecting. Stuck to those since.

Campaigning. This year fought lots of elections, district elections biggest gains ever,

Euros – had fantastic candidates on the list – privilege to be involved. Got an MEP elected: Phil Bennion who has been representing us very well in Europe.

Communication. Tried hard to get regular messages out, monthly. Phil How has coordinated that, and Jordan Quinlan has been good at getting monthly matters updates out regularly.

Connecting – most important thing we did was to appoint Jennifer Gray and we have gone around the region to put on training days for campaigning activity.

Lots of people to thank when these things come to mind: Father of our Libdem group in the Midlands who has out in 60 years of service – Jock Gallagher. Don’t know how we would cope without him. Lots of people to thank who have put in special efforts, will inevitably leave people out but must mention Richard Vos who has been a stalwart.

Despite gloom of national picture, we have something to be heartened about. Vote share has gone up. Personally impressed by all that you did.

Must thank Lee for work on media communication in GE and Euros.

Thrilled to pass the baton on to David. Thanks for taking over during GE. Took reins up quickly and easily, feel deeply indebted to you personally.

Close on a few thoughts. No doubt there will be much post-match assessment. Big priorities for the next few years: Hold government to account; a switch of emphasis now from what we wanted to what they are doing. Don’t let us be attacked, fire back onto them. Switch from key goals to what they are delivering.

Messaging is what we really need to think about. Shorter, pithier messaging.

Social media, we need to get smarter at it and keep it going all the time. Some of us building it up. Social media messaging was bland and lacking emotion personally. Must listen to our members. It is a very southern based party. As a chair, didn’t manage to engage with the national party. Closing word of thanks to John Kelly for representing us at national level. Midlands voice isn’t heard and not reflected in party positioning. At the London PPC session we were told that they knew everything about all of the seats and we must listen to them. It was clear that they were not engaged with the Midlands. We must be taken seriously, build from grass roots onwards. Onwards and upwards.

## **David Craddock – Chair report (took up post in October 2019**

Beverley was the most visible person in WM at the time when I joined. Someone who was a figurehead: Heard a lot about Jock too. Jock is the man who knows all in the WM.

This will be seen as the comeback year. Members grew from 5,000 to 7,000 in region.

Doubled our vote in region, got 7.5% of the vote, importantly, having not been in 2nd place anywhere last time, now in 2nd in 5 seats across midlands: Stratford Upon Avon, Kenilworth and Southam, Worcestershire West, Ludlow, Herefordshire North.

Thanks to Yeow for his efforts on policy and we are keen to build on that. Planning to have a meeting on that in January to establish 3-5 year plans.

## **Phil How treasurers report**

It works by doing it a year in arrears, so figures relate to 2018

£25,000 income

Spent £22,000 so £3k surplus

£7,900 expenditure forfeited grant to electoral commission: part of a pre-referendum grant. At the time of the referendum it was deemed ineligible to use. Alan Beddow forfeited the amount to the EC but the cheque had been sitting there for many years until someone realised that they had not received the money. Duly paid and officially forfeited.

Most of costs were for Jennifer’s time and hiring facilities and Birmingham university conference too.

Details are in document.

***Proposed by: Lorely Burt***

***Seconded by: Yeow Poon***

Agreed by the majority in the room.

In a good financial situation for 2019: Renegotiated fees with party. Now get 15% of fees in West Midlands which comes as rebate. Due to our growth we will get a healthy income assuming that membership holds. Spent money this year on Jennifers time, catering, and holding events etc. A few things came over budget. Exec meetings tend to be in Birmingham, but it is expensive to get meetings here. We will budget for that properly next year. HQ changed rules on charges for software which cost us more.

If there is something you would like to see region doing then do let us know and we can put it into the budget for next year.

Money coming in this year, had over £20,00 worth of donations, £12,000 for Euro elections. £6,000 donated for local parties in general election. Donations need to go through compliance system so that HQ can check how they are received. Lots of local parties don’t have that system, so Phil set that up election fundraising page which helped to raise money. If your local party wants a compliant donations page, let me know and we can set that up very easily.

Donation money has gone straight back out to local parties.

Phil does the PPERA on behalf of region to HQ. Region effectively accepts donation on behalf of local party.

## **Lorely – Presidents report on what has been happening in Parliament**

Reflecting on what Beverley said on the importance of communication between local parties, region and national. Unfortunately, I am the only parliamentarian in the West and East Midlands . Tells its own story. We must demand more attention. We need to get very bolshy quite frankly.

There has been so much happening. To coin phrase: Brexit, Brexit, Brexit. It has dominated politics in Westminster to the great detriment of so many other things that needed to be attended to. Been involved in Domestic Abuse bill, although it has been delayed. Everyone is very frustrated. Being a member of house of lords has its benefits e.g. when the govt tries to do something stupid we can defeat them. You don’t have that in the house of commons. In Lords, because we have cross benchers, inordinate number of Libdems who are not letting go soon, we have been able to stop the tories in some of the worst areas of policy. Lying to the Queen, Mr Johnson has shown similar resistance to Trump: he can lie, abuse women, make racist jokes e.t.c. People still seem to love him.

Trump said I could walk down 5th ave, shoot someone dead and I’d still get in. Time to hold people to account. That’s what we intend to do.

Was at 1 parliamentary meeting where there was a distinct possibility of getting 223 seats. When she was talking about being PM, that is where that came from. What has distressed us as we watched polls diminish is knowing that this is what happens. Tories have professional way, lots of money, we have got to start to emulate that. Stop looking like party of amateurs and accept that we are going to become more disciplined. It is hugely important that we get back to where we wanted to be, where we were when I was chair of Parliamentary party. We can do this because we have got talent. In this room. We have incredible determination. We have people who turn out, even in this weather, delivering, knocking doors. We work at it so hard because we know as LD’s that we have got carve out every vote. We have always done it and we will always do it, but we need to be more professional. Our country needs us. You have the left, the right and you have us. All those MP’s that joined us, how sad that we were not able to hold on to them. Our heart is in the right place, we have to show people what we are made of and what we care about.

Thank you for the hard work that you have all put in. Let’s use the momentum now to move forward. I think we can go on to tremendous success.

*Q – Should we rebrand ourselves because we are toxic?*

A – No, We should rebrand but we should talk more about why we feel the way we do.

David – need to be ruthless that we are the voice of progressive politics. Need to be ruthless on our attacks of the Tories. Need to be aggressive. Unapologetic.

Ian Flynn, stood in Dudley North. Challenge the National party: when you choose a policy can we test it against the word Liberal. Tim Farron, didn’t talk about gay issues and when he was quizzed he failed the Liberal test. The revoke ticket that hadn’t been discussed at conference (challenged in room and accepted: it was approved at conference)

Need to wear things on our sleeve. When we said “get Brexit gone” it made sense to people.

Totally agree with Revoke policy but there wasn’t preparation to deal with the comebacks. The spin wasn’t ready.

Ade – 2/3 of people were not here earlier. We had candidate session earlier. Without going back over this again, we will circulate that to everyone.

Jed Marson – I’ve been able to help Beverley because I work part time and I’ve been able to sneak odd day in the office. Effectiveness of tory machine is to get money from donors. Beverley has proven that you can get money from local donors. Have a motion for the party to require every constituency to have a selected and active PPC, campaign as though there’s a GE tomorrow, work full time and have enough money to ensure there is 1 or more people working FT in every constituency. I have come from Tories so know about how they make success.

*Q - Opp to feed back on issues from LP?*

A - Workshop on middle of January to get further feedback and decide plans going forward.

*Q - Can we build from village assemblies? Push it back?*

A - Grand plan to have a number of these events and move it forward from there. Will be other events moving forwards.

## **Announcement of Regional Exec Positions**

Elections are for the positions on the executive, positions on committees run by chairs on the executive and an election of English council members.

### Regional executive and related committees

Lorely Burt – President

David Craddock – Chair

Secretary - vacant

Atinuke Proctor – Vice Chair Urban

Jeanie Faulconer – Vice Chair Rural

Phil How – Treasurer

Adam Pilarski – Chair of conference

Conference committee – 2 vacancies

Yeow Poon - Chair of Policy

Policy Committee – Morgan Inwood and 2 vacancies

Chair of candidate committee – 3 applications received. An election will take place in February

Candidates committee members – Jock Gallagher and 1 vacancy

Ordinary members:

John Kelly

Richard Vos

Jennifer Pinkett

Slawomir (Adam) Fejfer

### **English council**

Morgan Inwood

John Kelly

Napier Penlington

Adam Pilarski

Jennifer Pinkett

+ 3 vacancies

There will be a number of positions co-opted which cannot be discussed because they need to be confirmed by the executive this afternoon

Still need:

Secretary

Chair of Campaigns

Speak to David if you are interested

If interested in conference development, please speak to Adam Pilarski

Susan Juned on FPC and would like to offer her support where she can

Liz Lynne was re-elected to Federal Conference Committee and Phil is elected to ALDE council and federal international relations committee

## **AOB**

Lee – What is a Liberal? Why are we fighting across the country? A thread came out this morning on values and why we are doing it. We can talk about it but we need to focus on the why. Define what we stand for then communicate that to the public. Talk about what we really believe it. Engaging the heart is far more important than the mind because that’s what wins votes.

Closed at 2.10

**CHAIR’S REPORT**

**to**

**WEST MIDLANDS LIB DEMS AGM 14 Nov 2020**

2020 will no doubt go down in history as the Covid 19 year. A momentous year, and one that we will all remember for two lock downs, a pretty incompetent response from the Government, especially early on in March, but also a strong community response in a crisis. A community response that in many areas was led by very active and committed Lib Dem Councillors and volunteers. So, firstly, I’d like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone for their sterling efforts during the year.

In January we had our last physical get together in Birmingham at a workshop of over 100 members following the disappointment of our performance in the General election in December. What struck me at the time was how positive and enthusiastic participants were. Everyone wanted to consider how we should build on the growth in votes for the Lib Dems across the West Midlands in the General Election and in a number of local elections. How could we build on the growth in councillors from 76 to 111, and improving our vote share in the GE bringing us into second place in 5 constituencies?

We took the issues and ideas generated at the workshop and I established a working group to consider and develop our strategy and plans over the coming years. I’m enormously grateful to Nukey Proctor, Yeow Poon, Jennifer Gray, John Kelly, and Ben Jephcott who worked with me to produce our Aim High 2024 development plan. We have already made a number of presentations seeking feedback from local parties and highlights of the plan will be presented to members at the regional conference today.

One of the key messages from the plan is to ensure that we work as a team across the party utilising the valuable resources we have in HQ and ALDC. I’d also like to draw your attention to the regional tithing policy for serving councillors which follows ALDC and Lib Dem Party guidelines. This encourages councillors to contribute 10% of their allowance to local party campaigning where affordable for the individuals. We also want to improve sharing of best practice across the region and give local parties more support across the region. Jennifer Gray has successfully championed events and training and we, in partnership with LDHQ, have recruited a regional Campaign Manager (Joseph Harmer) and a Regional Development Officer (Alex Wagner). They started in October and have been working since the beginning of October to liaise with local parties and assess campaigning support needs across the region.

I’d especially like to welcome Phil Bennion to the Executive as Chair of Campaigns. As you know up until the UK leaving the EU he was the regions excellent, and very visible MEP. Phil and I are now holding regular meetings with our new team and clearly the focus is on how we support and achieve a great performance in the upcoming local elections in May 2021. Also we have WMCA Mayoral and PCC elections to support.

On the policy front Yeow Poon has been working hard to establish working groups for defined policy areas and I hope that you participate in Novembers LiberTea Zoom sessions and working groups going forward. We know that many of you will have joined the party because you were affected by particular policy ideas, and so I encourage you to join up with this valuable work which will inform our press releases in coming years as we look to ramp up our outward communications. I’m very keen to establish regional policies across a number of areas such as health and education. What will also be of paramount importance, following economic impact of the pandemic, will to express our views on what support the region might need to aide a recovery.

Lucy Hurds has done a great job to organising a virtual regional conference. I’m really pleased to welcome Conference Ed Davey and Mark Pack to our conference and hope that you find their presentations and consultative sessions stimulating.

Thanks again for all your efforts and support, especially for your local communities, and here’s hoping for a brighter 2021.

There’s every chance and opportunity for us to do well at next year’s local elections, so I’d like to close with a thank you to all of you that are standing as target seat candidates, development ward candidates and paper candidates. You are all performing a valuable service to the Liberal Democrats, and your efforts will undoubtedly help us to put more gold on the map in 2021.

David Craddock

Chair West Midlands Lib Dems

**Parliamentary Report W Midlands**

Hello everyone. Sincere apologies for not being with you today - at least on Zoom - but Richard and I are moving in to our new home today.  Wish us luck!

I know I have to be brief, so these few words will have to cover my parliamentary report and my farewell as your president

In Parliament we are settled into operating as a hybrid - in other words attending both remotely and in the chamber.

We continue to hold the government to account, and only this week contributed to what I believe is the largest ever government defeat in voting down the parts of the International Markets Bill which flout international law.

Stick that in your pipe and smoke it, Mr Johnson!!

Now as I mentioned we are moving to the Cotswolds - it will be a new adventure in a stunningly beautiful setting.  Hence my resignation as your President.

But please be assured I will continue to defend the interests of the Midlands in Parliament.  You can take the girl (well, woman) out of the Midlands, but you’ll never take the Midlands out of the girl!

Finally can I wish Jock well as your new President.  He has given the party so much for so many years.  He’ll be brilliant, I just know it. **Lorely**