

Hart Liberal Democrats
Minutes of Annual General Meeting
Friday 3rd November 2023 held in
Room 2, The Elizabeth Hall, Raven Road, Hook Hampshire RG27 9H

1. Welcome and Apologies

David Simpson welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Paul Einchcomb, Liz Dooley, Sue Fisher, Dave Neighbour, John Rolls, Joan Samaru, Wilf Hardy, Janet Davies, Stuart Bailey, Sarah Horton, Shamraz Razzaq (arrived late)

2. Minutes of AGM held on 18 November 2022 were agreed, proposed Peter Wildsmith second Kara Stanford

3. Reports:

Chair: David Simpson reported.

Peter Wildsmith was re-elected to Hart for Fleet East and we now have Lib Dem members on both Hook and Hartley Wintney parish councils. David noted that Adrian has handed responsibility for Focus to Alex and we thank Adrian for his many years undertaking this significant task.

David urged members to take care to read emails through before sending to make sure the message cannot be misunderstood. Brian Blewett reinforced this message with a warning that he once just stopped himself sending an email and when he read it through he found he disagreed with what he had written.

David also urged members to consider donations to the Local Party funds. Polls show that we could win in NE Hants but the campaign could cost up to £20K

Treasurer: Silke Engstrom presented documents showing Audited Accounts for 2022, Income and Expenditure summary to date for years 2021, 2022 and 2023 and a summary report.

Silke noted that we had net income of about £700 for 2022 compared with a £5,100 deficit in 2021.

In response to a question from Glynn Neville, Silke noted that a donation of £15K was partly due to having transferred the remaining Councillor Fund balance and HQ confirmed that it had to be reported as a donation.

Hampshire County Council: Adrian Collett reported.

HCC is struggling financially with serious risk of bankruptcy in 2 to 3 years' time. All community support that is not a statutory obligation has to be stopped. One disillusioned Tory, Prad Bains, has switched to Lib Dems.

Adrian has been an HCC councillor for 40 years and there have been 107 Lib Dem Councillors in these 40 years. A reunion is to be held later in the month for those still with us.

David noted that the fourth arm of the Hartford Bridge roundabout is to be provided. Cost will be over £2 million compared with £800K for doing it when roundabout was first installed as proposed by David when he was on HCC

Hart: Graham Cockarill reported:

Hart has achieved a balanced budget, and a Corporate Plan, mainly written by Richard Quarterman, is in place. A Climate Change Action Plan has been agreed with the council taking steps to reduce emissions. Solar panels have been installed on Town

Council buildings and new vehicles are electric powered.

In response to a question from Sue Fox, Graham replied that HCC and Hart are not in step on Climate change. HCC are less ambitious but with a larger and varied area to cover, it is appropriate for each to do what is needed for their own area.

We note that Brian Blewett will have completed 38 years as a Hart councillor next May.

Yateley Town Council: Graham Cockarill reported:

All 13 Town Councillors are Lib Dems, being elected in May. The Yateley Town Plan, which is required every 4 years, has been agreed and a Climate Action Plan is in place. A new Meeting Room is now available downstairs at The Tythings with the Nursery Group satisfactorily moving to a new location. Control of the Yateley Village Hall is being undertaken by a company called Starburst, thus relieving YTC of the expenses involved in running the hall itself.

Roger Coombes asked that we should note his great dismay at what is being done to the Village Hall; as a result he felt unable to vote in May elections.

Blackwater & Hawley:

Brian Blewett praised the Clerk and staff employed by the council for all that they do, and the Coffee Shop is particularly good. Brian will have been on B&H council for 41 years in May next year.

Fleet: Silke and Dan Taylor reported:

Fleet is also involved with Climate Change action, including guidance to residents. As has been the case for some time, refurbishment of The Harlington is being considered. Councillor Surgeries are to be held once a month in Fleet Market.

Hartley Wintney: Deborah Fontana has just joined HW Parish Council and seems to be on every committee owing to a shortage of councillors.

Hook: Shamraz Razzaq reported that there are issues concerning the management of NE Pavilion.

PPC: Alex Brewer reported:

In October Hart Local Party recruited more new members than any other Local Party in the country. Alex is particularly pleased with the number of new people involved in campaigning. It may be daunting that we are the 25th safest Tory seat, but we are now no. 71 in the list of Lib Dem target seats.

In response to questions, Alex suggested that best guesses for General Election are May with Council elections or in October, but we need to be ready for whenever it is.

Adrian reminded us that some years ago Winchester was rather like we are now but with great effort they won by a majority of 2 votes, which became many thousands when the Tory contested the result and the LD MP resigned and won the resulting by-election.

4. To note the Accounts for 2022.

It was unanimously agreed that the Accounts for 2022 should be noted.

A copy of the 2022 accounts are available on request.

5. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the 2022 Local Party Accounts.

Mark Einchcomb accepts our request to continue in his role as Independent Examiner.

6. Election of Officers:

The following appointments for 2024 were agreed:

6.1	Chair	David Simpson
6.2	Vice Chair	Kara Stanford
6.3	Treasurer	Silke Engström
6.4	Secretary	John Keane
6.5	Elections Officer	Peter Wildsmith
6.6	Membership Development Officer	Alex Brewer
6.7	Diversity Officer	Shamraz Razzaq
6.8	Data Officer	Penny Hopkins
6.9	Media Officer	<i>Delegate to Exec</i>
6.10	Fundraising Officer	Stuart Bailey

7. Election of up to 8 Ordinary Members:

Graham Cockarill, Roger Coombes , Sue Fisher, Glynn Neville, Shaun Rowbottom, David Woodhead, Dan Taylor, Deborah Fontana were elected.

Both HCC and Hart Council groups are entitled to appoint Representatives to the Executive Committee.

8. Appointment of Committees

Campaign Committee – recommended 7 members

The members listed below were noted for 2023, but committee membership is expected to evolve as Campaigning proceeds. Peter Wildsmith to convene first meeting for 2024.

Peter Wildsmith, Alex Brewer (PPC), Dave Neighbour, Graham Cockarill
Adrian Collett, Penny Hopkins, Silke Engström, Paul Einchcomb

Fundraising and Membership Committee – recommended 9 members

The members listed below were appointed for 2023:

Silke Engström, Stuart Bailey, Alex Brewer, Penny Hopkins, Roger Coombes
Sue Fisher, John Keane, Glynn Neville, Roger Carter

This committee will next meet on Thursday 16th November (by Zoom) and it was agreed that any member with an interest in involvement should be invited to attend. That meeting should agree committee membership for 2024. John Keane agreed to convene the first meeting for 2024.

In response to John's concern that this committee was not equipped to meet a target of £20K for 2024, Alex urged the committee to continue organising social events as they have been. The Campaign committee are likely to take action towards other methods of fundraising and so the F&M committee is not expected to take responsibility for the whole £20K.

Policy and Messaging Committee – recommended 9 members

The following members were appointed to this committee:

Graham Cockarill, Deborah Fontana, Alison Box, Sue Fox
David Woodhead, Alex Brewer

Graham agreed to convene the first meeting in 2024. Wilf Hardy and Richard Quarterman were appointed to this committee for 2023; they will be invited to continue their membership.

Approval Committee – recommended 10 members

The following were appointed:

John Keane, Penny Hopkins, Glynn Neville, Pam Collett, David Simpson
Adrian Collett, Paul Einchcomb, Roger Carter, Silke Engstrom

Richard Quarterman is a current member and will be invited to continue. John Keane to continue as Convener and will convene meetings as required in 2024.

9. Selection of Candidates for 2023 Elections

The list below shows candidates that were selected at the meeting to stand for Hart District Council for the seats concerned. Where an appointment could not be made, it will be for the Executive to make an appointment (subject to acceptance of motion in item 12). These cases are indicated by 'Exec' in the entry concerned.

Hart District Council		
	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Selected Candidate(s)</i>
9.1	Blackwater & Hawley	<i>Exec</i>
9.2	Fleet East	Daisy Khepar
9.3	Hartley Wintney	Deborah Fontana
9.4	Hook	<i>Exec</i>
9.5	Odiham	<i>Exec</i>
9.6	Yateley East	Graham Cockarill
9.7	Yateley West	<i>Exec</i>

- * Tony Over and Gerry Crisp are reported to have agreed verbally to stand for Odiham and Yateley West respectively but they were not at the meeting and so cannot be selected. They will be asked to confirm willingness to stand, for confirmation at the December Executive meeting.

10. Constitutional Amendment

The motion to add section 10.8 to the constitution was agreed:

10.8 Such property as the Local Party may own or lease (whether physical or held in long-term investments) shall be acquired, held and disposed of through a Trust.

For a new trust, the Local Party Executive Committee shall appoint five Trustees to manage the asset on behalf of the Local Party who shall hold office for a period of five years but be eligible for reappointment by the Executive and if at any time the number of trustees shall fall below five immediate steps shall be taken by the Executive to appoint a new trustee. A document (which may be the trust deed) shall be drawn up setting out the responsibilities and indemnification of the Trustees in carrying out their duties on behalf of the Local Party. This document should be signed by the Chair and Treasurer of the Local Party and the appointed trustees.

For an existing trust, the Executive Committee shall follow the above procedure as closely as possible, consistent with the trust deeds.

11. The following motion was unanimously agreed:

In the event of any candidate for the elections in May 2024 having to withdraw or be replaced, the AGM delegates to the Local Party Executive Committee the selection of a replacement candidate, as well as the selection of remaining candidates.

Those attending:

Tony Baines, Brian Blewett, Alison Box, Nigel Box, Alex Brewer, Roger Carter, Graham Cockarill, Graham Coleman, Janet Coleman, Adrian Collett, Pam Collett, Roger Coombes, Erika Delmarko, Silke Engström, Deborah Fontana, Michael Fox, Sue Fox, Jack Hopkins, Penny Hopkins, John Keane, Daisy Khepar, Bob Lewis, Glynn Neville, Shamraz Razzaq, Shaun Rowbottom, Marguerite Simpson, David Simpson, Kara Stanford, Dan Taylor, Mark Vernon, Peter Wildsmith, David Woodhead(32)