

Bridgwater and West Somerset Liberal Democrat's ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2:30pm on Saturday 8th November 2025 at Holford Village Hall, Holford, TA5 1SD.

Welcomed by Peter Johnstone Honorary Patron, to this meeting.

1. **Attendees:** Peter Johnstone, Sarah Baker, Kay Barnard, Laura Chalmers, John Cossey, Bill Revans, Benet Allen (zoom), Ross Baker (zoom), Andy Kingston-James (zoom), Janet Johnstone, Taz Haysham, Adrian Nickolls, Heather Nickolls, Antony Nickolls, Jane Scott, Ian Scott, Cara Strom, Marcus Kravis, Janice Beasley, Allan Beasley, Richard Baum, Phil Harvey, Josh Harvey, Mike Murphy, Peter Jackson, Lesley Millard, Barbara Vickers, Colette Winfield, Lorna King, Sharon Perry, Pele Barnes, Sajjad Jabarkhel, Mohammed Sharjed.
2. **Apologies:** Gary Wong, Ganesh Gudka, Fiona Boston, Ann Parson, Lance Moir, Pat Nicholls, Ian McLaren, Paul Williams. Rachel Gilmour, David Allen.
3. **Minutes of previous AGM held in 2024:** One amendment: Expenditure £10,000 down on 2023, should be down on 2022. Taz Haysham proposed and Mike Murphy seconded.
4. **Reports from officers:**
 - a. **Chair:** Sarah Baker.

Thanking everyone for their hard work, and commitment in delivering our Liberal Democrat values, and making a real difference in our communities over the past year.

The past few years have been the most challenging on record for our councils and MPs as they work tirelessly to address the many issues facing our towns, our county, and our country.

Our focus has remained on strengthening and growing our local party, and ensuring we are ready for the electoral challenges ahead.

- b. **Vice chair:** Kay Barnard.

Also a member of the Western Counties Regional, our local party is formed of one and a half constituencies. Currently, Devon Regional group doesn't agree with changing the regional boundary's. Western Counties helped with funding a campaign manager for the Dunster by-election, this made a large impact in helping us to win. Western Counties dinner and event is next Saturday in Bristol, if anyone would like to attend? Bridgwater constituency will become a target area for the 2029 General Election.

Thank you to Kay for all her work and support.

- c. **Treasurer:** John Cossey.

Current position - Constituency account £1,801.95, Campaign account £22,621.66. Total £24,423.61

2024 Accounts: Income £41,063 of which £38,634 was in donations including £10,671 in Councillor tithes, two generous donations totalling £12,000 from a member, and £7,000 from the Blake Hall Trust.

Expenditure £46,308 of which £37,977 was on the General Election campaign, £1,500 donation to the PCC

election campaign, £752 on Town Council by-elections and £3,384 on General Election fundraising events. Expenditure exceeded income by £5,245, mainly due to spending on the General Election campaign.

All in favour - thanks to John for all his work as the treasurer.

d. **Membership & Media:** Ross Baker & Benet Allen.

Benet: Gained new members in West Somerset end of the county, successful campaign in Dunster.

Ross: Membership is going well, media wise pushing out campaigns on social medias, and getting councillors voices out. Improved email responses to campaigns and website development.

Thanks to Ross & Benet for all the hard work given.

e. **Campaigns:** Bill Revans.

This was meant to be an easy year, but then we had a lot of by-elections in other areas. Congratulations to Cara, for winning and pushing conservatives into 3rd place for the Dunster by-election. The next year ahead is working towards local council elections, and town elections. Boundaries for these elections are on 2nd December and approvals are for early January. Aiming for more than 72 councillors in the election - maybe wipe-out the Conservatives in Somerset.

Quoted, '**Lib Dems, is an army of ordinary people doing extraordinary things.**'

Member questions:

How many candidates do we need? 96 Seats

What spaces do we have left. 50 applications received in the first round, the second round opens December.

Any weak areas? Some wards will require extra campaign support. We expect to win on a smaller percentage of the vote.

f. **Diversity Officer:** Andy Kingston-James.

Provided statistics on religious diversity within the group, noting a broad representation across various religions.

5. Reports from:

a. **Burnham-on-Sea & Highbridge Town Council Representative:** Sharon Perry.

In 2022 we were the largest party on the town council, we currently have 6 Lib Dem's on the council. In July's by-election Reform stood their first candidate, with Conservatives only winning by 14 votes, now the Conservatives have taken back to leading the council, and Mayoral duties. Last year we were dealing with devolution from Somerset Council, to include taking on the responsibility for public toilets and open spaces.

Liberal Democrat councillors sit on various bodies outside of the Town Council, which aim to improve our locality. Amongst others, these include: the Green Team, a CIO, which began life under the Town Council's Climate and Ecology Plan; the Active Travel Group; the Burnham-on-Sea Chamber of Trade and Commerce; and the Highbridge Festival of the Arts. We also have regular meetings with interested stakeholders on the issue of travellers and illegal encampments.

There are two groups which have been established to look at reviving our town centres: Better BOS and the Highbridge Regeneration Group. Both Groups have had a brief hiatus, but in the past few weeks they have begun to meet again. Better BOS have two main projects under consideration: the establishment of a Business Incubator and improved signage throughout the town. The Highbridge Regeneration Group also

have many ideas which are being pursued, including, among other projects: public convenience provision in Highbridge, a request for EV Charging facilities in Bank St Car Park and a request for one hour's free car parking in order to boost local use of the shops in Highbridge.

The work of these two groups is important if we are to have any plans which could attract Pride in Place funding in the future.

b. Minehead Town Council Representative: Marcus Kravis

Four empty seats on the town council that we sit on as independents, two of us are Lib Dem's, our worry is Reform will aim to fill the 16 spaces. We need to find 16 lib dems candidates for 2027. They have a really good hard working town clerk. Is it time for minehead to become political again - should town councils be independent?

c. Somerset Unitary Council Representative: Mike Murphy

This year has been less stress full because of taking on the correct people has made the changes needed, to work towards saving bankruptcy. Thanks to Bill Revans Somerset Council leadership.

d. Member of Parliament for Tiverton & Minehead: Rachel Gilmour

We have had a strong year. Whether it was winning in Devon, winning in Dunster (congratulations again Cara!) or more generally, representing constituents and residents alike, it has been a strong year – proving what we can do as a united front, working tirelessly for people in West Somerset.

But it can't end here. On the horizon are the next set of elections for Somerset Council, where we will be in a battle against Reform, who represent some of the worst excesses of the populist right. Together, we can defeat them – the data has shown that, time and time again, where Lib Dems work hard, we are the only major party which can truly beat Reform. But it has to be together. That is why I urge all of you to engage with the campaigning which will be starting in the new year, help to elect out next fantastic local champions to Somerset Council.

There will be around 10 divisions up for grabs on Somerset Council within the boundaries of the Tiverton and Minehead constituency, and I want to be out on the doors in all of them over the next year: with all of you! Let's pick some fantastic candidates, work our socks off like Lib Dems always do, and let's go win some council seats in 2027. Just because the election isn't next year, doesn't mean the work doesn't start right here and right now. We have a fight on our hands, but hard work will get the job done. That's what I'm doing as your MP, and I hope that's what we'll be doing together over the next year.

So, here's to a year of successes and hard work: and here's to more to come moving forward.

6. Motions to AGM:

- a. **Motion A:** Local party name change, to add 'Burnham'. New local party name, '**Bridgwater, Burnham & West Somerset Liberal Democrats**'. **Motion carried.**
- b. **Motion B:** 5.2 Honorary President to add: President'/s' **Motion carried.**
- c. **Motion C:** 5.3.g. Removal of section. Representative(s) of the party's members from Somerset County Council representing electoral divisions within the constituency, elected by and from such members, and representative(s) of the party's members from the Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton District Councils representing wards/divisions within the constituency, elected by and from such members;] **Motion carried.**

7. Election of Honorary President/s:

- a. Peter Johnston. Sarah Baker proposed, Kay Barnard seconded.
- b. Phil Harvey. Lesley Millard proposed, Mike Murphy seconded.

8. Election of officers & Executive Members for Jan 2026.

- a. **Chair: Sarah Baker.** Bill proposed - Laura seconded
- b. **Vice Chair: Kay Barnard.** Taz proposed - Lesley seconded
- c. **Treasurer: John Cossey.** Kay proposed - Sarah seconded
- d. **Assistant Treasurer: Ganesh Gudka.** Sarah proposed - Bill seconded
- e. **Secretary: Laura Chalmers.** Sarah proposed - Mike seconded
- f. **Elections Officer: Bill Revans.** Kay proposed - Sarah seconded
- g. **Membership Development Officer: Ross Baker.** Bill proposed - Kay seconded.
- h. **Assistant Membership: Benet Allen.** Sarah proposed - Taz seconded
- i. **Diversity Officer: Andy Kingston-James.** Kay proposed - Pele seconded
- j. **Ordinary members:** Gary Wong, Fiona Boston, Pele Barnes, Antony Nicholls, Josh Harvey, Taz Haysham.

9. Representatives:

- a. **Somerset Area Campaigns Rep: Ian Scott** - agreed
- b. **Somerset Unitary Councillors Rep: Mike Murphy** - agreed
- c. **Burnham & Highbridge Rep: Ganesh Gudka** - agreed
- d. **Minehead / West Somerset Rep: Marcus Kravis** - agreed

10. Lighthouse Superusers x2: Sarah Baker, Benet Allen - agreed

11. Appointment of Independent Examiner for the 2025 Local Party Accounts: Andrew Dillamore- agreed - All voted in favour

Meeting closed at 15.47 hours.