



LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

ARUNDEL AND SOUTH DOWNS CONSTITUENCY HASSOCKS AND HURSTPIERPOINT BRANCH

MINUTES OF AGM HELD AT THE GREEN ROOM, ADASTRA HALL, HASSOCKS ON TUESDAY 27th NOVEMBER 2018 AT 8.00 pm.

Present: 11 members

1. Apologies for Absence, Kevin Carey; Margaret Carey; Annette Capps; Janet Shimmin; Patrick Cutler; Jeanne Cutler; Quorum is 20 or 1/5 of membership (14) if less. Meeting not quorate but no objection so meeting continued

2. Minutes of AGM 2017 held on Wednesday 22nd November 2017
Agreed and signed.

3. Chairman's Report 2018

Rodney and I were checking how many years I had been Chairman and it looks as if it has been since November 2014. i.e 4 years. It is time for a change. Part of the reason for originally stepping into the role was that we as a national party and as a local party had been through a fallow period. We had not been able to hang on to the county council seat in Hassocks that we had held for many years and the average age of the committee was going up by one each year. I was determined not to watch the Branch fall to pieces. The 2015 election did not bring any joy to us nationally when we were decimated. Sue retired from the District Council and we did not succeed in getting our local candidates elected. However the bright spot in all this was that people like Alison were stimulated to join the party and get involved.

The threat on the horizon was the EU referendum. My first report in November 2015 ended with "Our support (for the EU) is based on a philosophical belief in the importance of working cooperatively with our neighbours, of providing a robust defence of democracy, of a liberal approach to our society. We are not primarily driven by whether we are financially better off inside or out, though we almost certainly are better off inside. My personal view is that over the next few months we should focus most of our efforts on promoting the IN campaign. Losing the referendum would in my view be a disaster for us and for many other countries."

We did lose the referendum and 2016 which was a disaster but locally it brought into the Party people like Kirsty Lord, Ben Dempsey, and Victoria Beard. Never slow to miss a chance we co-opted them plus Alison Bennett and Drew-Miller Hyndman (our first Young LD) on to the Committee and promptly reduced the average age by generations. Our Branch membership grew to 74. At the same time we started our monthly Politics and a Pint meetings which continue and now alternate between the Hassocks and the New Inn. The next one is on Dec 11th at the Hassocks. At the end of the year several of us went up to Richmond Park more than once to support Sarah Olney in the by-election. And we had the pleasure of being on the winning side. A truly exciting time.

2017 was a high spot for us locally. Our new members on the committee raised our game infighting elections with much higher quality literature and immense commitment and hard work. We were so pleased when Kirsty was elected as the county councillor for Hassocks and Burgess Hill South and Alison built on the many years of hard graft by Rodney, to raise our vote in Hurstpierpoint by the referendum result. Then to add icing to the cake, on the same day that Theresa May fought her disastrous general election, Sue Hatton fought a by-election for the District Council in partnership with Gemma Stockford and was elected, the only non-Tory on the council. Her Planning skills were promptly called into play when MSDC announced a new strategic housing site of 500 homes, just north of Clayton Mills, off Ockley Lane. And, another first, the Branch held meetings with the Greens and Labour locally to coordinate our strategy. A planning based Focus was delivered throughout Hassocks in the autumn of 2017.

There have been no elections in 2018 but our two elected members have been working hard.

Kirsty promoted a motion at the county council to do more to encourage women to enter local politics. Since then she has moved a motion urging powers to be restored to local authorities to make decisions on fracking. Both motions were successful. Most of our efforts this year have been devoted to building on our efforts in Hurstpierpoint in 2017, to lay the foundations for a bigger push or at least to assess the current state of political support for us and enable us to make better decisions about the future. A knock and drop leaflet has been delivered to every part of the Hurstpierpoint and Downs Ward (includes Fulking, Poynings, Pyecombe and Sayers Common but not Albourne). From June through to the end of September houses were door-knocked and in October the balance of the knock and drop leaflets were just delivered. This is the first time in my memory that we have worked over the summer. Alison has done an analysis of the returns to identify the key issues for local people. Since October there have been two action days in Hurstpierpoint carrying out conventional canvassing, and the last one is on Sat Dec 1st. Rather less canvassing has taken place in Hassocks. Hassocks will have to be the 'focus' for the New Year. A Focus for both Wards has been delivered in the last few weeks.

Over the summer we co-opted Paul Herve (who also joined the party in 2016) to replace Victoria Beard. Victoria had to resign from active political work due to taking a job in a local authority. Her contribution to us and to the Local Mid Sussex Party in a short time was outstanding. Paul has extensive IT skills and has taken over membership development role and website admin. Alex has professional social media skills and looks after our social media.

Arundel and South Downs is our constituency but the Local party is organised around district council boundaries i.e. Mid Sussex. During the year a subcommittee of the West Sussex party was set up to coordinate actions across Arundel and South Downs and in particular to select a parliamentary candidate. As you will know Alison has been selected PPC for Arundel and South Downs. Well done Alison we are very pleased for you.

Thanks to the members of the committee for all their support and in particular to our secretary, Rodney Jackson.

My thoughts as I give up my position. Things have moved very fast over the last two years Kirsty

was elected to the county council just 10 months after joining the party. Alison has been selected

as a PPC just three years after becoming a member. Where do we go next? We have approved 8 of our members as possible candidates for the district council elections next year and there is a lot we can do in the local elections if we can summon up the energy. Nationally the fight for a Peoples' Vote is probably the most important fight for a generation. And it is happening right now. So smother Nick Herbert with letters and emails. MPs do respond to the weight of their mailbag.

Thank you for allowing me to be your chairman at this exciting time. It has been a privilege to do it.

But the fight goes on.

Nigel Cook proposed that the meeting should thank Colin for his work as Chairman which was accepted as well as his report..

4. Financial Report

- i) The Accounts for the Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint Branch for the year ended 31st December 2017 were presented. The consolidated Mid-Sussex accounts (including the Hassocks and Hurstpierpoint Branch) were approved by Mid-Sussex Party
- ii) Balance at 31 12 2017 £400.77
- iii) Excess of Income over Expenditure for 2017 £-13.52 (deficit)
- iv) Current balance (24 Nov 2018) is £1476.08 in Mid-Sussex Account.

The Year 2017

H&H have not held a separate bank account since joining Mid Sussex in 2014. Local funds are held by and are accounted for within the Local Party; in consequence, the accounts are therefore shown on a memorandum basis.

Mid Sussex accounts to the national party for its and its branches finances with a 31 December year end. Hence these accounts are for the year ended 31 December 2017. Over page I have added a review of the current year's activities to date.

2017 was a busy year.

The County Council elections saw an active and successful campaign with the election of Kirsty Lord to the County Council and then the subsequent General Election and Hassocks By-election campaigns with Sue Hatton elected to one of the two District vacancies with an excellent result in the face of campaigning on the same day as the General Election.

The branch spent a total of £1,934 on local campaigning including pre-County election leaflets £468, the County election £600, the Hassocks by-elections £762 and post-election campaign £104.

Elected councillors contribute a tithe / levy towards the communications budget in local funds and so the impact of this is now a regular monthly income from our elected County and District councillors which is being allocated to the branch. This generates approximately £135 per month. Up to end of 2017 the party received about £690 from this source.

Branch fundraising and donations raised approx. £ 400 to help support the campaigns and Mid Sussex Local Party allocated £830 towards the Hurst and Hassocks branch campaigns.

The snap general election meant that the Mid Sussex local party pulled spare resources left from fight the County elections to help fund the local constituency campaigns yet leaving enough resource to allocate to the branch to fight the Hassocks by-election. Mid Sussex contributed proportionately to the Arundel and South Downs and Horsham campaigns as well as funding the Mid Sussex campaign. As the local party raised strong donations towards the constituency campaigns it was able to fund these and remain solvent. Strong growth in local party membership boosted post-election income to Mid Sussex from the national party membership rebate scheme also helping to replenish local party funds.

Bringing these factors together, means that the Hurst and Hassocks branch had income of £1,920.48 and expenditure of £1,934.00 leaving it with a similar balance to the start of the year, approximately £ 400 at its disposal.

2018 – year to 31 October

The current year has been a lot quieter without elections.

Councillor levies have paid for leaflets and contributed to the branch war chest which will be needed to fight the local elections next May.

We should also expect potential general election referendum and even European elections next year if Brexit is cancelled.

Branch activities in the run up and including the local council elections are essential to building the Liberal Democrat base locally and will help us for any other elections as they happen.

Members are encouraged to help the branch by donating to the branch funds to help afford a strong campaign for the local elections.

5. Election of Officers

The following were nominated.

Chairman: Nigel Cook (Proposed – Rodney Jackson ; Seconded – Janet Slaughter),

Treasurer: Mid-Sussex Treasurer (Paul Lucraft (Mid Sussex)).

Secretary: Rodney Jackson (Proposed – Janet Slaughter; Seconded – Kirsty Lord),

Membership Development Officer: Paul Hervé: Proposed- Rodney Jackson; Seconded – Nigel Cook

Young Liberals Rep: None

There being no further nominations they were all elected.

6. Election of Committee Members, PPC and Councillor Representatives

Alex Sparasci: Proposed - Kirsty Lord Seconded – Benedict Dempsey.

Benedict Dempsey: Proposed – Nigel Cook, Seconded – Paul Hervé

Colin Wilsdon; Proposed Rodney Jackson, Seconded – Nigel Cook

District Councillor Representative: Sue Hatton

County Councillor Representative: Kirsty Lord

PPC : Alison Bennett

Branch Rep on Mid-Sussex Executive: Kirsty Lord.

The Committee members were elected and 2 vacancies remain.

7. Election of Independent Assessor for Accounts

To use Constituency Independent Examiner as accounts are consolidated. Paul Lucraft (Treasurer) to organise.

8. AOB

i) Need to consider prospects for District Council elections next May at Branch Meetings. As Labour came second last time need to squeeze Labour vote and work on disenchanted Conservatives.

9. Meeting closed at c 9.00pm followed by refreshments

Signed:

Chairman