



Report for AGM 2023

Chair – Jacqui Morley

At the last AGM we were at the beginning of the campaign for the Highwoods by-election following the resignation of two independent councillors. Our aim was to win one of the seats, and I am pleased to say that we were successful, and Alison Jay became our first Highwoods councillor.

In the May City Council elections, we had a number of holds. Wivenhoe, Stanway, Highwoods and Shrub End with existing councillors and Mile End and St. Anne's and St. John's with new candidates. **We held all these defences.**

Prior to the Highwoods by-election our two targets for the May City Council elections were Highwoods and Prettygate. As we had come second in the by-election, meaning that Alison was up for re-election, we decided that because of our limited resources we would still treat it as a potential gain and continue to target Prettygate which we were 22 votes short of gaining.

Shortly after the May elections the Labour councillor for Highwoods who was elected at the December by-election resigned, resulting in another by-election. We ran a successful campaign with our candidate Simon Appleton and took the seat from Labour.

This gives us a total of 16 seats making us the main challengers to the Tories and gives us a two seat lead over Labour.

In 2024 we have a number of holds. Wivenhoe, Mile End and Highwoods with existing councillors and Shrub End and St. Anne's and St. Johns with new candidates.

We will also be targeting two seats, Prettygate with an existing candidate and Stanway with a new candidate. If we can hold our defences and take these two seats from the Conservatives it would make us the largest group on the council.

There are likely to be a number of changes to the County Council ward boundaries in Colchester at the May 2025 elections, and along with Jakob and Martin Goss I recently attended a planning and training day in preparation for the County elections. We will

be looking to hold our current County seats on their new boundaries and target one further seat. Essex Coordinating Committee is shortly to start the selection process to select candidates for these seats.

It is expected that following a boundary commission review of the City Council seats there will be all up elections in May 2026. We are currently planning ahead and looking for potential candidates who can become involved now and start to get known in the community they would like to represent.

Earlier in the year the members selected Martin Goss as our prospective parliamentary candidate for the next General Election, which is widely expected to be held in either May or October next year. The proposed changes to the parliamentary constituency boundary remove the ward of Old Heath and the Hythe, which will weaken Labour.

Membership – last year in my report I told you that membership numbers continued to be a challenge for us, and over the year we had seen a decrease of approximately 9%, down to 259 members and 79 supporters, even though this was less than most other local parties. I also reported that **increasing membership was a priority for the Executive.**

Our **membership numbers are steadily increasing now**, bucking the national trend, and currently stands at 322 members and 78 supporters. The Executive has managed to retain most lapsing members by contacting those who need to renew and discussing any issues that were possibly preventing them from renewing. We have also been actively recruiting at events such as Colchester Pride and the Eco Festival, as well as being more proactive in approaching people who are known supporters by telephone or in person. I have been pleasantly surprised by the response both Jakob and I have received.

One of our other aims as an Executive is to try and be more engaged with members through social events.

The Politics and Pint event has been running monthly since January. The events have generally been well attended with around 20 people coming along on average. The feedback from members who wouldn't usually become involved has been good with some becoming deliverers and a few coming out canvassing.

We do appreciate that not everyone wants to go to a pub or turn out of an evening, and in view of this we are going to be holding a regular monthly coffee morning at a

venue in the city centre where members will be able to come along and meet some of our councillors, our PPC and Exec members. The first of these is to be held on Tuesday 5th December.

We also recently held our first annual dinner after a break of a few years, and it was good to see some members there who are not usually active within the local party. It is planned to continue with this next year.

There will be a fundraising buffet lunch early next year with a speaker which will hopefully appeal to members who would prefer a daytime event. If this is a success the aim is to also have a similar summer party.

I have attached our long-term Development Plan to the papers for the AGM. This is the first time that this has gone to the wider membership and in future AGMs the Executive will have to report on the progress of the plan. This should make the Executive more accountable to our members and help to keep us focused on our longer-term goals as a party.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to our councillors and to the other members of the Executive, along with all our supporters and everyone who contributes to the running of the party.

Jacqui Morley
Chair

Colchester Liberal Democrats

Pre-year end Treasurer Report 2023

4th November 2023

Financial position summary

The year started with £5,974 in the bank. We should finish with approximately £15,000.

The party funds have therefore increased by about £10,000 during the last year. This is a very healthy balance and a war chest for the general election.

Success in the council elections and the retaking of control of the (now) city council has led to a significant rise in tithe income.

General running costs have remained broadly the same as previous years, about £750 per month. Our tithe income is now about £2,200 per month. The difference between these is income that can be spent on campaigning.

Detail of the costs and income is given in the table and graphs on page 2.

Administration issues

The use of Xero has made production of monthly reports, year-end AGM reports and the formal year-end accounts very much easier. Some of these reports are now templated in Xero and can just be run and exported. As there are a number of account details, processes and procedures that would be helpful for my successor, whenever that might be, I will record those and keep them in a secure location.

My exchanges with the tax office have continued. A minor victory has seen an letter from the Tax office to my home address. This means that with a little more pushing I hope I will be provided with access to the online tax account. This is still a matter of concern, and past tax return are still due.

I have previously reported local branch funds for Saints. I understand we are no longer to have separate branch funds. Those funds need to be spent on legitimate expenses, ideally with receipts and then the account closed. I will need to record that in the report that goes to HQ.

Next Year

There will be local elections and a general election next year. We are in a good financial position to fund those campaigns.

Our typical annual income exceeds our operating costs by about £20,000. If we retain control of the council and maintain our tithe income will be about £26,000.

I project we could comfortably spend £25,000 or more on campaigning next year without the balance dropping to a worrying level.

Kit Barritt

Treasurer

4th Nov 2023

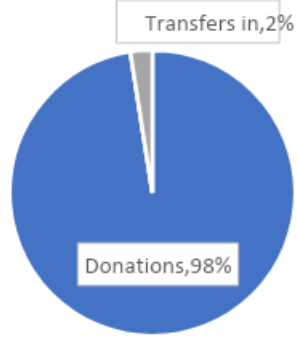
Profit and Loss

Colchester Liberal Democrats

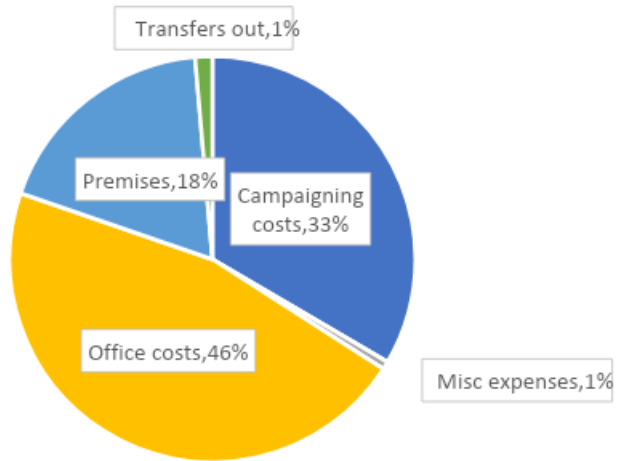
For the year to date 4 November 2023

Account	2023
Turnover	
Donations	18,669.01
Fundraising Income	0.00
Transfers in	475.00
Total Turnover	19,144.01
Gross Profit	19,144.01
Administrative Costs	
Campaigning costs	3,676.99
Depreciation	0.00
Misc expenses	70.00
Office costs	5,079.19
Premises	2,017.98
Transfers out	151.00
Total Administrative Costs	10,995.16
Surplus	8,148.85

Income



Expenditure





PPC Report – AGM 2023

Thank you to the many members who supported me as the Parliamentary Candidate once more. It was a challenging and gruelling process to go through and I have to congratulate Tom Bartleet and Natalie Sommers who ran very positive and energised campaigns which certainly meant you had three great choices to pick from! Tom has been appointed as the candidate in South Suffolk, just over the border, so I hope to be working closely with him over the next year campaigning together.

My General Election campaign planning was rudely interrupted by the Highwoods By-election caused by Labour where we managed to get Simon Appleton elected. As the Agent for Simon and part of the lead for the campaign this took all my focus (as well as my marriage, the two cats and my job also being fitted around it!)

I have been providing regular General Election updates in focus newsletters which have been going out in a number of Colchester wards and I have plans for literature in the wards where we have no Cllrs.

I have been undertaking visits and recently met with the Chief Executive of St Helena Hospice, visited the team at The Colchester Engagement and Next Steps (CENS) - formerly the Colchester Night Shelter, as well as meeting the Colchester United Womens Football coaches. I have many more visits being arranged and planned.

I was at the Regional Conference in Ipswich where Ed Davey appeared and gave a very powerful and motivating speech as well as undertaking some planning for the forthcoming GE which will be I expect no later than October 2024. The NHS will be one of the key messages in the Colchester campaign.

Please do get involved in my campaign as you as Liberal Democrat members are very important and key to me winning Colchester.

Don't hesitate to give me a call or drop me an email.
Martin Goss



Group leader – AGM Report

Since May 2023 we are now running the Town Hall as a minority Lib Dem only administration. As you may recall we normally go into a coalition with Labour but their National Exec Committee (NEC) refused them permission to participate so we lead the council taking all cabinet positions. We agreed Labour can have chairs of all committees.

To be frank it hasn't been plain sailing and some of the behaviour by Labour given we are supposed to be working together in an unofficial capacity now has been appalling. We are addressing this.

We also had two by-elections in the period in Highwoods - winning them both welcoming Alison Jay in December 2022 - where she was re-elected a few months later with an overwhelming majority in May 2023 and then a Labour Cllr resigned so we had to fight and won their seat with 40% of the vote. We welcome the excellent Simon Appleton to the team.

We now have 16 Cllrs, Labour 14, Green Party 2 and Conservatives 19.

We continue to focus on the finances, the rising cost of living, including those affecting council services as we have also been hit by rising fuel for our fleet of vehicles and of course gas and electricity. The main headline for the administration is seeing what other local help we can offer the most vulnerable in Colchester. There are many partners we can also signpost people to for help and all this had been pulled together in one place.

The everyday issues also matter such as trying to keep our streets clean, looking at a new waste strategy to help push our recycling rates to 70%, up from the current record of 56%, although it currently sits at an average of 52.9%. Fly tipping and antisocial behaviour remain a constant issue we have to deal with which has risen since lockdown and Covid. We need to change these

behaviours and stop residents feeling alone and vulnerable where experiencing such issues.

We have now been a City for 12 months - it is unbelievable how this time has flown by.

The headwinds we face with council resources and finances, like all local authorities will continue to be challenging and much tougher as costs rise, income from parking and other services has diminished from previous years due to Covid and less people returning to offices. Government funding and grants have also reduced.

Regrettably we have been forced to introduce garden waste charging from January 2023 to help cover the financial position I referred to earlier. Over 65% of councils already charge for garden waste.

This will bring in around £1,800,000 to help cover the costs of running the current service. We can only increase council tax by 3% and on a band portion of the bill for Colchester this equates to £5 a YEAR

We will continue to work hard for Colchester in difficult times and always welcome any input or help from any Lib Dem members.

Martin Goss
Group Leader