



Colchester Local Party Development Plan 2023-2025

PURPOSE

The Plan aims to give a clear idea of the local party's current situation. Describe its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It sets clear objectives with actions.

OUR PRESENT SITUATION

Councillors

- We have 16 City Councillors and 2 County Councillors.
- In the May 2023 City Council Elections, we held all of our seats (two with new candidates) and lost our only target seat by 22 votes.

Executive

- The Executive meets every 3 weeks.
- We have a Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Data Organiser. We do not currently have a Diversity Officer or Membership Officer.
- Our data organiser is our Connect Manager, and several people have lesser authorities and abilities within Connect

Membership

- We have approximately 330 members. 117 lapsed members who lapsed between January 2021 and August 2023 (and 67 registered supporters).
- We have 13 Young Liberals within the local party.

- We did produce a member's newsletter in 2022 and this was planned to become a quarterly publication, but the Membership Development Officer left, and this has not been picked up by anyone else.

Social/fundraising events

- Social/fundraising events are organised by the Executive, but it is difficult for members to find the time to devote to this. In January 2023 we relaunched a monthly 'politics and pint' social event and this has seen some increased member interest and activity. An Annual Dinner event is planned for later this year.

Communications

- We have a website, but posts are National only at present.

We have an active Facebook account, but there are not enough Local Stories being posted. Individual councillors have Facebook, Instagram, and twitter accounts.

- We have an irregular pattern of other member or supporter communications or meetings – often with long gaps. Here too there is a lack of local stories of activity.

STRENGTHS:

- Our finances are OK but historically we have used past balances which have, particularly recently, been heavily drained. Fighting hard campaigns to retain the City Council seats and the next General Election is likely to require greater fundraising efforts.
- We have "c £9k" in the bank

WEAKNESSES:

- We have a largely inactive and ageing membership.
- We don't appear to have anything to attract people not already committed to the Party.
- Lack of sufficient regular activity, recruitment and retention and fundraising efforts.
- Insufficient local use of website
- We have no active young Liberals

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Some opportunities to make gains in the City Council elections in 2024
- The internet offers a chance of widening our activity across the whole area using methods adopted by younger voters
- Facebook should be used more intensively to raise Lib Dem profile with local communities.
- Fully engage with candidates and new members.

THREATS:

- Inactivity
- Lack of skills
- Lack of Training
- Inadequate marketing of what we stand for in the local arena.

WHERE WE AIM TO BE

OBJECTIVES

- a) To increase membership by 10% of 2023 figures by December 2024.
- b) To contact all members and supporters within 2 months of receiving their details.
- c) In the 2024 City Council elections, we will aim to increase number of councillors to 18 or more and become the largest party on the council.
- d) In the 2025 County elections we aim to increase councillors to 3 or more and to field a full set of candidates.
- e) Make our website relevant to the area with local stories and up to date.
- f) Develop a Young Liberal Democrats group.
- g) Attract Local voters to the Liberal Democrats.

h) Establish regular communication with members through emails and a quarterly newsletter.

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

a) Nominate an individual to engage with new members and supporters.

b) Executive committee to identify candidates for specific roles.

c) Councillors and others to train in efficient use of social media for campaigning.

d) Identify and appoint Young Liberals Champion.