

LDER 2023 AGM: Minutes

November 30, 2023, 7.30pm on Zoom

Prepared by LDER Secretary, Sarah Lewis

1. Apologies for Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Susan Kendrick• Samuel Jackson• David Brandwood• Steve Pope• Kay Kirkham
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 1 November 2022 (attached) <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Accuracyb. Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minutes confirmed for accuracy• No matters arising
3. Reports <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Chair (attached)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keith Sharp (Chair) extended thanks to the Party leadership, including Wendy Chamberlain, Christine Jardine, Mark Pack, and Ed Davey's team• Keith noted we have one further leadership team meeting between now and Christmas on the manifesto with Dick Newby and team• Keith applauded return to in-person conferences• Keith extended thanks to our allies with whom we continue to work closely, including Unlock Democracy; MVM; ERS; and other political parties including the Labour Party• Keith noted major push with allies to upgrade our efforts towards a national campaign

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keith directed members to LDER website for campaign materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Systems work ○ Scenarios work ○ Campaign materials with ALDC ● Keith noted a renewed focus on DEI ● Keith directed members to his report for more information on technology systems and set up
<p>b. Membership Secretary (attached)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Helen Parker (Membership) reported an increase in LDER membership numbers and an increase in numbers of people receiving email updates - largely driven by in-person activity ● Helen welcomed new members; and thanked members for their flexibility in responding to requests for changes to payment options ● Helen noted changes to sign ups for new members and other expressions of interest in LDER ● Helen invited members to get in touch with any questions or challenges
<p>c. Treasurer - i) 2023 y-t-d; ii) budget 2024 (attached)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keith Sharp delivered the Treasurer’s report on behalf of Treasurer Kay Kirkham
<p>4. Annual Accounts a. To consider and approve the examined annual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conference budget discrepancy down to the death of the monarch and fewer conferences & website slightly more expensive

<p>accounts for 2022. (attached)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual accounts approved
<p>5. Membership fee</p> <p>a. Proposal to maintain fees at a minimum £10 per annum (£5 concessions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees approved
<p>6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee Members</p> <p>a. President</p> <p>b. Chair</p> <p>c. Secretary</p> <p>d. Treasurer</p> <p>e. Membership Secretary</p> <p>f. Up to five Ordinary Members of the committee</p> <p>g. Co-options by the elected executive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President: Wendy Chamberlain proposed by Keith Sharp, Richard Wood seconded • Chair: Keith Sharp proposed by Sarah Lewis, Hazel Fell-Rayner seconded • Secretary: Sarah Lewis proposed by Keith Sharp, Sally Yalden seconded • Treasurer: Kay Kirkham proposed by Keith Sharp, Hazel Fell-Rayner seconded • Membership Secretary: Helen Parker proposed by Keith Sharp, Crispin Allard seconded • Ordinary Members: Five ordinary members proposed by Sally Yalden, Keith Sharp seconded • Co-options: Keith Sharp confirmed Sally Yalden, Hina Bokhari and Daniel Cope as coopted members of the LDER Executive Committee
<p>7. Appointment of Examiner</p> <p>a. To appoint an Examiner of the accounts for the coming year</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dominic Mathon proposed as Examinder by Keith Sharp, seconded by Sarah Lewis

8. Motions to AGM

8.1 To amend our constitution by adding a new clause 2.5, which will help allow any residual assets from our predecessor organisation (DAGGER) to be transferred to LDER.

2.5 To be the successor to the Democrats Action Group for Gaining Electoral Reform (DAGGER) as the affiliate organisation recognised by the Liberal Democrats concerned with the advancement of electoral reform.

8.2 To enable electronic voting for internal elections by:

replacing the current clause 6.4 in our constitution with this new clause.

6.4 If an election is contested, there shall be either a ballot at the meeting by either paper or electronic means or a full postal or electronic ballot following the meeting, in which all members are sent a ballot / a personal link to an electronic voting system within 7 days after the AGM and which must be returned to the Returning Officer within 21 days after the

8.1

- Keith Sharp noted drafting amendment: “the Liberal Democrats” to replace “the Liberal Democratic Party”
- Constitutional amendment approved

6.4

- Keith Sharp noted two drafting amendments:
 - Specify that our electoral system used is STV or AV
 - Remove “local party”
- Constitutional amendment approved

<p><i>AGM. Elections will be held under the single transferable vote (or alternative vote for single vacancies) system.</i></p> <p>Motions may be submitted by full LDER members, if relevant to the objectives of LDER and deemed by the Chair to be in order. Motions must be submitted to info@lder.org ten days before the AGM is held (in this instance 20 October). Emergency motions can be submitted up until the start of the AGM, again at the discretion of the Chair.</p>	
<p><i>Close of formal AGM – approximately 8 pm.</i></p>	<p>AOB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peter Hirst: Is there an option to vote against the constitutional amendments? Will investigate technology!• Suzanne Fletcher: Has written an article for Liberator on why people without British citizenship should be able to vote in General Elections - Suzanne to circulate• Keith Sharp thanked members of LDER for their support

Debate session. We are delighted to welcome LDER President **Wendy Chamberlain MP**; and London Assembly member **Hina Bokhari** to address the meeting, followed by Q&A The meeting is due to close by 9pm.

“Will the next general election be the last to be held in this country under first past the post? And what can we all do about it?”

Opening Remarks - Wendy Chamberlain:

- Highly likely that Wendy up for election, as well as Hina
- England and Wales:
 - Seeing some retrograde steps: Wales moved from AMS to party lists; and England metro mayors and PCCs to FPTP
- Scotland:
 - Three voting systems and the electorate understand it!
 - Contrary to opponents' views
- This Conservative government has taken us back:
 - PVs narrowed
 - Voter ID
 - Other uncomfortable changes
 - Only positive thing: Overseas Voters - do away with 15 year requirement but do not give them opp to vote in an overseas constituency (instead in constituency they were last registered). But how is this going to work?
- No progress with LOTO/Labour front bench
- Worrying: risk that Labour do not do what is needed
- Wonder what the scope is to pick off individual Labour candidates who have a high chance of being elected
- Labour is the only social democratic party in Northern Europe which does not support electoral reform
- Need to keep pressure up by getting Lib Dems elected
- Reform: not going to step back in Conservative seats & they are supportive of PR
- Clearly got a lot to do!

Keith Sharp:

- Labour reformers; not an easy journey but they do point to their National Policy Conference statement, “electoral system contributes to the alienation and distrust” acknowledgement
- Wales: Keith will be speaking at ERS AGM on Saturday about the Wales local government situation - there is some fluidity in the political system which may be beneficial
- Reinforced the fact that voting systems are well understood in Scotland

Opening Remarks - Hina Bokhari:

- Campaign for Gender Balance was crucial for Hina and Wendy
- PR got someone like Hina elected - one of the first Muslim women in the Assembly
- Proud of Lib Dem position on reform
- So many divisions within Labour - great that LDs are united on reform
- We come from a position of strength and we will put electoral pressure on Starmer
- Labour need PR
- 8 of 11 assembly members (list) are women; 3 are BAME; 3 are LGBTQ+
- Party name vs individual name helps minorities to get elected
- Voter turnout has been impacted by FPTP - ethnic minorities do not vote
- 2019 - turnout was 52% vs 63% of white voters; 47% vs 74% turnout young vs old
- Young adults don't think political system treats them well
- We need to reach out to diverse groups across the country: cannot rely on Labour; reach out to diverse groups and know that PR will make a difference to them
- Every voice should matter!

Keith Sharp question:

- What has been the real impact of voter ID?

Hina Bonkari:

- Socioeconomic diversity is a problem and voter ID impacts that

Tom Brake:

- Labour campaign org is identifying pro MPs and candidates - L4ND rally
Labour candidates spoke in favour of PR
- Bigger and better funded campaign for PR is on the table: includes continue process of identifying who has said what on PR, getting them on the record and being able to use that
- Voter ID: two reports out today - government response to what happened in May council elections; and report from IFS whether gov had met its objectives:
 - Get impression that it was huge success
 - But clear that it is a big issue: for elections in London in May, if doesn't coincide with GE, there is not a requirement to keep records of who was turned away. If this info is not captured, it becomes a lot harder for a GE in October to work out how to reduce the risk of ethnic minorities being turned away at polling stations. Hope that the Mayor will agree to capture this information.
- Automatic voter registration could help young people, renters, minorities registered: Process where ROs can use data they have to automatically register people; and nudge factor when people make contact to renew passport/driving license - would really help to register the 8 million people (EC confirmed) are not on register but eligible to vote
- These things are disproportionately impacting people who are already most affected by political process
- Hope Lib Dems will consider being on the front foot on automatic voter registration

Wendy Chamberlain:

- Put something in on AVR during the constituencies bill in Elections Bill: would certainly help

Kathrine Santos question:

- Would Covid outcomes have been different if we had had a coalition government elected by PR?

Wendy Chamberlain:

- Not too sure; depends on the coalition
- Select committees are set up with the top three parties which is challenging
- During Covid, called for Covid select committee for all parties in Westminster - as smaller parties frozen out
- Electoral reform would change the whole dynamic of Westminster
- Genuinely believe that the more LDs there are, v likely to get credibility back as third party - growth, recovery, visibility, two PMQs a week

Peter Hirst question:

- In view of the challenges to Labour putting forward a Bill on electoral reform, would it help to consider targeting MPs for private members' bills? What other routes are there?

Tom Brake:

- Unlock Democracy and MVM targeted MP who came high up in private members' bill ballot to suggest he takes forward a bill - Lloyd Russell-Moyle

Wendy Chamberlain:

- Just taken through a bill (carer's leave bill) which showed that the likelihood of any bill getting through before the next election is very slim - getting it through stages, even with government support

- We have a government with an 80 seat majority who are resistant to change so any bill is not going to progress beyond second reading
- That is not to say that it wouldn't be a campaign tool that could be useful
- Only Tory MP who is supportive is Dan Poulter

Marisha Ray question:

- How would we make sure the entire political set up after PR would produce population outcomes that are not biased towards different ethnic groups or against people with protected characteristics? How to make sure not to perpetuate bias after systems change

Hina Bokhari:

- PR will not end racism
- Got support through a system that allowed Hina to be second on the list: despite efforts of the party was hard
- When first on list, was number 5 voting wise, but because of previous decision of Party and London region, it was decided BAME would get 2nd or 5th position on the list
- Some might think very unfair, but it was there because every time there was a selection the top 5-7 were never ethnic minorities on the list: needs to be a way to allow this to happen
- This time around they did not do; already a minority elected and Hina was first person chosen on the list
- Equity rather than equality
- Not the perfect world, but one way forward

Keith Sharp:

- Cultural change needs to come
- Find our systems brochure on LDER website

Keith question:

- How should we be ready to push/support Labour in moving a referendum, commission etc. - a few years into the next administration?

Wendy Chamberlain:

- Change in Labour leadership might lead to a rethink?
- Or does it remain in category of things Labour won't talk about
- Boundary changes do benefit the Conservatives - perhaps about 10 seats
- Labour still needs a sizeable swing to achieve a majority of one
- But there is a position where there are Labour MPs with small majorities
- Constitution Unit at UCL: D Green said before he became an MP he was supportive of PR and then went off it due to the constituency link; and Wendy corrected him re multi-member systems
- Get out and campaign!

Hina Bokhari Closing Remarks:

- Politics is very interesting right now
- Labour not incredibly clear on their values and members of the Party leaving in their droves and becoming independent
- Not just because of international factors; also internal issues
- We are very clear on our values, at home and internationally - clear and focused policies so there is a lot to be shouting about and PR is a massive part of it!
- Promote to all communities to bring over to us

Wendy Chamberlain Closing Remarks:

- Our own campaign for 2024 is about fairness and fair votes is absolutely part of that - thread through all
- 2024 needs to be a route back to credibility for us: target seats, working hard - can't push on anything we believe in unless we get Lib Dems elected; and engage new people in politics
- Thank you for continued interest!

Keith Closing Remarks:

- Member survey coming in next few weeks
- -See you in York

Draft