

High Peak Liberal Democrats
Constituency Executive Meeting
Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 26th January 2012
at
The Old Pack Horse, Chapel-en-le-Frith

PART ONE

1. Present

Beth Atkins, Ray Atkins, Bob Hobson, David Lomax, Roy Lyon, Tobias Stroner, Barrie Taylor and Stephen Worrall.

2. Apologies

Alan Debes, Brian Musgrave, Maeve Serby, Ann Strudwick and Geoff Strudwick.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was proposed by Barrie Taylor and seconded by Bob Hobson that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October, 2011 be accepted. This was carried.

4. Matters Arising

- i. The AGM had been arranged and took place on 30th November, 2011. The Chair welcomed returning and new Executive Committee Members.
- ii. Ray Atkins informed the meeting that he had been making enquiries as to how to contact the Borough Councillor who has yet to pay the levy in such a way as to avoid embarrassment, but that he had yet to contact them on the matter.

It was noted that not asking for it was not an option but that in “extreme cases” there may be mitigating circumstances in which the levy may be waived.

Barrie Taylor agreed to pursue the matter with the Borough Councillor in question, with regards to the finalizing of the previous years finances.

- iii. Barrie Taylor informed the meeting that the deadline for the submission of initial suggestions to the Boundary Commission had been missed, but that there would be a second opportunity to submit suggestions.

It was noted that at a Parliamentary Constituency level the Boundary Commission recommended that High Peak be expanded to include Hathersage and Eyam. It was also noted that a potential alternative could be to expand High Peak to include Bradwell and Tideswell instead.

It was noted that at a County Constituency level Derbyshire County Council recommended that, in the High Peak, Sterndale Moor be moved from Buxton West to Buxton North and East, and that SJ5 be moved from Glossop North and Rural to Etherow. It was also noted that whilst no objections could be seen further changes were anticipated, due to uneven ward sizes, but that these would be difficult as there is a desire not to cross Parish Council boundaries. Whaley Bridge was noted as an example, being 11% smaller than recommended and heavily parished.

5. Reports

i. Membership Secretary's Report

The Membership Secretary informed the meeting that membership currently stood at 73. This was a 30% drop on the previous figure and the vast majority of this drop was due to lapsed memberships as opposed to resignations. Ray Atkins stated the belief that this was a return to the membership level before the general election.

A number of executive members agreed to "chase up" appropriate lapsed memberships in their local areas.

David Lomax informed the meeting that a new, student, member had contacted him. They had stated their desire to become involved with the party and to be considered as a candidate for potential forthcoming elections.

David Lomax agreed to make further contact with the new member.

ii. County Councillor's Report

Beth Atkins and Barrie Taylor informed the meeting that the general picture was that of financial cuts and large caseloads. The next budget meeting was close at hand at which cuts of £25 million needed to be agreed. This could include a £2 million cut to road services and a £4 million cut to adult services. This would potentially lead to the closure of all council run youth clubs and all but four old people's homes.

Bob Hobson questioned whether a policy of attempting to avoid compulsory redundancies was being followed as part of the cuts and, if that was the case, whether it was leading to a problem of a top heaving management structure.

Barrie Taylor informed the meeting that such a policy was being followed and, that whilst it was hard to say at this stage, there was evidence of a top heavy management structure forming. The number of council employees earning in excess of £50,000 had actually increased from 103 – 126.

Beth Atkins informed the meeting that locally the issue of the stench from the anaerobic digester at Birch Vale quarry was now being investigated by the Environmental Agency.

Ray Atkins informed the meeting of the breaking news that Derbyshire Constabulary was to close a number of their Enquiry Offices, including New Mills and Chapel-en-le-Frith in the High Peak.

iii. Borough Councillor's Report

Ray Atkins informed the meeting that due to the “merger” with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council the impact of the cuts had been reduced and that the management structure was less top heavy than it had ever been. On top of this the current, minority Labour, administration had inherited a £1 million under spend.

Ray Atkins then informed the meeting that initial negotiations have been undertaken with Labour with regards to what the Liberal Democrat group on the council would want in exchange for their support. This would be a freeze on council tax for one year, the parish grant funding to continue for one year, no increase in parking charges to protect small businesses, rate relief for sports clubs and street cleaning improvements. The demands have been agreed to in principle but are subject to financial and other approval. He stated the belief that should negotiations be successful we should seek to capitalise on the good publicity it could generate.

Bob Hobson inquired as to the state of affairs with regards to the sale of the Chinley council offices.

David Lomax informed the meeting that the last potential sale had fallen through. It was noted that the current climate was making the sale difficult.

iv. Parish Councillor's Report

Stephen Worrall informed the meeting of a tragic incident which had occurred in Charlesworth Parish involving a collision between a car and a horse. The horse had regrettably had to be put down and both rider and driver had been hospitalized.

The subsequent meeting of the Parish Council had seen attendance of over 100 people, substantially higher than usual, as the local community wished to know what could be done to try and ensure something like this did not happen again. A petition was being organized by the local community, people were to be advised to write to the County Council and Jean Wharmby (County Councillor for Glossop South) had attended the meeting to act as a direct link between the local community and the County Council.

Stephen Worrall requested if any additional help was possible and Beth Atkins agreed to monitor the situation at the County Council.

6. Business Matters

i. Liberal Hall

Ray Atkins informed the meeting that Brian Musgrave had notified him that planning application had been turned down. There had been no local party opposition and the application was being reconsidered without the need for formal resubmission, Brian Musgrave was said to be confident of success.

It was noted that the impending closure of New Mills Police Enquiry Service could have an impact on the situation due to its proximity to Liberal Hall. Ray Atkins agreed to inform Brian Musgrave to pursue this.

Bob Hobson enquired as to the potential sale value of Liberal Hall. Ray Atkins informed the meeting that the figure could be between £100,000 and £120,000.

ii. Printer lease/ Alternatives

Barrie Taylor informed the meeting that the lease expires on 23rd February 2012. To purchase the printer would cost £450 + VAT; it would be collected for free should it not be purchased. The potential to make money using the printer by printing for Bill Newton Dunn was noted.

Stephen Worrall raised the alternative of using an online printing service and circulated an email he had received from the company that had been in touch. Beth Atkins pointed out that sharing the service with an unknown number of other users could mean access to the service at critical times being unavailable.

Ray Atkins raised the alternative of sharing Hazel Grove's printing facilities but noted that if they had elections when we did this could prove problematic.

Bob Hobson raised the possibility of negotiating to reduce the price of purchasing the printer.

It was proposed by Bob Hobson and seconded by Stephen Worrall that Barrie Taylor be authorized to negotiate the best price possible for the printer and purchase it, as long as it did not exceed £450 + VAT. This was carried.

iii. Potential Buxton West By-election

The need to identify a potential candidate was noted, especially as the ward is the only one the party holds second place in.

Beth Atkins suggested the creation of a newsletter including a section on how the party is looking for potential candidates for forthcoming elections as an initial tactic. Barrie Taylor agreed to pursue this.

iv. 2012 social/fund raising events

The Chair requested that the Secretary be emailed details of any potential social/fund raising events planned so that they could be publicised.

Ray Atkins suggested a dinner, potentially with Andrew Stunnell MP as guest speaker, and agreed to pursue this.

Barrie Taylor informed the meeting of the upcoming Coffee Morning in Whaley Bridge on 3rd March. The potential for Coffee Mornings in Liberal Hall was noted.

David Lomax informed the meeting of the upcoming Mayor's Charity Dinner at Pavilion Gardens, Buxton on 16th March.

7. Current financial position

- i. It was noted that Margaret Weaver has agreed to examine the accounts.
- ii. The Chair thanked Barrie Taylor for filling the role of Treasure on a temporary basis and welcomed Bob Hobson back to the role.
- iii. A summary of the previous two years finances was presented by Barrie Taylor which indicated an available balance as of 30/11/2011 of £738.76. It was noted that this did not include the income related to printing for Europe which could come to somewhere within the region of £200 - £300.
- iv. It was noted that Ray Atkins had payed off an outstanding bill for North Branch and that he would receive some reimbursement at a later date.

- v. The Treasurer informed the meeting that the South Branch account was now closed, that the forthcoming year he anticipated expenditure £300 - £400 in excess of income and that he was wary of running down our base funds due to the upcoming County Council elections. He anticipated the cost being in the region of £2500.

He also informed the meeting that the solicitor's fees for the sale of Liberal Hall would come from funds belonging to the Liberal Hall and so did not need to be taken into consideration.

He also stated the belief that an annual budget for claims for printing for Europe would be needed, Barrie Taylor agreed to pursue this.

He also informed the meeting that the 200 club was stable, having declined from its previous high, and that it should be advertised in the potential newsletter proposed by Beth Atkins.

- vi. Barrie Taylor requested that the Treasurer provide a summary of budget against expenditure at all future meetings.

8. AGM Motion

- i. **It was agreed that the constitution could potentially require changing. Roy Lyon agreed to check the constitution and highlight any potential changes that may be required at a future meeting.**

9. High Peak Constituency meeting structure

- i. Roy Lyon suggested that a structure with two types of meeting, Business and Discussion, with alternation between the two be adopted.
- ii. David Lomax suggested reducing the number of meetings a year from 12 to 10, with no August or December meeting.
- iii. Ray Atkins suggested that "Business" and "Discussion" be kept together, as non executive members may well find the council reports of interest.
- iv. David Lomax and Roy Lyon agreed that the council reports could be of interest to the non executive members but that it would be better to have the two type meeting structure and move the council reports from the Business meeting to the Discussion meeting.
- v. Barrie Taylor proposed that the next meeting be a General Discussion meeting for all members and Tobias Stroner seconded the motion.
- vi. Tobias Stroner suggested that the meeting should have more than one topic, one local and one national and that he had a number of ideas for topics.

- vii. The idea of potentially rotating meeting location was noted and Thursday 1st March was chosen as the next meeting date.

10. A.O.B.

- i. It was noted that Barrie Taylor had received a request from the Sir Winston Churchill Foundation asking for permission to use information that originally belonged to the Buxton Liberals. The Secretary was authorized to respond giving our permission for this information to be used.
- ii. It was noted that Connect was replacing EARS, that Bill Newton Dunn MEP was paying for it and that Barrie Taylor had received the information and believed it could be very complicated.
- iii. Ray Atkins stated the belief that it would help us to modernise and that we needed to do so in order to win elections.
- iv. Barrie Taylor suggested that Stephen Worrall should become involved in the use of the new system to which he agreed.

11. Executive Discussion Topic

- i. Barrie Taylor informed the meeting that Derbyshire County Council is consulting on the future of the Youth Clubs they run and that they propose to close them all. Liberal Democrat policy is acknowledgement of the need to make savings but belief those savings could be made by more efficient use of the buildings.
- ii. It was noted that Conservative policy is that voluntary organisations will “pick up the slack” and that an example of this is that Chinley Youth Club is run by a Community Association and is doing very well. Concerns were raised that volunteers will be unwilling to step in the areas that need it the most however.
- iii. It was noted that the proposed savings are £500,000 (based on the money made from sale of the buildings minus the money set aside for grants to voluntary associations).
- iv. The belief was raised that we should oppose this particular cut and call on the Conservatives to use the financial reserves now to maintain Youth Clubs rather than to avoid having to make the more unpopular political decision of raising council tax.

Action Points

Action	Responsible	Time scale
Pursue the borough councilor who has not yet	Barrie Taylor	ASAP

paid the levy.		
Contact lapsed members	All	ASAP
Monitor developments on Charlesworth road safety	Beth Atkins	Ongoing
Inform Brian Musgrave of closure of New Mills Police station and request he enquire whether this will effect Liberal Hall sale	Ray Atkins	ASAP
Purchase Printer	Barrie Taylor	ASAP
Look into the production of a newsletter	Barrie Taylor	Next meeting
Look into hosting a fund raising dinner, with Andrew Stunnell MP	Ray Atkins	Next meeting
Check constitution and highlight potential necessary changes	Roy Lyon	Next meeting
Contact Sir Winston Churchill Foundation	Secretary	ASAP