



Brentwood & Chelmsford Green Party Meeting

Minutes of Meeting of Members

Date: 24th January 2024 19:30hrs

Location: Hybrid Meeting at Chicken and Frog Bookshop, Brentwood and Zoom

Chair: Julian Goode

Secretary: David Hale

Present:

In Person: Jackie Enifer, David Hale, John Hamilton, Reece Learnmouth, Marc Sardinha, James Vessy-Miller, Sue West

Zoom: Julian Goode, Reza Hossain, Paul Jeater, Mike Thompson

Apologies for absence: Ronnie Bartlett, Angie Faulds, Emma Randall, Angela Thomson, Will Young

1. Constitution Update

Julian Goode has read through the current constitution and found that it is need of updating. Paul Jeater wrote it around 2015 (pre- Brexit referendum) and it still has references to elections of MEPs and suchlike and thus is in need of revision.

Julian has looked on the Green Party website and found a model constitution on there. It is eight pages long and appears to be very thorough. It seems to cover everything we need for a local party, covering all aspects of party requirements. Julian will amend it as appropriate and add the relevant details and will then circulate to all members for comment.

The current constitution can only be changed at the Annual General Meeting or at an Extraordinary General Meeting. Paul suggests carrying out the revisions then calling the March meeting an EGM for the new constitution to be discussed, ratified and adopted if agreed.

2. General Election Candidate Update

Chelmsford

Paul reported that central Green Party required signed forms for the Chelmsford General Election Candidate. Reza Hossain is the candidate and his details have been uploaded accordingly. Reza reports that he has started to receive communications from central party regarding General Election matters.

Brentwood + Ongar

We ran two selection processes in the autumn of 2022 to find a candidate for the Brentwood + Ongar constituency. No interested parties came forward, so there isn't currently a candidate in

place. James Vessy-Miller, Julian and Paul have been discussing the situation. James was previously the paid regional co-ordinator for the East of England Green Parties. He spent some time explaining the national position.

The Green Party is intending to stand a full slate of candidates in the forthcoming General Election, whenever that comes. In other words, the intention is to have a candidate in every seat in England and Wales. When it comes to campaigning, the party will focus on four Target-to-Win seats – Brighton Pavilion (Sian Berry), Bristol Central (Carla Denyer), Waveny Valley (Adrian Ramsey) and North Herefordshire (Ellie Chowns). Everywhere else will stand paper candidates to give everyone their democratic right to vote for the party they want. It is very important for everyone to have a party on the ballot that shares their beliefs and values. No specific canvassing will be undertaken in these seats. The national party has a pool of people who are willing to stand in seats where the local party has been unable to find a candidate from their own members.

James asked if we had moved over to the national selection process yet for the Brentwood + Ongar constituency. Julian said we hadn't yet done that but would be if no local candidate could be found. James suggested that central party would be offering that as the first option.

The second option would be to run a selection process again as everyone felt it would be better to have a local candidate, even if it is a paper candidate. James says that a Southend Green Party Member, Reece Learnmouth, would be interested in standing in Brentwood + Ongar. When Reece arrived at the meeting he explained that while he currently lives in Southend he grew up in Brentwood and is currently working in Brentwood in a Health Care capacity, so is very familiar with the area. It was generally agreed that he would be a good option for Brentwood + Ongar.

Julian was previously the Election Returning Officer (ERO) for the B+CGP but feels that with his current medical issues it would be prudent for him to be assisted in this role. James offered to help as he has undertaken this role for other parties. To this end he will be given access to the B+CGP Action Network to access members contact details.

Paul said he has nominating rights for Brentwood and would be happy to carry on as Election Agent for Brentwood.

James asked if the branch was solvent to cover candidates deposits. Paul said he thinks so as there are issues ongoing in accessing the bank account. These issues are in the process of being addressed. He said that previously we had looked for donations from the local members and had not previously had any problems covering the deposits.

3. Brentwood Council Elections

Due to boundary changes the Brentwood Borough Council will be formed from 13 wards with 39 seats up for election, an increase of two seats. All of these seats will be up for election in May 2024, and James reiterated that the national party is very keen to stand candidates in every seat if possible, aware that most of these will be paper candidates.

For the new members benefit, Paul explained that paper candidates are where the candidate stands in name only. There are no costs involved and the covid related election change of only requiring two nominees has been retained. It is simply filling out the nomination form and handing it in. It was pointed out that the candidates address doesn't have to be made public either. For James' benefit Paul explained that Brentwood Borough Council is currently on a knife

edge with the Tories having 18 councillors, and a Lib-Dem/Labour alliance having 19. The Leader of the Council is a Lib-Dem, the Mayor is Labour. Paul has legitimate concerns that the balance could be upset if candidates are not strategically placed, potentially allowing the Tories to regain control. We have previously stood in wards where we wouldn't upset the Labour vote and attempts to form progressive alliances with the Lib-Dems have met with little success.

James suggested that experience nationally didn't reflect this, hence their desire to field candidates in every seat possible. He felt that Labour voters tended not to give their votes away to the Green Party and that more "protest votes" came from previously Tory voting constituents. In his local area (Southend) they had struggled to stand anyone and were also worried about splitting the left vote and their credibility overall. They started to stand in every seat and from that have now got one Councillor and have good prospects in two more seats off the back of this.

It was also suggested that standing a full slate of candidates in every seat marks us out as a serious party worthy of consideration. Reece said that worries about splitting the Left vote are largely unnecessary as the Green Party is the only viable left wing party. Labour have moved very close to the centre with the Tories, Lib-Dems aren't left wing at all. James mentioned that we are the only party with a serious left-wing and environmental agenda and we can only get closer to power under our current election system by standing everywhere.

As a baseline we will target finding thirteen candidates in order to place one in each ward.

4. AOB

Julian thanked Reece and the three new members for coming along.

James said that they won a seat at Leigh-on-Sea because of volunteers, and that everything depends upon good numbers of volunteers. We will have a zoom meeting to discuss volunteer needs.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be an EGM in order to discuss the revised constitution and will be at 19:30hrs on Wednesday 27th March 2024. It will be a hybrid meeting at the Chicken + Frog Bookshop, Brentwood and zoom.

A social Green Drinks is provisionally booked for Wednesday 28th February 2024 and The Essex Arms next to Brentwood Station has been suggested as a venue, all TBC.

Meeting finished at 20:50.

Julian Goode, Brentwood + Chelmsford Green Party Chair

David Hale, Brentwood + Chelmsford Green Party Secretary