

Why we need more council candidates

When we debate party policy, strategy or election tactics, questions about what might attract or put off voters often – and rightly – come up. But there's one sure-fire, 100% guaranteed, rock-solid way of repelling voters from us, and it's one we use far too often. It's not having a Liberal Democrat on the ballot paper. Zero votes for the party guaranteed.

Both Labour and the Conservatives, for example, get very close now to having a full slate of candidates in local elections. Despite improvements in recent years, we are still lagging a long way behind, and not yet back to where we used to be. So **we know we can do better – because we have.**

Even in wards where multiple seats are up for election and where we stand someone but not a full slate it is still a problem – as we're still forcing people to vote for someone other than us.

With the important exception of STV elections in Scotland, of course, where the way the voting system works means standing 'too many' candidates harms our election chances in a way that doesn't happen under first past the post. So in Scotland, it's at least one candidate in each ward that's the equivalent of the full slates we should be aiming for elsewhere.

Of the council seats coming up in May, we fought 63% of them in England and Wales last time out, and we had at least one candidate in 73% of Scottish wards. Those numbers are on the up – but still short of where we want to be. Remember – every single voter gets a ballot paper, showing them whether we are standing or not.

Standing candidates isn't only about credibility and relevance. It's also the way to get more people into the habit of regularly voting for the Liberal Democrats – a crucial step in building the sort of larger core vote for the party that will help us succeed more often.

And you never quite know when putting up more candidates, or failing to do so, will turn out to be rather more important than you thought at that election.

That after all is just what happened in **North Shropshire**. Back in spring 2021, the **local party successfully put great effort into increasing its number of candidates**. Then when an unexpected Parliamentary by-election took place, that **boost in our local credibility – and the improved bar chart it provided – was vital for Helen Morgan's campaign**. A clear cut case of us making our own luck.

Where our candidate numbers have increased in the last few years, it's notable that this has happened across the board – from weaker local parties through to the strongest. So whatever your local situation, if you have elections coming up this May, let's all do our best to make it a record-breaking one for the number of candidates.

There's [a great video from Daisy Cooper about how to find candidates here](#) and there is also [Lighthouse training that shows you how to make use of its data to find more candidates](#) (scroll down to 'managing candidates & selections'). ALDC also has an [approval and selection toolkit](#) to help.

Good luck with your candidate numbers and let's make this May a record-breaking one for the party.

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Author:

WATCH: Britain needs a party prepared to listen

Boris Johnson's failure to defend our children's education meant that his Government spent the same amount in one month on Eat Out To Help Out as in a whole year for our children's school catch-up.

Imagine a future where our children's education is a priority. Where schools raise their mental well-being and their maths grades. Where they can excel at English and find their talent for music or sport. Where they grow into happy, healthy, adults.

We all fear that in the end, it will be our children who have paid the price of this pandemic."

Ed Davey

The Liberal Democrats are calling for a £15 billion package of education catch-up funding, as recommended by the Government's former Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins.

As part of this, the party is calling for a £5 billion programme of Catch-Up Vouchers for every school child, putting the money directly into parents' hands to spend on whatever their children need most: tutoring in reading, writing or maths; music lessons; swimming classes or other physical education.

We heard that loud and clear on the doorsteps of Chesham and Amersham and North Shropshire. They told us that too often this Government hasn't listened, has taken people for granted, has ignored the people who work hard, and pay taxes.

When we won the Chesham and Amersham and North Shropshire by-elections, people told us Boris Johnson was taking them for granted. They told us they'd finally been listened to. Britain needs a party prepared to listen.

It is time Boris Johnson's Conservatives stopped taking people for granted, time people got a fairer deal, time we guaranteed a better life for future generations.

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[Spring Conference motion selection 2022](#)

The Federal Conference Committee (FCC) met on Saturday, 15th January to start its work on the **final agenda for Spring 2022 Conference**, which will be taking place virtually via the Hopin platform.

If you haven't yet registered for Conference, I would recommend doing so [here](#).

We've had a few departures from the FCC in the last few months and [welcomed two new members](#). Jennie Rigg ceased being the English Party's Representative to the FCC and Jenni Lang stepped down as the Scottish Party Representative after becoming the Convenor of the Scottish Liberal Democrats. I would like to place on record our thanks for their service to the FCC, they will be missed, and we would like to wish them all the very best for the future. We welcomed Matt McLaren as our new English Party Rep and Paul McGarry as our new Scottish Party Rep to the committee.

The FCC wants to thank the Conference Office for the amazing work that they do. We are always so grateful to them for their hard work.

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[What we must do next to learn the](#)

Lessons of 2019

The headline “two new MPs so far in this Parliament” is a welcome one. Winning, especially winning with record swings, is what we all want.

Underneath the headline is a lot of hard work, plenty of tough decisions, and a drive to improve. **We should all be thankful to our activists, staff and supporters.**

It is clear to me that the diagnosis and recommendations [my team and I set out](#) after the failures of 2019 were right, and that [they are being taken seriously](#). Not least among them was that a Federal Board of 41 members cannot, and should not, be the clear leadership team we need to steer our party and help us all win elections. Something of that size is a talking shop, and talking shops are neither democratic nor effective.

I therefore welcome the Federal Board’s motion to Spring Conference setting out options for reforming the structure of the Board.

My thanks to those [who took part in the supporting consultation](#) – collectively you have been clear that it is time for change. This feedback was crucial in helping the Board refine our options to a sensible number for consideration. With limited time, not all ideas could be brought to the floor.

Conference is being asked to choose between three options for change, and then finally between reform and the status quo.

As you can see (below) from the proposed set-up of a new Board, the options deliberately ensure key voices from across the party – geographically, demographically and in other respects – are built in.

I am pleased that the reform options presented address the concerns highlighted in my review. The options provide for a smaller, more nimble leadership team.

They also **retain the democratic selection we cherish while clarifying responsibilities**, individual and collective.

I see in these options a chance to better encourage cooperation across the party. To build a real leadership team. Only when we have that team can our leaders be held collectively accountable by members: currently a missing ingredient.

That accountability makes for a better democracy for members. Too much power, now, is wielded outside of our official structures, and so outside of accountability.

I look forward to a rigorous, healthy debate at Conference. This is a complex question and I will be listening hard to colleagues and friends to help make my own decision. My principles will be **democracy, accountability,**

electability, and not letting the best be the enemy of the good.

Organisational change is not easy. For us, though, it is necessary.

Do see below for a quick summary of the options coming, in more detail, to Spring Conference.

What a reformed Board would look like: key points

The smaller, reformed Board under these proposals would consist of:

- The President, who shall act as its Chair;
- The Leader;
- The Chair of the English Party, the Convenor of the Scottish Party and the President of the Welsh Party;
- The Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities;
- Three people who shall be party members elected by all members of the Party except that persons who, at the date of the close of nominations for election under this paragraph, are members of Parliamentary Parties set out in Article 17 shall not be eligible to be candidates for election under this paragraph. Casual vacancies amongst this group shall be filled in accordance with the election regulations;
- A Vice-Chair of the Federal Policy Committee;
- The Chairs of the Federal Conference Committee, the Federal Communications and Elections Committee, the Federal Finance and Resources Committee and the Federal People Development Committee;
- The Chair of the Young Liberals; and
- A principal local authority councillor, elected Mayor or Police and Crime Commissioner, elected by the principal local authority councillors, elected Mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners of the Party.

Others would also be invited to Board meetings where applicable, such as a staff representative and the Chief Whip for topics that particularly affect staff or interact with our MPs respectively.

It's important to note how many of the roles listed are already elected by party members, given direct accountability:

- The Party Leader, President and Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities are all elected by all party members; and
- The Scottish Convenor is elected by all members in Scotland, the Welsh President is elected by all members in Wales, the Chair of Young Liberals is elected by all Young Liberals members, that the councillor representative is elected by all councillors, and that the Chair of Federal Conference Committee (FCC) has to come from the FCC members elected by all party members.

Conference will also be asked to choose an option for holding the Board to account, with options including a relatively small 'scrutiny committee' model

of less than 20 members, a larger 'Party Council' model of about 40 members, or direct oversight by Conference itself alone.

More details of these options are in the full motion which will appear in the conference agenda.

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[February bulk-buy deal](#)

The LDHQ Campaigns & Elections Team are running a rolling programme of bulk-buy deals.

This month's bulk-buy deal is on an A3 Focus leaflet.

This should be your last 'Focus' branded leaflet, before you head into the election period. Include a couple of key local stories, but don't forget to have your strong squeeze and attack messages as well.

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