

**MINUTES** of the meeting of Torridge Green Party held on Saturday, 13th May at 2.30 pm at the Pannier Pantry in Bideford.

**PRESENT** Kirstin Smith, John Sanders, Peter Hames, Marcus Alexander, Cathrine Simmons, Lorraine Drake, Rosemary Gent, Tracey Beresford, Pauline Rogers, Keith Funnell, Peter Christie, Ruth Funnell

**1. APOLOGIES** Gillian Stevens, Wendy Lo-Vel, John Puddy, John Simmons, Colin Jones, Huw Thomas

## **2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MARCH 20TH**

These were agreed to be a correct record

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising not already on the Agenda

## **4. REPORTS**

**a) Treasurer:** Cathrine reported that there had been no change in our bank balance of £2397.24. She thanked Keith and Peter Christie who had paid for election leaflets from their own pockets.

**b) Press:** Peter Hames said the Journal had got our election result wrong, stating that we had two seats when we now have four. Ruth suggested that this might be worth a letter to correct the record. She also commented that the Gazette had made almost no mention of the elections before the vote and none at all afterwards.

**c) Membership:** Rosemary reported that we have two new members bringing our total to 106. She does not know how many have ceased to be members. Marcus said he can set up a regular report of who has left on Action Network. Rosemary will find this useful.

**d) Webmaster:** Colin sent in a report. The website hosted a page on the elections and another with all the candidates' details. He also posted a "congratulations" page following the election. He will shortly rework the "People" page with our new councillors.

On Facebook he ran a campaign of the candidates' pictures and statements twice daily for about ten days and then more concentrated over the few days before the election. In the last twenty eight days we reached 741 hits and have more than ten new followers. Colin assumes there was more engagement over the election period. Our top post was "Congratulations Huw" which reached 198.

## **5. FEEDBACK FROM COUNCILLORS**

a) **District Council**: Peter Christie said the four Greens have formed a group with Carl Hawkins and Len Ford. The Council is likely to be Independent led but the "Green Group" should have two seats on the C and R Committee and one and a half on Planning, the latter could hopefully be resolved into two seats. Committee members will be decided at the Council meeting on Wednesday 17th May.

Peter C has been in contact with Ricky Knight (North Devon) about the Local Plan. Ricky looks likely to Chair the Climate Committee on North Devon.

Peter Hames hopes to be Lead Member for Climate Change on TDC and to be elected Northam Mayor.

b) **Littleham Parish**: Rosemary reported that the Parish held a public meeting to which the TDC Planning Officer came which had a large attendance.

## **6. DISTRICT COUNCIL AND PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL ELECTIONS**

Keith reported delight that we now have four DC Councillors plus a third Town Councillor (Wendy Lo-Vel on Northam) and a third Parish Councillor (Colin Jones on Dolton). He thanked all those who had helped with leaflet delivery.

The overall structure of the District Council has changed. As well as two more Greens, there are eight Lib Dems instead of two and the Conservatives are down three to six. There are sixteen independents.

In the rest of Devon, Greens did well with three on North Devon, six on West Devon and in Exeter forming the opposition to Labour. Only Teignbridge and Torbay lack a Green Councillor.

Marcus talked about the success of Caz in North Devon. He is nineteen years old and, while he did not win, he gained a very respectable vote and put a video on Instagram which gained 20,000 views. This seems a very good way of getting our message across to voters in future. Marcus is keen to form a sub group of young Greens from both North and Torridge who could plan how to get a better visibility online as this will be vital for future campaigns.

Ruth commented that an anti racism group had taken the trouble to leaflet Bideford South, where there were two Britain First candidates, to explain what they stood for and pointing out the origins of the party with Oswald Moseley. They came bottom of the poll.

Keith said there is a strong likelihood of a by election before 2027 looking at the health of some Councillors. The County Council Elections will be in 2025 and we need a clear strategy for then.

We will need to choose a Parliamentary Candidate in the Autumn in readiness for a General Election in 2024. Tragically one of the potential candidates,

Neil Jameson, died suddenly a few weeks ago. It was agreed that we need a candidate rather than standing aside. Nationally the entitlement to Party Political Broadcasts and more general media exposure depends on the number of candidates a party has. We get free delivery to every constituent of our leaflet giving a coverage we could never achieve ourselves in such a rural area. If we stood aside, where other parties have a better chance, we will never get Green representation. Ruth said we should trust the voters to do the tactical voting, not impose it from above.

## **7. GREEN EVENTS**

**Climate forum:** Rosemary reported back on the Climate Forum saying that Bratton Fleming and Georgeham are bringing in community energy. The biggest problem is capacity on the grid with the government admitting that there is currently a five year delay in getting linked in to the National Grid. Bideford has looked at a solar farm and had similar issues. Donna Sibley (Climate Change Officer) is sending out a questionnaire to PCs and TCs re community energy and charging points for electric vehicles.

**Green Gathering:** Cathrine offered her house and garden for a Green Gathering and she was thanked and a date set for Sunday, July 22nd from 3 pm with a bric a brac stall as a fundraiser. It will be an opportunity for members to get together and perhaps bring along interested supporters.

**Cyclecades:** In response to a suggestion of tables in towns, Ruth said the Cyclecades we have had in the past always get a good reaction and make people smile. We could plan to hold these around future elections in the centres of Bideford, Torrington and Holsworthy at least.

**Hartland Group** Kirstin offered to arrange a meeting in the Hartland ward for GP members and supporters as it can be difficult for people at that distance to get to Bideford meetings. Ruth thanked her and said she would email her a list of members there so she can contact them.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Peter Christie reported that the Bridge Trust has made a grant of £100,000 to help with the cost of a refurbish of the play area in Victoria Park.

## **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This will be on Saturday 1st July at 2.30 pm at The Pannier Pantry on the corner of Bridgeland Street and The Quay.