**Chair’s report for Montgomeryshire Liberal Democrats November 2023**

The local party’s organisation and compliance with Liberal Democrat procedures remain in good order. A model for membership development was tried in one town, proving itself ripe for adoption elsewhere in the constituency. The team has taken a break from campaigning in what is of late a rare non-election year. That said, the outstanding enthusiasm and commitment of every single one of our councillors has been an excellent advert for the party.

**Management of the party**

The Executive Committee (Vice Chair Richard Derricutt, Treasurer David Collington, Secretary Cynthia Jones, Powys County Council representatives David Selby and Richard Church, Membership Secretary Tim Saul, and Ordinary Members Ric Wegener, Robert Williams, Simon Spencer, Stef Kay and Glyn Preston) has met monthly. Stef Kay and Richard Derricutt had to step down part way through the year; many thanks to them for their contributions and notably to Richard for reporting back on the monthly Moving Forward Seat Briefings from the federal party and for gathering our KPI’s.

The local party is compliant with party procedures and election law - software usage and financial reporting being of the utmost importance in this regard. Our online filing system has been thoroughly reorganised for more efficient shared working. Ric Wegener and the Chair completed an outline five-year campaign plan for the party, to be used as a working document. The first annual plan was adopted at a meeting in Newtown, during which we were privileged to receive campaign training session from Asssociation of Liberal Democrat Councillors and Campaigners (ALDC) trainer Heather Kidd. Dr Simon Spencer reconvened the candidate selection committee after the Chair regretfully stepped down from the candidacy due to personal circumstances. Before the committee was able to complete its work, the federal party invoked emergency procedures which leaves the selection in the hands of the Chair. A potential local candidate, approved of by all Exec members, is expected to be announced in January 2024.

Members have received email news and two hard copy newsletters. Open gardens, social gatherings and team delivery sessions have been held in Llanfyllin, Llanidloes, Newtown and Welshpool.

**County Councillors**

Councillors Danny Bebb, Richard Church, Kelly Healy, Adam Kennerley, Gareth Morgan, Glyn Preston, Carole Robinson and David Selby are a credit to us all. They all make themselves readily available to residents of their ward, contribute to county council committees and take an active part in the Lib Dem group’s shared endeavours. Richard Church and David Selby carry out their duties as cabinet portfolio holders with the seriousness, wisdom and commitment that we would all hope to see from politicians in administration but so rarely do; the same goes for Adam Kennerley as a cabinet assistant with additional responsiilities but no additional remuneration. The scandalous underfunding of local government makes this an exceedingly difficult time to be in administration and has made for some unfavourable headline news. The financial position will be worse again next year and we doubtless face some difficult and unpopular decisions. Nevertheless, our councillors have managed to keep PCC books in the black, a not inconsiderable achievement, and progress some Lib Dem priorities such as the public transport review and fairer mileage rates for care workers. Much work was undertaken in 2023 to put in place good group communications among councillors and to build team cohesion, which has been successful.

**Policy development**

A group of members continues to be available to county councillors for policy support as needed. County councillors themselves have begun forming working groups to support portfolio holders within the cabinet; Glyn Preston and Richard Church have taken on this responsibility for education, a valuable contribution given the schools reorganisation in our constituency. Party members continue to research renewable energy, public transport and agriculture. A major focus has been the Montgomery Canal, which has received Levelling Up funding from UK Govt. While dredging work is vital to the survival of the canal, the failure of ‘offline’ reserves to mitigate species losses in areas opened up to boat traffic elsewhere has caused concerns for the wildlife in the aquatic haven that is the Monty. Mont Lib Dems have brought together an expert group of ecologists to provide guidance and additional oversight of the work to ensure maximum return for nature as well as people from the public purse. Particular thanks are due to Cllr Adam Kennerley for spearheading this work within the county council in his role as Cabinet Assistant for Nature.

**Coordination with other local parties**

County councillors continue to work productively and closely with Brecon and Radnorshire councillors, as detailed above. Mont members joined the recent campaigns in Talybont and Crickhowell that returned three Lib Dem councillors to the group, with convincing margins. The Chair maintains good working relations with B&R, N and S Shropshire, and Wrexham and Clwyd South. Several of our members supported county council by-elections in Shropshire. We welcome in Glyndŵr members to Mont at this year’s AGM, as a result of the boundary changes, and look forward to a social with them and other Wrexham members in January.

**The future**

Now that activists have enjoyed a breather from campaigning, it is time to step up the pace. Our administration has been improved this year, providing a good base for expansion of activity. An election must be called before January 2025 and the likelihood is that it will fall either in May or October. Membership and activist recruitment, fundraising, doorstep activity and literature production need to ramp up from January. Member newsletters need to be produced to an established timetable. The nascent literature production unit needs to be fully developed. A long and short election campaign plan has been produced; we must now put it into action.

**Thanks**

The Chair would like to thank the executive members for their conscientiousness in attending to the good governance of the party and wise expenditure of members’ much valued contributions, most notably Treasurer Dave Collington, Secretary Cynthia Jones and Membership Secretary Tim Saul; county councillors for their work; party members for their generous donations of both money and time, here a special mention to Patrick Adams and Simon Spencer for their research support and to Ric Wegener for planning; and the organisers of social gatherings, particularly Nick Semper, Tim Saul and Simon Spencer.