

Minutes of Ipswich Liberal Democrats Annual General Meeting

27th November 2025

Apologies: Lucy Drake, Trevor Powell, Robin Whitmore, Timothy Oxborrow, Oliver Holmes

The Chair, Martin Pakes, opened the meeting, noting that Zoom AI would be used to take the minutes.

The minutes for the 2024 AGM, held on 6th Jan 2025, were considered and amended to include apologies from Andy Campbell.

Chair's / Campaign Report

The year had been dominated by the twin initiatives of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution (Norfolk / Suffolk Mayor). There was only one election because County elections were cancelled. We had a St Johns County By-election ably contested for us by Kelly Turner, who beat the Conservatives into last place. Labour narrowly retained the seat, with strong showings from both Reform and the Greens. There were other Suffolk by-elections, including a recent one in Copdock, where Reform beat the Lib Dems into second by a mere 23 votes. Given the fractured nature of the electorate, wins with 25% or less of the vote are very possible. Electoral pacts were very much outlawed by our Federal Party HQ. We would attempt to put up a candidate for every vacancy. There was some discussion about future local government boundaries.

Financial Report

Martin Hore outlined our overall healthy finances. The major income is regular donations by councillors and others and the major expenditure our one election in St Johns. Postage and printing outside elections were another expense. Our website and other systems were a regular outgoing back to the Federal party. Other costs were due to Regional and neighbouring Local Parties. Two post-election social events were also held. As a piece of administrative business, the 2024 Accounts were available for inspection and adopted. Thanks were voted to Martin Hore for his contribution.

Membership

Councillor Tim Lockington welcomed 4 new members over the last two months, including at least one from the Bangladeshi community.

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Mayoral Election

A Norfolk / Suffolk Mayoral election was anticipated for May 2026, with our candidate Kevin Keable due to contest the position. Mayoral debates, especially one with an environmental focus, were also expected.

Forthcoming elections

There would be a normal Ipswich Borough Council (one-third, 16 wards) election in May 2026. There was a possibility of a simultaneous (postponed from 2024) County council election (12 Ipswich electoral divisions, 2 councillors each), on new division boundaries.

Local Government Reorganisation

The shape of new unitary Suffolk's local government was still uncertain. Ipswich would need a new body at the Parish level, likely called a Town council. Elections would be needed for both bodies, timetable and detailed makeup uncertain.

Borough Summary

Councillor Tim Lockington outlined our three Borough Councillors respective responsibilities. LGR was dominating, focused on the three-councils-in-Suffolk proposal that the Borough had pioneered. There were concerns about integration of functions after LGR. The major Lib Dem success for the year was to mobilise residents to oppose a change in residents parking, penalizing residents for owning larger cars. This was not going to be properly enforced and the Borough was compelled by the public reaction to withdraw the proposal.

County Summary

This was similarly dominated by LGR, with the ruling Conservatives pushing their one-County unitary proposal. Reform's rise through defections was a concern. Libraries were taken back in-house. Infrastructure to do primarily with Sizewell was another major topic of concern.

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Election of Officers

Malcolm Mitchell was re-elected as Honourary President and briefly took the chair for the Chair's election.

Martin Pakes was nominated for his final year as Chair by Nigel Fox, seconded by Inga Lockington and elected unopposed. He then re-took the chair.

Tim Lockington was nominated as Data Officer by Martin Hore, seconded by Malcom Mitchell and elected unopposed.

Martin Hore was willing to carry on as Treasurer, was nominated by Martin Pakes, seconded by Tim Lockington and was also unopposed.

Conrad Packwood was not present and would be asked if he wanted to continue as Diversity Officer.

Kathy Hamilton would continue as an Ordinary Member of the Executive.

Other officers would be co-opted as required. A particular need was for people willing to look after the website and social media accounts.

Martin Hore would pursue the usual swap of accounts for verification with Steve Card of Mid-Suffolk Local Party – this was approved.