

# Getting it right on Europe, how we run the party and on local candidates

## **The next steps in our European policy**

There's a lesson we should learn from Brexiters. It's that for most of the road to the tragedy of the 2016 referendum they weren't Brexiters but Euro-sceptics. For most of that time, they weren't campaigning for Brexit to happen tomorrow, but against a particular aspect of the EU. That is how they built up a broad coalition of support to get Brexit through.

In turn, we need to do the same in reverse – to recognise that even many Remainers are put off by 'let's rejoin the EU now!', but that even those who voted Leave can be won over by **campaigning issue by issue on the merits of cooperation with our neighbours.**

It's an approach that party members [overwhelmingly supported](#) in our recent (with a record-breaking response!) consultation.

At our spring federal conference, we'll be fleshing out the details of what this means when we debate a motion which [sets out our comprehensive plan to reconnect our political and trading relationship with Europe.](#)

## **Getting party reform right**

Our Federal Board is currently 41, which means we have **approximately one Federal Board member for every two members of Federal staff.** That isn't just a quixotic statistic, it's also a sign of something wrong with how the party's governance structures work.

As our [independent review of the 2019 election found](#):

"The lack of connection between operational, political and governing parts of the party has created structures which foster a lack of collaboration and isolated decision making";

"There is no clear 'leadership team' where the three pillars of the party – political, operational, federal – can make cohesive decisions, simply, quickly, and effectively. The Federal Board – 40+ members – is not, cannot, and should not be that team"; and

"The Federal Board was often a 'rubber-stamp' and is too large a group to be a realistic decision-making body."

That's why we've got a motion coming to this Spring conference that would instead give us a Board of 16, bringing together key decision makers across the party along with other **changes made to increase accountability and scrutiny of the new Board.** For example, the changes would also introduce a

new power of no-confidence in the President – so that if I go off the rails, I can be held properly to account.

Dorothy Thornhill, who led that review, has [written about why we need these reforms](#) and you can see the [full details in the Spring conference agenda](#).

Under the proposals, over 80% of Board members will be elected by party members – either in all-member elections (such as our elections for Leader and President) or in elections by parts of the party (such as all members in Wales elected the Welsh President, who will be on the Board). But in addition, our internal democracy will also be strengthened by making the Board more effective – because the more a Board is like a talking shop, the more power seeps elsewhere in practice.

**I hope you'll come to the debate on this**, which will be on the Friday night of our Spring federal conference. [You can register for conference here](#) (and it's only £5 for first-timers). Or [register here for the Conference Live event](#) being organised alongside it by ALDC.

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

---

## [Getting our technology and tools right: get in the know.](#)

Campaign Technology is one of the most important things for the Liberal Democrats to get right.

Whether it's canvassing apps, websites or even data entry, **we can't campaign effectively without the right tools and the right data.**

Over the last 18 months, the LDHQ technology team has been reviewing our data, technology and tools. We've also been gathering feedback from the people who use them to help us understand where the problems are at the moment.

That process has identified a number of problems with our current setup, including:

- We aren't getting value for money from our campaigning technology
- Our data quality is low and it is scattered across multiple systems
- Our websites are expensive, hard to maintain and out of date
- We can't give volunteers easy and high-quality information on how their teams are doing and their campaigns are going
- Our tools aren't easy for activists to use

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

---

## [Vice Presidential Election 2021 Declaration](#)

**Amna Ahmad has been elected and will take up the role of Vice President responsible for working with ethnic minority communities.**

Thank you to [Amna and all of the candidates](#) for taking part in the election. The [results can be found in full here](#).

As this was a by-election, **Amna's term will run until January 2023.**

### **More about Amna**

Amna was born in Lahore, Pakistan, and grew up on a council estate in London where she experienced the foster care system. She has a track record as a candidate for the Party, including a 2017 Westminster target seat campaign, and was our Shadow Refugee Minister that year.

She is a regular contributor to BBC Asian Network and has appeared in The Guardian, the Evening Standard, ITV News, and the BBC, amongst others. Professionally she is a campaigner working in healthcare policy.

Her [manifesto for the election](#) was clear:

“Time and time again, we hear that the reality of what ethnic minorities face in our party and in our politics does not match up to the principles we hold, and, as a party committed to equality, it is vital that we apply our values and make a change. I will provide the positive vision and leadership we need to move forward and make that happen.

As a former Lib Dem Parliamentary candidate, I have seen prejudice close-up, within British politics and, sadly, within our party. And I know that I'm not the only one. My experience led me to take time to reflect and then, at Harvard, I learnt from world leaders on race equality, collaborative working, and leadership. I want to translate my experience and learning into change for our party in the UK. As a starting point, we must implement the Alderdice Review recommendations.”

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

---

## [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.**

[Go to Source](#)

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.

[Go to Source](#)

Author: