

# Why we must stand in more council elections

The merits of standing in a council by-election we have a chance of winning are obvious. So too for wards which we might hope to win in the future and where the by-election is a chance to accelerate that progress.

But there are also **huge benefits in standing even in wards that we are not likely to win** for a very long time yet (if ever).

One set of benefits comes from the **opportunity to practice, train and learn**. Winning elections isn't easy and some of the skills required are very hard to pick up outside politics.

So we should be using every opportunity to add to our experience, try out things and get better.

Even if we don't do very much, or any, campaigning, there is still the **chance for a new election agent** to practice getting the paperwork right. Or to **take a new person out on their very first canvassing session**. Steps such as those are if anything easier in a 'no hope' by-election as the pressure is much less and so you can concentrate on the learning.

Those benefits are specific to by-elections on their own. There are other benefits too, which apply even if you've got other elections on the same day – and to non-target wards in the usual run of elections.,

First, **it's good for democracy**. Having different parties put up candidates is the necessary condition for voters to make choices between them. The mere act of having your name on the ballot paper is a contribution to making democracy function – and democracy could do with all the contributions we can give.

Second, **it's good for voters**. It's deeply frustrating for many voters when they turn up to vote and see their preferred party isn't on the ballot paper. They may just feel frustrated (and crikey, do they feel frustrated as I know having had the job of fielding such complaints from voters in the past). Or they may also blame the party for, in their eyes, treating them with disdain for not giving them a candidate to vote for. Frustration or frustration and disdain; either way, that's not how we should be leaving voters feeling.

Third, it's **good for the party**. One of the biggest challenges the Liberal Democrats face is **to build up a large group of loyal supporters who persistently support us**. Our core support is much smaller than that of our main rivals – and we suffer for it. It makes us more vulnerable to bad times. It means we have further to go and harder to work to get to the winning post than rival parties with larger core votes.

Yet the one sure way to ensure people don't become persistent supporters is to insist that they should not be allowed to vote for us thanks to not putting up a candidate. **No Liberal Democrat on the ballot paper means us**

**saying to voters: 'we refuse to let you be loyal supporters of us'.**

Standing also helps the party identify better where its support currently is, and isn't. Having a full slate of candidates across the board helps spot areas that can be promising to target and try to win in the future.

All of which is why even if being a candidate does not mean more than getting a name on a ballot paper, it's still a valuable contribution to make.

**Hundreds of party members do that every May and in between at by-elections – thank you.**

With next May's elections nearing, it's a terrific contribution you can make if you join them and ensure another vacancy has a Liberal Democrat name next to it come May.

And in the meantime, **let's contest as many council by-elections as possible.**

**There is lots of support and resources available, for everyone from a possible first-time candidate through to an experienced agent working in a marginal ward. Do [get in touch](#) if you'd like to know more about how to access this.**

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## **[International Aid: What Next](#)**

Catch up on our Webinar with Jeremy Purvis and Layla Moran on International Aid after the Conservatives cuts.

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## **[Meet your candidates for Vice President](#)**

Nominations closed for the Vice President with responsibility for Ethnic Minority election today at noon and six candidates had obtained enough nominations to appear on the ballot.

Those candidates\* are:

**Amna Ahmad** who was nominated by 52 members and 1 local party

**Roderick Lynch** who was nominated by 65 members and 1 SA0

**Tahir Maher** who was nominated by 13 members

**Julliet Makhapila** who was nominated by 23 members

**Rabi Martins** who was nominated by 7 members and 1 local party

**Marisha Ray** who was nominated by 55 members

*\*Candidates appear here in alphabetical order by surname.*

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## [Time for Conservative MPs to stand against sewage dumping](#)

We're calling out Conservative MPs that voted in favour of dumping sewage into rivers.

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## [Governance consultation 2021](#)

How the Party is run, by, and on behalf of, every member is fundamental to how successful we are at delivering our liberal vision of Britain.

The 2019 General Election Review (the Thornhill Review) set out how we must change in order to succeed at future elections. Since its publication, in many areas we have made strides, but there is still much to do.

A key recommendation was that we "Review ongoing governance" at all levels, including the Federal Board. On the Board it found that:

*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.*

These problems meant that decisions were taken in more fragmented and less accountable ways. A reformed Board, therefore, might therefore both improve decision making and also make it more accountable.

The review also identified a need to improve the coordination between different parts of the party so that, for example, different committees are more clearly working towards one overall strategy.

Turnout in the last Board election was around 10%, which suggests that greater clarity around the role of Board members would be helpful to get better engagement by and accountability to members.

A key distinction between members of the current Board is their remit. Some Board members have a specific portfolio, for instance the President is elected by party members to a job that includes chairing the Board, or the Young Liberal representative is elected by Young Liberal members to specifically add their perspective. Some Board members do not have a specific portfolio, but instead are elected to be 'Board members' in general. Currently, our Board is a hybrid: it has a mix of these types of members and the combination adds up to a large Board.

Therefore, this questionnaire is based around four different possible approaches:

- Retain the status quo – the current large hybrid Board model;
- Retain a hybrid model (portfolio holders plus non-portfolio members) but reduce the numbers of each to make for a smaller Board;
- Have a smaller Board, comprised of portfolio holders – with possibly an additional accountability structure to hold them to account in between conferences (this additional structure might be based on a Cabinet and full council model or on a Cabinet and scrutiny committee model); or
- Have a smaller Board, comprised of non-portfolio members.

This consultation is designed to help understand which options are most attractive to members and therefore to help boil down the wide range of possible solutions. Based on your feedback, the Board intends to bring at least one option for reform to the 2022 Spring Federal Conference.

**[You can take part in the consultation by responding to this survey](#)**. Before you do, you may want to **[read this summary of our current arrangements](#)**, or **come along to one of the consultative events:**

## **Events list**

Please note that this is a live events list and will be updated with new events as they are scheduled.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Register here!</b>
<b>An introduction to our current structures</b>	45 minute presentation and Q&A for members wanting to know more about our current structures. Led by our Company secretary, Jack Coulson.	18:00-19:00, Thursday 4th of November	<a href="#">Registration</a>
<b>Q&amp;A with Baroness Dorothy Thornhill and Party President Mark Pack (1)</b>	Join the author of the 2019 General Election review and President Mark Pack for a discussion of where the Party is and where we need to be doing.	20:00-21:00, Tuesday 9th of November	<a href="#">Registration</a>
<b>Board Surgery</b>	Join members of the Federal Board for its next surgery session. This will have a particular focus on governance reform but any and all questions welcome. If you would like to raise anything in advance, please contact <a href="mailto:jack.coulson@libdems.org.uk">jack.coulson@libdems.org.uk</a> .	18:00-19:00, Thursday the 11th of November	<a href="#">Registration</a>
<b>An introduction to our current structures (2)</b>	45 minute presentation and Q&A for members wanting to know more about our current structures. Led by our Company secretary, Jack Coulson.	18:00-19:00, Wednesday 17th of November	<a href="#">Registration</a>
<b>Q&amp;A with Baroness Dorothy Thornhill and Party President Mark Pack (2)</b>	Join the author of the 2019 General Election review and President Mark Pack for a discussion of where the Party is and where we need to be doing.	18:00-19:00, Monday 22nd of November	<a href="#">Registration</a>

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