

[Vote Amna Ahmad for Vice President](#)

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.

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[Party policy development this autumn](#)

The Federal Policy Committee has had a busy autumn, kicking off our **next programme of policy development work**.

We have spent some time over the last few months trying to understand the **party's key political priorities to win over the voters we need, and the right messages and supporting policies needed to achieve that** (recognising that detailed policy is not usually the thing that swings most voters). This has been the starting point for our latest programme of work.

At the heart of this is developing proposals for **'A fairer society'**, where people broadly see the system as fair, and there is much greater economic fairness. We advertised widely for party members to join the policy group to work on this and were very pleased that 255 applied to do so – with similar enthusiasm for other groups. We have appointed **Julia Goldsworthy, former MP for Falmouth & Camborne, to lead an excellent group here**; the group's remit and membership can be found (with those for the other groups too) at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/policy-working-groups>

A second key priority is setting out **our vision for a more caring society**, also flowing from research into priorities for our key voters. We have appointed **Baroness Judith Jolly to lead a policy group** developing proposals on this, including responding to the government's own plans for funding social care, and also incorporating ideas from our own **Commission on Carers set up last year by the Leader**.

A major interest of both our voters and also councillors, the Young Liberals, and others within the party, is how we can provide **more homes and improve the planning system**. Cllr Peter Thornton from Cumbria, will lead a group working **this through and developing proposals here**.

The **environment also remains of course a key issue** for Liberal Democrat members and voters, and on top of our existing extensive and very impressive proposals for tackling the climate emergency, **Richard Benwell is chairing a group developing ideas about the natural environment**. This group has been under way for some time, and like the other groups mentioned here, **FPC aims to bring proposals from it to autumn conference next year**.

Commitment to **early years care and education** has been a longstanding priority for us and was a major funding commitment at the last General Election. We have appointed **Cllr Dine Romero from Bath & NE Somerset to lead a group** looking at this area in further detail and to support an updated set of proposals.

The proposals for policy on the whole nature of public debate at the moment, were referred back from Conference in September to FPC. Following further discussion with the movers of the reference back, we plan to bring updated proposals to this spring conference.

FPC received a petition asking us to set up a policy working group on the party's policy on nuclear weapons; after discussion over a couple of meetings, we do not believe this is a priority area for FPC to focus its attentions at this time, and do not plan to do this.

At the heart of all of this, must lie our party's **underlying principles and values**. Our paper setting these out in today's context, which conference approved in September, resulted in a number of requests to help communicate these more widely across the party and beyond. Some work is under way to do this; in the meantime you might be interested to see this set out at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/a21-beliefs-and-values>

We have been working to make better links with the groups of party members interested in particular policy areas or groups (in party jargon variously known as SAOs, AOs, party bodies, and others). We have appointed a number of **FPC members as part of the Party Bodies Forum**, set up this year to bring these groups together, to facilitate two-way discussion with them about policy development progress and plans. Over the summer, for example, we were glad to **consult the PBF about our planned future policy development programme set out above, and looking forward to continuing to work more closely with them in the future**.

As party members will hopefully will be aware, we are currently consulting all members about the **future direction of our policy on Europe** (an email was sent to all members last week). Conference has made the decision for us to support a **long-term aim of being a member of the EU again, and a policy group chaired by Duncan Brack is developing proposals on a rolling basis in support of this**. Conference this autumn approved plans for **immediately improving cultural and educational ties**, and the group is currently working on plans for our future trading relationship, to bring to Conference next year. **Please do contribute to the consultation**.

FPC is always keen to promote as many party members as possible participating in policy discussion, and we have been discussing some other ideas for taking

this forward which we hope will come to fruition over the next few months.

Last and by no means least, we have **begun planning for the manifesto for the next General Election**, which could be held as early as spring 2023. We have appointed **(Lord) Dick Newby to chair a group responsible for leading its drafting**, which FPC will discuss regularly over the coming months. It's worth perhaps saying that because of the way we as a party develop policy, the main task of writing our manifesto is to shape our existing ideas and well-established body of policy into an appealing pitch to the electorate – and not, as it's sometimes seen, especially in other parties, as simply starting building a whole new set of policies from a blank sheet of paper.

We're conscious that the actual proposals in our manifesto document at the last General Election, and ones before that, were very well received, taking plaudits from a wide range of different directions for its proposals both for the health of the economy generally, and specifically to help the least well off. It scored less well amongst those who didn't actually sit down to read it, in setting out an appealing top line message which drew its proposals together. This will be an important priority this time, and in support of this a small sub-group of FPC members will be doing some intensive work, working with others in the party, to look at some of the likely **key messaging challenges of the next General Election**, to feed into this.

So as you can tell this is mostly a time of starting off new projects for policy development. Over the next few months FPC and the policy working groups will be working hard on these, so that we can bring proposals on them to Conference to debate in 2022. **Our firm aim is that we should develop and bring forward proposals which help us appeal to key voters.**

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[Omicron variant: Clinically Extremely Vulnerable must not be ignored any longer](#)

The Liberal Democrats have today called for urgent measures to support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV), including a formal **return and improvement of the shielding programme.**

The Government has so far **failed to announce any specific measures** for those who were classed as CEV in spite of their increased risk of serious illness from Covid. It comes after two cases of the newly discovered 'Omicron' variant of Covid were reported in the UK.

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable are incredibly worried”

[Daisy Cooper](#)

The Liberal Democrats are calling for a **five-point action plan to support the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable**. This would include the return of official centralised guidance, so that the 3.8 million vulnerable people on the ‘Shielded Patient List’ have clarity on what is safe for them to do and where to seek the tailored clinical advice and support they need.

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[Apply now for the 2022 Campaign Innovation Fund](#)

After a successful first year, where we donated £4000 to campaigners across the country, applications for the 2022 elections Campaign Innovation Fund are now open.

This year, we are focusing on digital campaigning, to find out the best way to campaign online.

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[Learn more about why Rabi Martins is standing to be Vice President](#)

Let’s Make Lib Dems BME Friendly – It’s Not What We Do, But How We Do It That Counts

Below is an outline of why I am standing for Vice President.

I am an established Race Equality and Diversity campaigner with a Business Management background and an established record of striving for Race Equity across the Party. In the course of my 25 years as Party member I have served on the Federal Policy Committee, International Relations Committee, been Secretary of the PCA, vice chair of EMLD and served as a Regional Diversity Champion. I am also Secretary of Lib Dem Friends of India. It is this personal history that accounts for my reputation as a Community Champion within the Party and my high profile amongst BME communities nationally.

In 2001 at the request of the then Party President Lord Dholakia I chaired the first Race Equality Group in the Party and produced a report with guidelines on what the Party should do to attract support from Ethnic Minority (BME) Communities. It recommended establishing an Ethnic Minority Election Task Force (EMETF). This was done and soon after we elected our first BME MP. Unfortunately EMETF was killed off by the Party machine.

In 2018 Lord Alderdice undertook a comprehensive review on the same subject. His study concluded that "Despite our clear liberal values, rejecting all forms of prejudice and inequality, the Party has failed to engage sufficiently with BaME communities".

That is precisely what I and others who are campaigning to make our Party more inclusive have been saying for years. By and large our messages fell on deaf ears. As a consequence several talented highly capable politically active BME individuals became disillusioned, felt undervalued and left the Party. But I chose to stay on and fight. I am glad I did because I now have one more chance to change things. So I promise you if I am elected Vice President and charged with the responsibility of making Lib Dems more appealing to individuals from BME Communities I will make do everything in my power to achieve that outcome.

Doing this will need member support. So I will closely work with local parties in England, Scotland and Wales to develop a plan for attracting individuals and groups from BME Communities who will act as ambassadors within their respective catchment areas. I know it can be done because I did it in Watford. Indeed I consider it my prime responsibility to drive this change.

This is my three point plan to Kick Start my plan:

1. Establish a BME Engagement Consultative Group made up of BME Councillors and Activists from England, Scotland and Wales and task the group with devising a plan to implement the recommendations in the Alderdice Review
2. Devise a BME Engagement Framework for local Parties in our Target Constituencies and in Councils with significant BME populations
3. In consultation with the Leaders Office, Campaign Team and Communications Office produce a special BME Media plan

I know I can rely on our members to help me achieve our common inclusivity goals for the Party.

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