

Policy Officer Report

Young Liberals Summer Conference 2024

What a year! Whilst all politicians were transfixed on the actions of the Young Liberals Policy Officer, some other minor events happened, including a General Election. Below, please find a report on the things that have gone well, and those which I will continue to work on in the last few months of my tenure, and work with my successor on.

What went well

Young Liberal Conferences

We ran a successful Winter Conference in Autumn, with strong debates and positive feedback! With the constructive feedback we received, I've worked to improve delivery of this conference, including with higher vetting for chairs and more guidance for chairs and aides. I hope that you will all enjoy the Summer Conference.

Federal Autumn Conference

At this upcoming Conference, I'm pleased to announce that Young Liberals will be taking two motions to conference! This is great news for us post-General Election, as it will show the party that the Young Liberals have the influence to shape the party.

At the time of writing this, the full content of motions has not been submitted, and we will continue to monitor developments to ensure that the Liberal Democrats continue to being a force in Parliament that looks out for young people and students.

General Election

The first thing to say, is a congratulations to all the campaigns-oriented staff and volunteers. Whilst policy is of course the absolute most important side of politics, the incredible campaigning from teams across the Young Liberals, HQ and local parties has led to our best ever result.

On the policy front, I was delighted to use my newfound voting powers to influence policy outcomes. On the whole, the manifesto was incredibly well received by Young Liberals, party members and voters (especially our policies on social care and health).

FPC worked very well together, and many of our policies were uncontroversial. The only area where a tight vote was held (where we disagreed agreeably), was on housing and the inclusion of 380,000 homes target in the manifesto. I'm pleased to say this was included, with a narrow 7-9 vote (with a few abstentions). This makes the Lib Dems the most ambitious party on house building!

Other work

I was pleased to support other Executive Offices, including the International, Comms and Events Offices, as well as the Chair.

On the Federal Policy Committee, much focus has been on the General Election. I will continue to be a voice for Young Liberals and our policies, on the following working groups, and have supported YLers who wanted support, in applying to join these new working groups

- Science, Tech and Innovation
- Future of Work
- Opportunities, Skills and Training
- Climate Change (to be created)
- Policy Review (to be created)

What needs work

Young Liberals Conferences

There is one area that continues to be a drawback for policy and conferences - inclusion.

- New members
 - Some of the activity in conference, including procedural motions, chairing and aiding and submitting policies, has often been difficult for new members to engage with, because of barriers to entry including specific formats for policy motions and the constitution sometimes being difficult to understand.
 - To try and rectify this, I've created some short briefing documents at this conference. Moving forward, working with my successor too, I will make sure to have more sessions ahead of conferences, to brief new conference attendees on how to participate effectively.
- Women
 - Whilst activity at Conference is often demographically, proportionally representative, there is a disproportionately low number of women who participate, particularly in policy-related activity. I will be discussing with our new Women's Rep, as well as the Policy Committee, on how we can turn this round.

Federal Spring Conference

You may have noticed that Young Liberals had no direct policy presence at the Federal Conference in Spring. Whilst my defence for this is that the agenda, being a pre-General Election conference, was dominated by PPC and MP motions (very validly), it is a learning point in that, moving forward, it may help to consider how the Young Liberals can better create motions that support other parts of the party (in this case, the parliamentary party).

Other

I believe there is further scope to use the Policy Office to greater effect, especially in providing policy briefing services for Lib Dems in National, Regional and Local authorities, and in providing campaigns that allow YL to generate awareness and revenue for us. I've started work on such an activity with the Lib Dem European Group, but this is something that might be worth scaling up.