

CAMPAIGNING IN YOUR COMMUNITY



MARK PACK AND
SHAUN ROBERTS



£4



THANKS

This book builds on a series of publications stretching over nearly forty years, and in particular works authored or co-authored by Tony Greaves, Hywel Morgan, Candy Piercy, Chris Rennard, John Smithson and Hilary Stephenson. Roger Hayes kindly gave his time for a conversation that helped crystallise many of the thoughts about how those previous works could best be drawn on and refined for the contemporary setting,

whilst working with Lynne Featherstone on a series of local campaigns has helped root abstract ideas in a practical test bed of what does and doesn't change communities and win political support.

Thank you to John Bridges, Tim Pickstone and Jeanette Sunderland in particular for helping bring this publication about.

© Association of
Liberal Democrat Councillors

August 2011

The Birchcliffe Centre

Hebden Bridge HX7 8DG

01422 843 785 www.aldc.org

 Association of
Liberal Democrat Councillors

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT WAY	5
WHAT'S ON PEOPLE'S MINDS	7
HOW TO PERSUADE PEOPLE	15
TAKING ACTION	17
PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES AND NEWS RELEASES	21
PETITIONS	23
LETTING PEOPLE KNOW	28
CAMPAIGNING WITH A PURPOSE	30
MAKING THE MOST YOUR CAMPAIGN	32
CONCLUSION	39
EXAMPLES	40



INTRODUCTION

In communities across the country there are improvements just waiting for a successful campaign to bring them about. Yet there are also people – far too many people in far too many places – who do not believe they and their neighbours have any power to change the streets around them, let alone the wider world.

Helping bring about those changes and helping people realise their own power should be at the core of local Liberal Democrat campaigning. It may be as simple as showing people that the graffiti that has blighted a local bridge for the last 20 years really can be removed or it may be as complicated as improving the quality of special educational needs services, but either way these are the sorts of changes that make politics a noble endeavour. Winning elections is fun – immense fun – but improving lives and communities is what makes it meaningful.

All over the country there are thousands of local campaigners who can look around their area and see the results of their work: improved playgrounds, safer

roads, homes protected from flooding, older people with the support they need, new recycling facilities, green space protected and much more.

Take a look at <http://bit.ly/mattsanders> for a short film about one example from Camden councillor Matt Sanders.

This book is about how you too can join the ranks of these successful campaigners. We show you how to find the right issues to campaign on, how to run successful campaigns and how to build up the team and the track-record which then wins your election, and re-election, as a councillor.

We start with a short explanation of why this book is necessary and how it offers something different from other party publications and training. We then get to the heart of the matter: how to find the right issues to campaign on. The book then takes you through ways to run successful campaigns on those issues, including the importance of building up your team and your data. We then talk about how this links with winning elections before wrapping up with some other issues.

THE LIB DEM WAY

What makes for a distinctively Liberal Democrat approach is our belief not just in winning campaign successes for our communities but also helping people to secure more power and control over their own futures. Liberal Democrats don't just want to fix problems for people; we want to help people fix their own problems.

This approach, frequently called 'community politics', was pioneered by the Liberal Party in the 1970s. When done well it balances local campaigning, empowering people and winning elections, with each helping the other. When ignored, politics can become a soulless exercise – all about elections, not people.

Over the years the “how to win elections” part of the party's publications about being active in your ward or community have got longer and longer, sometimes even therefore inadvertently given the impression that electioneering is all that matters – and that “campaigning” is just another word for “electioneering”.

Therefore, this book seeks to strip back those publications to the local campaigning essence. For some people this book hopefully presents useful and new ideas. For others it may be more of a reminder of what can get squeezed out when you're so busy day to day with



other matters. But for everyone we hope it provides a reason to campaign and a vision of campaigning that is uniquely Liberal Democrat.

Of course we are a political party, not a glorified residents' association. So part of what we are about most certainly is winning elections and the political power and opportunities which flow from the ballot box. But we are also about winning elections with a purpose and as part of a wider effort to improve our communities and empower our neighbours. Or in other words:

“Community politics is not a technique. It is an ideology, a system of ideas for social transformation. For those ideas to become a reality there is a need for a strategy of political action. For that

strategy to be successful it needs to develop effective techniques of political campaigning. Those techniques are a means to an end. If they become an end in themselves, the ideas they were designed to promote will have been lost.”

(The Theory & Practice of Community Politics by Bernard Greaves and Gordon Lishman (1980))

The essence of campaigning should be to communicate and enact our liberal and democratic principles. By campaigning we change people’s attitudes, encourage people to take power into their own hands and empower them to improve their communities.



■ Sheffield campaigners rally against Post Office closures