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Newsletter of Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats: 2021 No.1

May 6th sees elections across the County. Our primary focus is on the County Council elections, where we hope to repeat our 2019 triumph in Rother and take the County into No Overall Control. This means that in the spirit of the Rother Alliance, we are not contesting all of the seats ourselves, and we hope that the sacrifice pays off. We are contesting all of the seats with Hastings Borough, but Brede & Marsham will be contested by an Independent, Beverley Coupar, who is a Sedlescombe Parish Councillor, and Rye & Eastern Rother by Dominic Manning for the Greens. We wish them luck.

For Hastings Borough elections, postponed from last year, as said, we are fielding a full slate and our manifesto is available on our website. It is unfortunate that we were unable to come to an arrangement with Hastings Greens, unlike those in Rother, but that was their decision. Details of our Hastings candidates for the Borough and County are below.

Sally Anne Hart finally resigned as a Rother District Councillor last month, and Kate Lamb has been working in anticipation of the by-election since Hart went to Parliament. Much of our campaigning effort will be in that direction, and all help is welcome, as in Hastings.

Finally, Jamie Bennett is standing as our candidate for Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner. Jamie is a Arun District Councillor.

One thing that must not happen – there is a lot of talk of the Tories benefiting from a Vaccine Bonus in these elections. This would be wholly unjustified. The roll-out of vaccines has been down to the NHS, despite the constant cuts of the Conservatives over the years. Otherwise, the Tory response to the Pandemic has been devilled by denial, delay and confusion, not to forget their cull of care home residents in the early months. They are unfit to run Social Services at County.

HBC & ESCC Elections, 6 May 2021: Liberal Democrat candidates

HBC Ward Candidate ESCC Division



Ashdown: Martin Griffiths [Ashdown & Conquest]

Martin moved to St Leonards from a village in Kent 5 years ago and lives in Ashdown Ward. Having worked in legal practices for over 40 years he brings experience of governance and decision-making, and wants our councils to make better decisions, and put an end to their current lack of openness and meaningful

consultation with residents. His priorities are to see that our local roads and public transport infrastructure are improved; to increase the availability of good quality social housing, and to ensure that good Planning decisions are made, whilst protecting our valuable green spaces.



Baird: Robert Wakeford [Baird & Ore]

Robert has lived in the Borough for a number of years but his working life has been in London, so he has been trying to adapt to lockdown just as everyone else has had to do! He is married with two young children. He wishes to see better technology infrastructure for the Borough; greater public participation in Council decision-making; and higher, greener standards in Planning.



Braybrooke: Lee Grant

Lee began his career as a mental health professional and worked as a cognitive behavioural therapist and a service manager for the NHS in primary and secondary care. He founded and is now clinical director for Efficacy providing independent cognitive behavioural therapy to individuals and groups. Lee is a lecturer practitioner at Kings College London and provides post-graduate training to mental health

professionals. Lee wants to bring a focus on well-being and joined-up policy making to our Council.



Castle: Katy Hunter-Burbridge [Braybrooke & Castle]

'I am a retired voluntary sector worker and part-time taxi drive. I want all non-Conservatives to work more closely together on local social justice and environmental issues. Priorities include enabling a coherent, affordable and accessible public transport network. Engagement: to include supporting the roll-out of a high-speed internet network. Housing: to take a tougher line with developers on affordable housing provision. Lib Dems want to halve the number of Councillors and reduce the wasteful use of taxpayers' money on costly consultants. These are my priorities: to ensure our local taxes are more beneficial to the governed, rather than

the governing.'



Central St. Leonards: Stephen Milton [CSL & Gensing]

Stephen has two daughters and has lived in St Leonards for 30 years. He is managing director of a local company which implements business IT projects and provides services for the construction industry. Stephen is a Humanist and enjoys walking, playing table tennis and keeping track of the latest scientific developments. He wants to see the Council supporting the town's economic base - particularly small and

start-up businesses - as a means of transforming it into one of the top places to live and work on the South East coast of England.



Conquest: Veronica Chessell

'As a director of a small business in Hastings with my husband, who grew up here, I am interested to improve transport links to and within the town; to promote cultural events, venues and the seaside location - these are huge assets to the local economy, with potential to increase employment opportunities. As a mum with a young family, I am grateful for our incredible green spaces and am committed to protecting and extending them, as well as

wildlife resources. Thinking of the world future generations will inherit is important to me, and I support schemes that will protect our environment.'



Gensing: Susan Stoodley

Susan was born and brought up in Kent and settled in St Leonards in 2015 where she now runs a small business. Susan believes that social and affordable housing should be high on the Council's agenda, and with increasing pressure on Council finances, it is essential to manage spending efficiently. Neglected areas of the Borough should be prioritised for funding and development, and green spaces should be safeguarded. As the Borough copes with the return to a new normal after the pandemic, it is even more important the Council focuses on targeting funding for projects that

will benefit the whole community.



Hollington: Anne Gallop

Anne is retired and has been a Liberal Democrat councillor in Sutton and a GLA candidate in the past. She is passionate about the Borough's heritage and wants more to be done to protect and promote it. Anne knows that Liberal Democrats on a Council contribute to transparency and cross-party co-operation, and she wants local residents to be more involved in the Council's decision-making - particularly when it comes to hard-to-reach groups.



Maze Hill: Jonathon Stoodley

Jonathon qualified as a barrister, working for the UK government before becoming an official of the European Commission in Brussels where he lived for 30 years. Upon returning to the UK in 2017 he moved to St Leonards and became politically active. Having worked to support individuals and businesses in the EU, Jonathon would like to see a council more responsive to local residents' interests, offering better value for money, and more supportive of those in need. He is Deputy Chair of the local Lib Dems and Treasurer of the local branch of the European Movement.



Old Hastings: Gene Saunders [Old Hastings & Tressell]

'I am standing for election after 10 years running the Land of Green Ginger, on the High Street! I also spent 14 years working in senior positions within Local Government, so I know how to get things done. After 15 years of Labour and Conservative Councils, parts of our Borough are still among the most deprived in the UK. The Liberal Democrats have the policies and determination to turn this around - in partnership with residents. I will be standing for County too because I have concerns about local education facilities and resources, and

how they are determining life chances.'



Ore: Jon Smalldon

Jon has lived in the Borough since 2014. He is married with two children and works for a charity in London. He wants to see proper, greener investment in our transport infrastructure, and good traffic management so that nobody needs to queue forever just to turn onto the Ridge, or to access the seafront. He wants to see more community development work to make

our streets safer and our open spaces cleaner; and for residents generally to feel listened to by the Council. Hastings has a vibrant cultural life and we should do more to support and nurture that.



St Helens: Bob Lloyd [St Helens & Silverhill]

Bob has lived in St Helens Ward for nearly 15 years and is a self-employed property manager. His daughters attended both Blacklands and Helenswood Schools, where his wife taught, and he served as a governor for eight years. Bob's priorities are the building of more social housing, as well as more and safer cycling provision. Other important local issues are: the redevelopment of Pilot Field, better Planning decisions, making Alexandra Park safe, and tackling speeding on a number of local roads. He is the local co-ordinator for the

European Movement.



Silverhill: Terry Keen

Terry has lived in the borough for 33 years and has been actively involved in local cultural events for the last couple of decades, having been a Morris Dancer and local musician throughout that time. A former civil servant, he currently works in the retail industry. If elected, he would work hard to represent the people of Silverhill and do his best to ensure that the community flourishes as we emerge from the pandemic, and will hold the Council to account on issues such as Planning, protecting and utilising green spaces, and

ensuring that Council Tax is spent wisely.



Tressell: Jim Deasley

'The world's top priority is to combat climate change. As an architect, low energy housing has been my specialism, both new and existing homes, adaptable for people of all ages and abilities. If elected, I will use my skills to work with other specialist groups to improve local understanding of social and affordable low energy housing. I also want to ensure that social and private-rented housing standards are adequate. I am a member of Friends of the Earth and am a passionate pro-European. I have children and grandchildren and would

value the opportunity to make this contribution to my community.'



West St Leonards: Stewart Rayment [Maze Hill & WSL]

Stewart sees Labour's hostility to residents in planning matters as highly suspicious and says that West St. Leonards has consistently been a victim of this. A Liberal Democrat Council would run things differently: Stewart believes the planning system should be a natural extension of the democratic process. As the former chair of a local government Education Committee, Stewart says Conservative Ministers have handled schools & colleges badly in the pandemic. There will almost certainly be a knock-on effect mental health-wise which East Sussex's already-stretched Social Services will be left to deal with. Conservative councillors need to be replaced. Stewart brought his intellectual properties consultancy business to Hastings ten years ago and has children in full-time education.



Wishing Tree: Emlyn Jones [Hollington & WT]

'I am a retired GP who has lived and worked within the Wishing Tree, Hollington and Silverhill area for 39 years. I have always been attracted towards socially responsible politics. My campaign priorities include tackling deprivation and the lack of good quality social housing; as well as dealing with pollution, particularly along main roads where there are also schools. Within the Council I want to see more transparency and participatory decision-making. Using my experience, I want to help statutory agencies work more closely together for our most disadvantaged citizens.

My leisure interests include archery, walking, music and reading.'

It is disappointing that there isn't greater diversity amongst our candidate - only four women in Hastings, plus Kate Lamb in Eastern Rother. We did better in 2018. But this is largely down to people being willing to come forward. Next year, all being well, there will be another round of Hastings Borough elections, and we hope that candidates will be joining a number of those elected this May. So don't be shy, if you are interested in standing for election and becoming a councillor get in touch with Bob Lloyd right away. There are plenty of training opportunities, and although Covid-19 has impacted on campaigning, it remains on-going.



Eastern Rother: Kate Lamb

Kate Lamb, lives in East Guldeford. She is a specialist consultant Human Resources Director who enjoys an active village life, organising events and looking after the medieval church.

Kate played an active part in liaising with Rother Councillors during last summer's Camber traffic fiasco.

Fairness and inclusivity underpin all of Kate's ambitions for Eastern Rother and beyond. She walks the talk when it comes to tackling climate change, ensuring that her own home limits

waste and conserves energy whenever possible. Kate lives with a rare health condition and she understands how ill health and disability can curtail opportunity and quality of life. As an elected councillor, Kate will challenge the barriers to the well-being of every constituent at home, at work and across the wider community.



Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner: Jamie Bennett

Jamie Bennett was born in Brighton, grew up in the Newhaven area and now serves his local community as a Councillor in the Rustington area of Arun in West Sussex. He lives with his wife Jo and their son Elliot in Rustington. Jamie has 12 years of experience on Rustington Parish Council, during which time he has served as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council. In 2019, Jamie was elected to Arun District Council.

Jamie says, "I want to bring back community policing, get drugs off our streets by cutting county lines and deliver a fairer deal for Sussex." "Theresa May's failed PCC experiment has been a disaster for Sussex policing. We have seen the Police's share of our Council Tax bills rocket, yet we have nothing to show for our money but rising crime, more drugs and fewer police on our streets."

"As a Lib Dem Councillor in Arun, I have seen at first hand the impact of withdrawing community policing and increasing lawlessness on our streets. These have been exacerbated by Conservative cuts to youth services, mental health and road safety at West Sussex County Council."

Former Eastbourne MP Stephen Lloyd said, "I'm absolutely delighted to endorse Jamie Bennett as Police and Crime Commissioner for Sussex, his dedication, integrity and commitment to residents means that were he to be elected I know he will do a fantastic job."

The postponement of last year's elections mean that we have to fight on a much wider front than would usually be the case. Your input would be invaluable - even delivering Focus in your street. Please contact Martin Griffiths on 07836 662216 when you can help, and it's not too late to respond to chair Bob Lloyd's appeal for donations to fight these elections.

The Year of the Ox Rocks...

The Year of the Ox was greeted by us on 12th February with a Virtual Chinese New Year Dinner. The Chinese calendar works on a lunar basis, so the dates change each year, and celebrations run through to the Lantern Festival, 16 days later.



We were joined by Larry Ngan of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Hong Kong, who told us about the problems in Hong Kong and the difficulties of Hongkongers trying to leave. Those born after 1997 do not have BN(O) status (British Nationality (Overseas)). Larry urged fellow Liberals to help with befriending refugees.

There were two suggestions for the dinner; we posted a simple

recipe for a Hoisin Chicken dish, or you could order a takeaway from your favourite restaurant.

It's obvious to say that social events and fundraising have been hit by the pandemic, but we'll be announcing further events in the near future and look forward to joining you there.

Championing Trees

Howard Norton

"I am delighted to support an exciting new initiative which aims to raise awareness and rally support for trees in Rother. As a Council we are now charged with ENHANCING bio-diversity, and trees have a crucial part to play in that. At long last we are recognising the vital role part that trees have to play in carbon capture, flood prevention and nurturing mental well-being. We need to plant more trees especially in the Bexhill area whose tree density is below the average of comparable seaside towns. That afforestation process has already begun. Of course, the trees must be the right trees in the right places and more trees are not the answer to all our ecological concerns: we need a mosaic of habitats -scrub, grassland and marsh are equally important for wildlife.

However, tree planting is only half of our mission. We must effectively protect our existing trees. I fear that the very extent of our tree cover in Rother and its quality has made us complacent. Creeping suburbanisation is not our only enemy. Climate change and the increasing appearance of new tree diseases are long term challenges but there are more local threats that we can do something about.

Our existing trees are not adequately protected at present. Casual felling, even in Conservation Areas, continues - most of it unauthorised or needlessly authorised. It is just too easy to condemn an ancient or (inconvenient) tree because it has one diseased or damaged limb—easier and less expensive than consulting a tree surgeon who could probably save the tree. I wonder how many handsome ash trees



Howard championing the trees in his garden.

have been felled because they could have die-back but actually don't. It is scandalous that less than half of our parishes in Rother have an appointed Tree Warden (or Tree Champion as some prefer) - a recognised local person who residents can contact if they suspect trees are in danger. Pre-emptive action is so important. When one hears the dreaded whirr of the power saw it is normally too late. Our trees are vulnerable and only our vigilance can protect them.

Enforcement of complaints about unauthorised felling is virtually non-existent or haphazard at best so culprits know that the dangers of being caught and punished are minimal. In any case one can't resurrect a felled tree.

Local Tree Wardens also need to know that there is a designated Officer hopefully of senior rank at Rother DC to whom they can appeal for advice and support. That provision does not exist at present, but we're working on it."

Howard Norton.

ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The Rother Alliance's commitment to openness was seen in action at the March Planning Committee meeting when Parish Council, applicants and objectors were able to speak on two highly controversial applications. Since the new council was elected in 2019 public speaking rights have been extended and simplified. The meeting, held remotely, was watched on YouTube over 600 times, giving unprecedented public access to democracy. Lib Dems provide the Vice-Chair and two other members of the committee.

Residents in Camber, Rye and elsewhere can look forward to less visitor congestion this summer due to Civil Parking Enforcement, a Lib Dem initiative. On-street parking restrictions are now enforceable and the flow of traffic into Rother's off-road



Camber traffic problems last summer.

car parks improved by better payment facilities. Rother works closely with the police, waste contractors, coastguard and other agencies to ensure the safety of visitors and the amenity of residents. This exercise has now been extended to cover Pett Level and Winchelsea Beach, where last year's Camber overflow traffic blocked roads.

Bexhill Town Council became a reality on 1 April, with elections in May. The previous administration denied Bexhill residents their own Town Council, despite overwhelming demand for parity with Rye, Battle and the rural parishes. The new council is healthy for democracy and healthy for the wider District, letting local decisions be taken at local level and Rother free to deal with district-wide issues.

Rother is to run a lottery. Profits will be used to support the popular Community Grants programme. The programme needs to be put on a sound financial footing, as drawing on reserves is not sustainable. The lottery will be run by an experienced professional contractor, which is cheaper and easier than starting from scratch in-house. A great way to support our local facilities.

There are plans to develop the Rother Town Hall site at Bexhill. This would preserve the heritage features, provide 14 flats, lettable office space and acceptable working conditions for staff. Above all the carbon footprint of the buildings will be dramatically reduced, in line with Rother's commitment to tackling climate change. The project will be cost neutral over its lifetime.

The creation of our own housing company, Alliance Homes (Rother) Ltd to build in the district with a green emphasis. First project is 200 homes on the Blackfriars site in Battle.

<https://rother.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s2747/Alliance%20Homes%20Rother%20Ltd%20-%20Business%20Plan%202020-2023.pdf>

Efficient distribution of Covid business grants.

We are doing everything possible to help businesses affected by the Brexit debacle. Especially the Rye fishing industry which exports most of its catch to the near continent. Rother officers now have to certify each shipment and each species and have been helping translate paperwork. (Much credit to officers).

Successful implementation of government's "Everyone in" policy for rough sleepers and the purchase of properties for temporary housing for homeless people. Cheaper and better in the long run.

Restructuring of the top management from two Executive Directors to one Chief Executive, saving money in the long term and improving accountability and effectiveness.

Our Climate Change Emergency initiative dramatically to reduce our carbon footprint to zero.

<https://www.rother.gov.uk/news/views-sought-on-ambitious-carbon-neutral-plan/>

Loads of stuff which you would expect from a council - roles in covid enforcement for businesses, Licensing matters arising from Covid breaches. No party political point to be made, but officers (especially) and members have been getting on with it in difficult circumstances - working from home, remote meetings etc.

Our one sore point is the planning department. We are way behind with housing delivery, not having even a three-year supply. In fairness this is not Rother failing to approve sites, but developers failing to build, plus daft government targets. I've mentioned our own housing company, which is a start. Nevertheless, the planning department is sinking under the burden of work. To remedy this we are conducting a review of systems, using outside consultants (iESE).

Andrew Mier

REMEMBER

THE LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER TO IS 19th APRIL

THE LAST DAY TO SIGN UP FOR A POSTAL OR PROXY VOTE IS 20th APRIL

POLLING DAY IS THURSDAY 6th MAY