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Newsletter of Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats: 2021 No.2

Winchelsea Garden Party

We got back to live social events on Saturday 4th September, when Cllr. Howard Norton and David Page hosted a Party in their magnificent garden abutting the river at Winchelsea, on what was a quintessential late summer afternoon. Whilst I didn't get the dark blur of a kingfisher in flight, this was compensated by the multitude of butterflies that joined us – Commas, Painted Ladies, Peacocks and Red Admirals amongst the ubiquitous Whites. Cllr. Steve Murphy from Hailsham entertained us and raised funds with his dodgy card tricks. Thanks to all those who made sandwiches, scones and some outstanding cakes. Watch out for the next event. We will take a decision on the Annual Lunch at the September Exec.



County Council Report

Steve Murphy, who won Hailsham last May reports that the first meeting of the new County Council lasted a full 18 minutes, under tight Covid security; apparently government legislation had made it binding for the meeting to physically take place, instead of by Zoom, as they had over the previous year. The meeting simply elected the chair, vice-chair, portfolio holders and committee chairs. The rest of the agenda was adjourned and will result in what amounts to an all-day meeting later this year. A cabinet meeting has also taken place, but under the guise of Covid the Tories have limited other party's attendance to 4 Liberal Democrats, 2 Labour and 1 Green. Steve sits on the Police & Crime Committee and the Place Scrutiny Committee, which deals with physical infrastructure – council buildings etc. He is also group spokesperson on Community and Safety, which apparently includes buses, which takes up much of his mailbag.

The composition of the County Council is 27 Tories (-3), 11 Liberal Democrats (+1 -1), 5 Labour (+2-1), 4 Greens (+4) and 3 Independents (-2). Proposals for anti-Tory agreements never got very far unfortunately. They were successful in Forest Hill and Hailsham, between the Greens and ourselves, but not in Eastern Rother & Rye alas.

CONFERENCE

Our Autumn federal party conference is being held online in September -17th to 20th. There's a brilliant offer for people who have not come to conference before: <https://www.libdems.org.uk/conference#first> For those who've already been conferences before the cost is £50.

Conference will include an important trio of linked debates: on our party's values, our policy platform and our strategy. Traditionally, we have debated these separately at conference, even years apart. But all three need to fit together in a coherent way – which is one of the lessons from the 2019 election post-mortem. So, this time we're doing things differently.

The values and platform come from our Federal Policy Committee (FPC), while the strategy is being proposed by the Board. It sets out the practical approach which is needed to grow our party and win more elections, securing us more political power to deliver on what we believe.

Among the other conference items is also the latest stage in developing our post-2019 European policy, <https://www.libdems.org.uk/eu-relationship>

As I the Board has also put in some important proposals for conference to decide on, including boosting our party bodies with an improved, simpler structure and set of rules. These come from the Party Body Review Group, which has run an extensive consultation with existing party bodies before drawing up the plans. The full conference agenda and reports to conference booklet are at <https://www.libdems.org.uk/autumn-21-papers>

All Good Things Come to an End

After 19 years as candidate and MP in Eastbourne, Stephen Lloyd has hung up his megaphone to an online outpouring of affection.

Many Hastings & Rye members have travelled over to Eastbourne over the years - helping Stephen to win in 2010 and then take back the seat in 2017.

Stephen was always the perfect candidate for what is a much more conservative town calling himself, as he does, a 'business-wing Liberal'. But what is special about Stephen is his ability to connect with people, make them feel valued and heard, and to support and advocate for them with dogged tenacity.

Stephen's heart for social justice is deep-seated, from his childhood in colonial Africa to his own experience of disability. This is why he has been able to corral so much good will and support from all parts of all the region's constituency parties.

He will be a hard act to follow. But, true to form, he has been growing local talent to keep the Lib Dem flag flying in Eastbourne. Good luck to him (and particularly Cherie) in this next chapter...

Nick Perry



Stephen with volunteers from Hastings at the 2019 General Election

Rother News

Two items of interest -

- The first introduces Rother's new Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant;
- The second concerns Rother's response to the Afghan refugee crisis - and an appeal to landlords to come forward for this and general housing purposes. Rother runs a very attractive Tenant Finder scheme which has many advantages for landlords

1. New grant scheme for disability projects

A GRANT scheme to help improve disabled facilities and access across the district has launched.

The new scheme allows community groups to apply for grants of up to £10,000 to fund projects for community-based facilities and provide greater access to public buildings, venues, parks and open spaces across Rother.

Funding may be awarded for improving disabled access by fitting ramps or communal stairlifts, making community spaces more accessible, and installing toilet and sanitary facilities for those with disabilities.

Applications will be assessed by a grant panel who will award the grant allocations. The first meeting of the panel is due to take place in October.

Establishing this new grant scheme will improve facilities across Rother for those with disabilities, support the local economy and improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for residents and visitors to the district. I would encourage community groups to consider applying.

The introduction of the new grant scheme was proposed as part of the council's revised Financial Assistance Policy to ensure the full allocation of disabled facilities funding is spent and community needs are met.

Further details about the scheme and how to apply can be found at www.rother.gov.uk/housing/disabled-facilities-grants/discretionary-disabled-projects-grant/

2. Afghan Refugees and appeal for Landlords -

Here is an update on Rother District Council's support for the two Afghan resettlement schemes operating at present.

Rother already has experience in this kind of initiative from the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and UK Resettlement Scheme which we continue to run successfully.

Rother is requesting offers of accommodation that can be let to Afghan families in order for them to resettle in the UK. Please email tenant.finder@rother.gov.uk with your contact details.

Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy

Rother is playing a full role in this policy. The Policy has been in place for some months now and is designed to resettle those Afghan citizens who have provided interpreting services to the British Armed Forces during the recent conflict. Rother District Council has secured one property to date and is working to finalise agreement on two further properties.

Afghan Citizens' Resettlement Scheme

This is a new initiative announced in response to the very recent escalation of events in Afghanistan and we are fully behind it. We await further details from the Home Office as to the particulars of how the scheme will operate so that we can also support this scheme in the same way we have supported all previous resettlement initiatives.

Please feel free to forward this information to anyone you think might help.

Councillor Andrew Mier

Life Boat Funding

While our RNLI, Mountain and Cave Rescue and Air Ambulance services do amazing jobs saving lives across the UK they are not currently given any funding by government. These services almost wholly rely upon public donations, which are uncertain, rather than having any guarantee of their costs being reimbursed by central government.



The Oldham Liberal Democrat group have drafted a council motion to call on government to do more to back our overlooked emergency services. With a little bit of adaption, we might promote this through Rother District Council, and perhaps more remotely with Hastings. The Pett Level lifeboat, which is independent of the RNLI did receive a Covid grant through Rother as they couldn't fund raise but do support them if you are passing the chapel when it is open.

Contact us at info@harold.co.uk

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