



# HASTINGS & RYE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2019

## ROTHER ROMPS HOME



*Councillors Andrew Mier and Howard Norton.*

We are pleased to announce the first two Liberal Democrat gains in Hastings & Rye for more than a decade; the famine of the Coalition years has ended. On May 2nd in the Rother District Council elections, Howard Norton won Rye & Winchelsea and Andrew Mier topped the poll in Southern Rother (Fairlight, Guestling, Icklesham & Pett). Rother now has a Liberal Democrat Group of seven, with four gains.

We held the (now North) Battle seats (Vikki Cook & Kathryn Field) and Robertsbridge (Sue Prochak) with stonking majorities. The new South Battle & Telham ward was the overall target, and many of us were helping there on polling day, Kevin Dixon winning by a large majority. The fourth gain was Richard Thomas in Bexhill St. Stephen's. Full results can be found on our website.

However, that is only half the story. Battle Liberal Democrats had persuaded the Bexhill Independents, Greens and Labour to work with us to maximise the damage to the Tories. To that end, each party should not target the other party's target seats. The strategy exceeded all expectations. Only one Tory councillor remains in Bexhill, where the Independents swept the board, with one Green and three Labour councillors joining them. So, Rother went into our overall control, the Tories with 14, Independents 13, Liberal Democrats 7, Labour 3 and Greens 1 councillor. A Rother Alliance of the Independents, Liberal Democrats, Labour and the sole Green (who will sit with us, so as to not be excluded from full access to the council) now runs Rother District and we expect great things from them. We also thank Sue Schlesinger who fought Eastern Rother, and Derek Greenup, who fought Brede & Udimore for us. Derek has the consolation of being a Fairlight Parish Councillor. We did not contest Sedlescombe & Westfield (under the above agreement), where Independent Jonathan Vine-Hall was elected. The Liberal Democrats form the majority of the Rother Alliance's rural contingent and are determined to provide A Voice for the Villages.

## EU-PHORIA AS 3 MEPs ELECTED IN SOUTH EAST

Nick Perry, at number 9 on the Liberal Democrat list, would have required our taking 90% of the votes to become our MEP, however the 653,743 votes - 25.75% that we gained (+ 17.41% on 2014) gave us 3 MEPs in the South East, with Antony Hook, a good friend of Hastings & Rye, and Judith Bunting, joining Catherine Bearder. In what was inevitably a short campaign we delivered the best part of 20,000 leaflets across the constituency, opening up the Wishing Tree ward in particular. The local results in Hastings were 4,415 votes – 18% and in Rother 6,069 votes – 20%. We were slightly behind the Greens in Hastings – 4,480 votes – 18.3% but in Rother they came third with 3,510 votes - 11.4%

Whatever the 'bollocks' about the Brexit Party, overall there was parity between the votes cast for Remain parties and those for a hard Brexit – slightly in our favour. Across the EU it was Liberal and Green parties who were the main winners and the former domination of the Christian Democrats (EPP) and Socialists has ended. A lot can be said about the extremes, but it is the radical centre that will shape the next European Parliament.



## ANNUAL DINNER

Guest speaker at this year's Annual Dinner will be Baroness Olly Grender. The Dinner will take place at the Royal Victoria Hotel, Marina, St. Leonard's, on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November. Tickets for the three-course meal cost £25.00 and are available from Pam Brown on 01424 424693.

Some of us have known Olly Grender since our Young Liberal days. Olly went on to be an aide to Paddy Ashdown, later Nick Clegg. She now sits in the House of Lords. Last year Olly launched a Private Members Bill in Parliament relating to tenancy charges and this passed into law earlier this year. 29% of Hastings & St Leonard's residents live in private rented accommodation, so Olly's work is of importance to us.

## CANDIDATE SELECTION

As soon as one election passes another comes on the horizon – the certainty (any General Election in between perhaps) is the Hastings Borough elections next May. Candidate selection for St. Helen's and Wishing Tree will take place soon (closing date 30<sup>th</sup> June) and members in those wards will be notified. If anyone wishes to stand for those or any of the borough's 16 wards please contact Paul Hunt for an informal discussion on 01424 441197. Work needs to start on our target seats immediately and also on policy formation - watch our website [www.har0ld.co.uk](http://www.har0ld.co.uk) for details of a policy workshop. We are now in a formal process of selecting a parliamentary candidate again, contact Paul if interested.

In the 2018 borough elections & this year's Rother, we were pleased with the diversity of our candidates, but we must strive to improve on this, so ladies, lbgt+, people with disabilities, minorities, don't be shy – the sooner prospective candidates come forward, the better we can plan to support you and work towards winning.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place at the Royal Victoria Hotel, Marina, St. Leonard's, at 11.00am on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2019. It will be followed by the Annual Dinner. If you are interested in standing for the executive please contact Paul Hunt for an informal discussion on 01424 441197. We need people, especially with computer and communications skills to meet the party's requirements in IT and membership fields and particularly need to make the executive less Hastings-centred now that we are winning seats in Rye and the villages.

Meanwhile, executive meetings take place at 7.30 at the White Rock Hotel on the second Friday of the month and are open to all members.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Lee Grant has done wonders with our social media presence. We now have an active Facebook page – Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats, and our website [www.har0ld.org.uk](http://www.har0ld.org.uk) has been revamped. Please visit our Facebook page, like, share and contribute posts to it. We are catching up in this field, but our series on local women in politics during Women's History Month last March was very popular. Follow us for up-to-date news.

## SAFARI SUPPER 8TH JUNE

Our next social event will be a Safari Supper – which is held over three venues – one for each course and is (alas) limited to 25 people. To book places at £25.00 (or for more information) email [info@har0ld.org.uk](mailto:info@har0ld.org.uk)

## POP-UP POLITICS

Our highly successful Pop-Up Politics meetings will resume on 8<sup>th</sup> July (after a break for the election season) with a discussion on **WHAT IS A LIBERAL?** Meetings take place at the café Grand Rue de Péra in Queen's Road, Hastings, starting at 7.00pm. Barbaros, the café proprietor, makes probably the best coffee and hot chocolate in town.

## LEADERSHIP ELECTIONS

Vince Cable retires as leader on a high note and elections for his replacement will follow shortly. Any supporters who would like to take part in the selection of the Liberal Democrats' new leader should join or renew before 7th June 2019.