

hAROLD

Newsletter of Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats: 2020 No.1

THANK YOU FROM NICK PERRY

2019 was quite a year for the Liberal Democrats in Hastings & Rye. Our membership doubled. We won our first council seats for a decade in Rye & Winchelsea and Southern Rother, enabling the Rother Alliance to take control from the Tories. We went straight into the Euro-elections from that, coming second across the constituency with 18% of the vote and securing three MEPs in the South East. Over the summer it became obvious that a General Election was imminent; Nick Perry was reselected as our Parliamentary Candidate and we fought a vigorous campaign, both in our constituency and Eastbourne, fully aware of the problems of being in a Tory-Labour marginal. But it was a luck-lustre Labour campaign, and Labour, nationally, couldn't have tried harder to lose the Election. However, fully aware of the limitations, we used the General Election to open up new wards and to consolidate the gains of earlier in the year. As Paul Hunt, our terrific agent, writes, we go into 2020 way better prepared than we have been for many a year. We've recharged our batteries over Christmas, now onwards and upwards, the fight isn't over.



Nick at the Climate Emergency Hustings.

BOB'S BANTER

A Happy New Year to you all, I would just like to introduce myself having been newly elected to the role.

I moved to Hastings from Hackney in 2006 with my family, my wife an English teacher and my two daughters (now at university). What a wonderful town it is, we joined the sailing club and have met lots of friendly interesting people. I am a semi-retired property developer and builder. I have been a school governor at Helenswood the school my daughters attended and my wife taught for a while.

Way back in 1980s I joined to SDP and stood as a ward councillor in East Finchley where I lived at the time. I have always voted Liberal/SDP/Lib Dem, but until recently have never had the time to be involved in politics.

The EU Referendum reengaged my political side, I helped run the Remain campaign in Hastings, and after the result joined to Lib Dems. I stood in the local election in 2018 in St Helens ward where I live.



The Referendum has been a disaster of our country and has proved very divisive but the general election has sadly decided the direction the country is going for many years to come!

Locally and nationally the Lib Dems have had a rollercoaster of a time, we did well in the local elections in May gaining control of Rother council in partnership with Labour and Independents and gained seats in the European Parliament, but obviously the General Election result nationally was a disaster for us. Locally we ran a good campaign and doubled our vote.

Our local party is revitalised and we have lots of hard-working people giving up their time to help.

I would like to grow our membership and engage with members as much as possible, so we hope to run a number of social events over the coming year and will hold regular informal gatherings.

So why not come and join us in the bar of The White Rock Hotel on the second Sunday of the month at 7.30pm for a drink and a chat. The next meet takes place on 8th March.

Bob Lloyd, chair Hastings & Rye Liberal Democrats

May Elections – Will You Stand?

If you are interested in standing for the Hastings Borough Council in May, there are still wards to fill. As usual, we want field a full slate of 16 candidates. Some of you will be thinking longer term about getting elected, so contesting one of our non-target seats is an ideal way to gain experience, and win next time. Our aim is to get a strong foothold on Hastings Borough Council.

We are also facing a Rother Council by-election in Eastern Rother to replace Sally-Ann Hart. Last May, with a paperless campaign we came second to the Conservatives and we hope that our involvement in the ruling Rother Alliance has made a difference. Polling is expected to take place on 7th May, the same day as the Police & Crime Commissioner election.

We are particularly keen to encourage more women to stand, and anybody from a group that feels under represented on the Council.

Please let Stewart Rayment know if you would be interested in contesting any vacancy – lockharthastings@btconnect.com or phone 07968 845426, by 24th February 2020.

Rother Branch

Our Rother members are going to start meeting for social and political catchups on a bi-monthly basis.

These will usually be held on the first Wednesday of every other month.

Kate Lamb is going to convene them. The next meeting will be at Kate's home in East Guldeford on Wednesday 18th April at 7.00pm.

Please contact Kate for details on klamb21438@aol.com

ELECTIONS PAST AND FUTURE

The General Election result nationally was bitterly disappointing for Liberal Democrats but we can take some modest satisfaction in Hastings and Rye where we increased our support by over 2,000 votes on the 2017 result to 3,960, despite a lower turnout. Our vote share doubled to 7.3%. This is small beer in the great scheme of things but we faced a massive two-party squeeze by the other two parties who poured national resources into our highly marginal seat.

The most encouraging aspect of the campaign was the active involvement and financial generosity of so many members. As the agent, I want to thank everyone who gave so willingly of their time, energy and money. Nick Perry was a superb candidate and it must remain a matter for counterfactual history for what might have happened had the Brexit Party fielded a candidate and the political winds blown our way.

Our next fight is the Hastings Borough Council elections in May. We have already selected Susan Stoodley for Gensing Ward, Bob Lloyd for St. Helen's and Emlyn Jones for Wishing Tree. If you are interested in standing for the Council, please contact Stewart. We are also likely to be facing a Rother Council by-election in Eastern Rother to replace Sally-Ann Hart. Please let Stewart know if you would be interested in contesting the vacancy. His details are on page 2.

Thank you once again to everyone who 'did their bit' in defence of liberal values during the General Election.

Paul Hunt. Agent at the General Election



Nick on the street in Camber when the Tories were in denial about their candidate. If you'd like to contest the Eastern Rother by-election contact Stewart Rayment.

Rother District Councillors' Report

At Rother the ruling Alliance of Lib Dem (7) Independent (13) Labour (3) and Green (1) continues to work effectively following its formation after the May 2019 elections which swept away the Conservative majority.

Work on making Rother carbon-neutral by 2030 is progressing, with the Steering Group having met twice and a lengthy (30 page) Environment Strategy drafted.

We are tackling the growing housing problem and will set up a Local Housing Company with the aim of building up to a thousand new homes by 2035 on mixed-tenure developments, in addition to those privately built. Major developments in the pipeline or under way include Blackfriars at Battle (220 homes on a site earmarked for 52 years) and a £10 million mixed-use development at Barnhorn Green, Bexhill. The Council has now adopted its new Development and Site Allocations Local Plan after it was approved by the government inspector, giving some measure of certainty over the location of new development.

New rules for public speaking at Planning Committee meetings were used for the first time (and to some effect) in December. There is now no need for a petition before at least one objector can speak. In addition a representative of the Parish or Town Council may always speak. I welcome these improvements.

Plans to form a Bexhill Town Council, giving residents the same measure of control over their own affairs as other Rother towns and villages, are progressing, with elections to take place perhaps as early as 2021.

Finance continues to be a problem. Rother has been drawing down on reserves. This cannot go on, and there will have to be both savings and increases in income – we can guess what that means, though Council Tax increases are severely capped by central government. At Ward level concerns have centred on planning issues, tree preservation and crime and antisocial behaviour. I have met some very interesting people. It's a privilege.

Andrew Mier

Southern Rother Ward (Villages of Fairlight, Guestling, Icklesham & Pett)



Councillors Howard Norton (Rye & Winchelsea) and Andrew Mier (S.Rother)

Leadership Election

On the Leadership Election, **the Party has decided to start the contest after the local elections, for three main reasons.**

Firstly, this gives us time to digest the lessons of 2019 - and the party's general election review to do its work - ahead of leadership candidates having to set out their plans for the future.

Secondly, it means that activists will not have to take time out of the key contests to participate in the Leadership Election campaigns.

Thirdly, to ensure we have the maximum time possible to recruit as many members as possible.

We'll know who our new leader is on the 15th July.

If you have friends or family who share our values and might want their say in this critical election, please ask them to join today: www.libdems.org.uk/ask-to-join

Social Events

As Bob has said, he plans to hold an informal gathering in the bar of The White Rock Hotel on the second Sunday of each month at 7.30pm – commencing 8th March. This will be a great opportunity to meet other members and to exchange ideas.

Over the Summer we are planning a Garden Party in Winchelsea in June, a Barbecue in July or August, and another Safari Supper. The Annual Lunch will take place in October or early November, according to our guest speaker's availability.

More details of these will follow – see our website www.har0ld.org.uk and like our Facebook page – Hastings-and-Rye-Liberal-Democrats. These are the places for you to keep up to date.

We are looking for a volunteer to coordinate social activities (not do all of the work on them). Could that be you? Contact Bob on 07973 614278 or boblloyd@yaho.co.uk

The Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference is in York - 13th - 15th March.

