**CANTERBURY AND COASTAL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS**

**CHAIRS REPORT – AGM 1st NOVEMBER 2022**

Another extraordinary year politically. In last year’s report I stated that I hoped that Boris Johnson would be held to account which eventually he was but I think this is a case of ‘be careful what you wish for’. With each day it is increasingly imperative that we oust the Tories both nationally and locally.

The Lib Dems have made significant gains in both national and local elections in the past year. Nationally, Liberal Democrats were elected as Members of Parliament in North Shropshire where Helen Morgan was elected last November and in Tiverton and Honiton where Richard Foord was elected in June. Together with our gain in Chesham and Amersham last year this is very encouraging and shows what we can achieve with a good message and a strong election campaign.

With regards to May’ local elections:-

* Labour gained 25 seat but lost control of two councils
* Other parties gained 50 seats and gained control of one council
* The Greens gained 79 seats but no councils
* Conservatives **LOST 332 seats and LOST control of 12 councils**
* **Lib Dems GAINED 178 seats and GAINED control of 4 councils**

It is also positive that success has been across the breadth of the country - in Scotland, Wales and England.

The Executive has turned its attention to the Local Elections next May. We are in a good place with our preparations and are much better off for candidates this far ahead of an election than any of us can remember. We are delighted with the number of members who have put themselves forward for our target seats and as paper candidates. We are still seeking more paper candidates so that voters have the option of voting Lib Dem in all wards at the Local Election in May. We are quietly confident that we can increase our number of Canterbury City Councillors. To achieve this we need members to support and help our candidates with their election campaigns – delivering leaflets, stuffing envelopes etc.

The events calendar was again affected by pandemic restrictions and some events were cancelled or altered. Having said that we had a number of successful events this year and it has been great to be able to meet, catch up and have an enjoyable time. The Annual Dinner became the Annual Supper and Auction of Promises which was a success due to those who attended digging deep into their pockets. By the time of the AGM we will have had the Annual Dinner with guest Speaker Sir Geoffrey Nice. Hopefully this has been an enjoyable and successful event. Events have two functions as before, a chance for us to meet, socialise etc. but they are also our main means of raising funds for election campaigns. We will put together and Events Calendar for next year and would welcome new members on to the Event Team.

Nick Eden Green is not standing for Election in next year’s election and he and Monica are moving from Canterbury to live near to their daughter. Nick has been a City Councillor for the Wincheap ward for 23 years. He has been a stalwart member and a well-regarded Liberal Democrat City Councillor. Nick and Monica joined the Social Democratic Party in 1982. They have been the hugely significant members of our party for many years giving freely of their time and resources to improve the standing and success of our group. Monica has been chair, membership secretary and together they ran the 100 Club. They will both be greatly missed and I know that you will all join me in thanking them and wishing them all the best for the future

Our Vice President Graham Wood sadly died in April. Graham was a City Councillor for the Westgate ward from 2011 to 2015 and subsequently chair of our local group. He is memorialised with his face etched on the iconic city centre statue. He will be remembered as providing ‘wit and wisdom’ in the Council Chamber. His family kindly donated 2 dozen bottles of wine to the group which we auctioned at the Annual Supper and Auction of Promises, He was an active member and a generous supporter and will be greatly missed.

Our Canterbury City Council Councillors have continued to promote Liberal Democrat values and policies and the hold the Tory administration to account - challenging Sewage Dumping, ill-gotten expensive spending and the Tories housing development plan.

This is a really exciting time to be a Lib Dem. The polls show that gradually and incrementally our position nationally is improving. Our successes weren’t just handed to us, they happened because of a huge amount of hard work, smart campaigning and dedication over a period of time. As I said at the beginning of this report – it is increasingly imperative that we oust the Tories. Locally we can do this with your help in May and come the General Election whenever that is. Our aim is to achieve more elected members nationally and locally to ensure that Lib Dem policies, and values take us to success across the country.

So - WE NEED YOU! Please come forward to support us in any way you can.

Thank you all for your support during my year as Chair and I wish you all good health.

Maggs Mackechnie

October 2022