

CANTERBURY AND COASTAL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

CHAIR'S REPORT – AGM 9TH NOVEMBER 2023

If a day is a long term in politics – a year is an eternity. I am writing this in mid-October when a year ago we were coming to the end of Liz Truss's disastrous Premiership.

Locally and nationally we have had a good year. Firstly, locally we were very successful in the May local elections, by increasing our number of councillors to 9, ousting the Conservative administration and soundly defeating the Conservative leader of the council. Labour didn't get an overall majority and our councillors have a working arrangement with the Labour group in running the council. The arrangement is reportedly going very well with a couple of quick wins in terms of reintroducing the market and reinstating the Sturry Road, Park and Ride.

Nationally - another gain in the Somerton and Frome by-election and by the time of the AGM we will know the outcome of the Mid-Beds by-election – hopefully a win. In the May local elections the Lib Dems made overall control gains from 26 to 37 Councils and the number of councillors increased from 712 to 1628. This was a great achievement as we had already made significant gains in the previous two rounds of local elections.

Locally we had to cancel a couple of events this year which was disappointing, not least because events are our main source of funds to finance elections. We had a very successful Annual Dinner in October where Mark Pack the Lib Dem President was our after dinner speaker. He was universally well received. With reference to the above, where we had to cancel events, I would be interested to hear from members of what kind, and the frequency of events that they would like. My thanks to the event's team for their hard work in planning and catering at each of the events which we held.

Michael Steed sadly died in August this year. An active Liberal Democrat at both a local and national level and a past president of the Liberal Party. He fought for gay rights and the preservation of the historic city of Canterbury. He stood (unsuccessfully) in six Westminster elections but was a city councillor for Barton from 2008 to 2012. We have lost a stalwart Lib Dem.

I am coming to the end of my tenure as Chair and I would like to thank the executive committee for their hard work and support in not the easiest of times. It is difficult to single people out but a particular thanks to Nigel – a never ending source of knowledge and expertise, Christopher who has been an outstanding Secretary and Graham who is retiring as our Treasurer after many years service.

There will be a General Election next year. We have commenced the process to select our Prospective Parliamentary Candidate (PPC). We will need help and support in launching an election campaign. Not least of all, funds!

My very best wishes to you and yours for 2024 and my thanks for having had the opportunity to be your chair for three years.

Maggs Mackechnie
12th October 2023