DOVER DEAL & SANDWICH AGM 26

Chairs Report

The past year has been a time of transformation for our local party.
This time last year saw the, well deserved, retirement of a generation of excellent and very experienced Officers.
At the time, I was asked to consider being a candidate for the position of Chair, which I accepted and, to my surprise, was elected.
I say surprise because I was very inexperienced in political procedures and knew that I was about to embark on a vertiginous learning curve, a curve I am still on.
However, that wonderful generation have always been there to give me advice and guidance and I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their continual support.
It was obvious to me immediately that if we were to go campaigning in the normal way, we needed young legs and we didn't have any.
So, it was clear that things had to be re-jigged to cope with the new landscape.
I decided that one thing we could do, was to take everything that we wanted say on the doorstep, and put it onto the website. Then we in could engage directly with the public and lead them to our website with leaflets and cards.
Well that was Plan a, sounds simple doesn't it?
It turned out to be an enormous task.
A task that would not have been possible without our web hosts bending their platform to get what I wanted, and the design skills of Ryan, working from the other side of the world whilst at the same time battling Canadian forest fires.
He was going to bed when I was getting up at my usual 5 in the morning. So we got some very useful work done, if a little bleary eyed.
We have now got a great tool that can be filled with all sorts of issues and information.
It is a great opportunity for everyone to be a part of the effort.
I urge you all to look at the website and send in your reports and points of view about how we Lib Dems can make things better here, in our part of the world.

Some of you may ask where the usual get togethers and functions have gone this year.
The plain fact is that, in spite of the great efforts made in the past, most of them were poorly attended and we made little or no headway in attracting new members.
We had to be effective or die in this most difficult of constituencies. I put a pause on them this year in order to see what we could do better and concentrate on restructuring and rethinking what would work. And be more effective.
Events will be back next year but in a more appealing and fun format. Watch this space.
Recruitment is by far the most important task on our future Agenda.
I believe strongly, that the principles of our Liberal Democracy are needed more than ever here and in the country.
If we are not to fall into the slavery of Big Money or dictatorships, then we all have to mobilise, and become activists in some way.
I, myself, will get a portable stand and where I can, hand out leaflets to the public in the streets, or at functions.
All of us can speak up about the LibDems more than we do and every little helps
Mind you, Do not alienate your friends, or get into heated arguments, That would never do, Rather, gently lead people to the website where they can find out in relaxed way everything they want to know.
Peering into the crystal ball, we need to complete the task by recruiting as much as possible, particularly the young. That's why the gatherings and events will be more tailored for the young to join in.
The website will be filled with all sorts of campaigning issues for everyone to get their teeth into.
Something must be said about Dover Town.
It has been as far as I can remember, a barren area for us politically.
I regard it as essential that we have a special project to set up a meaningful presence there.

We have seen this year a closer liaison with our neighbouring party groups through the East Kent Liberal Democrats. Group, which was set up by Penelope last year.

It has proved to be an important mutual support group with regular meetings and Internet discussions, which mean that we can all, act together in this confused regional landscape.
A whirlwind visit by Ed Davey to St Margaret's meant that some of us were lucky enough to sit down and talk with him.
He was very generous with his time in conversation with all of us.
He was here to make a video to promote our solution to illegal immigration by having a Pact with Europe, similar to the Dublin agreement that we had before Brexit. An excellent policy, which will, no doubt be filched by the government.
I attended the Brighton Conference, where I felt a really determined buzz in the air and I think it's coming our way.
As Ed said, 'we are in for the fight of our lives!
I know that Dover Deal and Sandwich will step up to the plate.

JOHN GOSLING

CHAIR