



## Chairman's Newsletter

July 2020



### Introduction

As we now begin to tentatively emerge from the Covid-19 Lockdown, perhaps our thoughts can now start to turn to what used to be known as normal.

As you know, we held our Association AGM via the Zoom platform last Friday and it was pleasantly surprising to see such a strong turnout of our members. We had almost 50 join us to hear about the progress we have made at HCA over the past 12 or so months.

And what a year it has been!

Since I became your Chairman, we have fought successful local elections for Horsham and Mid Sussex District Councils; at County level West Sussex got a new Leader in Councillor Paul Marshall. The Police and Crime Commissioner elections originally planned for May this year have now postponed until May next year to coincide with the County Council elections and on that front, as I mentioned in my April Newsletter, I can report this Association, unlike many others across the country, has already selected all of our candidates. And they have been using Lockdown to put together campaigning strategies for when normal politics resumes.



Over the same period nationally, the membership elected a new Leader for our Party and then, not soon afterwards, we went into the third general election campaign in nearly as many years! It was an election none of us really wanted at a time of year we didn't want either – until we saw the result!



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The landslide victory in December meant the new “oven ready” Boris Johnson Government was finally able to implement the result of the Referendum of June 2016 (remember that, over four years ago now) and we exited the European Union on 31 January this year. Which gave us February to savour that success before, thanks to Covid-19, we were effectively shut in our homes from March onwards.

Oh, and on top of that, there was the small matter of our own MP being promoted on three separate occasions!

I have had cause over the past couple of weeks to look back at the minutes of past AGMs going back as far as 1960. If there was ever a year as full of so many challenges and events like the one we have just experienced, then I must have missed it in those minutes!

### **HCA Operation**



***Gough House***

In my April newsletter, I disclosed that following Government advice and CCHQ direction, we had closed Gough House to staff and visitors alike. I can now tell you that once again Gough House is open for business, albeit with measures in place to safeguard against the continuing threat of the pandemic. This means we have not yet returned to normal operations and, for the time being, we will still not be holding meetings in the conventional sense.

Nonetheless, the work of the Association has continued during the first half of 2020 and, as I informed the AGM last Friday, Horsham has performed incredibly well in the Association Incentive Scheme run by CCHQ from 1 June 2019 through to 31 May 2020.

I am pleased to be able to announce to all members that out of a total of around 500 Conservative Associations and Federations right across the country, Horsham finished in the top 5%. Moreover, across East and West Sussex and Kent, we were ranked number one amongst all our 33 fellow Associations.



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We were measured across seven distinct areas of performance;

1. Total membership numbers
2. Youth membership
3. Donations received
4. Voter Intentions input
5. Marked Registers uploading
6. Strategy Plan
7. Website

The maximum number of marks awarded in each category was 10 points and in five of the above we achieved the maximum number of points available. This was a truly fantastic performance and was testimony to all the hard work put in by everybody in this Association.

This Association is now a beacon of professionalism and best practice across the South East Region. And we hope to do even better in the Incentive Scheme for 2020/21.



Joining us in our AGM was Mr John Belsey who is the Conservative Party South East Region Deputy Chairman. Commenting on our achievements over the past year, he paid tribute to the hard work of the Officers, staff and membership of the Horsham Conservative Association and acknowledged the good standing that we now have across the south-east region and beyond within the Party.

He made the following comments in particular,

*John Belsey*

***“(Horsham) has not always been in a position to aim so high, but it has soared up the leader board...”***

***“What a great website you now run! If we are given enquiries in the south-east for other Associations, we have no hesitation in giving them Horsham as an exemplar website which other Associations should seek to follow.”***

These were fantastic comments for this Association to receive and we are well and truly on the Party's radar for all the right reasons these days!

Congratulations too are due for Councillor Karen Burgess and her excellent team at Holbrook Branch. At the AGM, the James Provan Trophy was this year awarded to Holbrook Branch for their fantastic fundraising efforts during 2019 and also for their campaigning work which ensured the return of the four incumbent Conservative Councillors across their two Wards during the District Council elections last May. More information can be found [here](#).



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### **HCA Events and Meetings**

As I mentioned above, we have had to cancel so many fantastic events we had planned. In particular, the Holbrook Branch Summer Party that would have been very generously hosted by Ray and Eileen Lawes had to be scrapped as too was a planned Horsham Carfax Branch event at Cowdray Park Polo Club, our first two Patrons Club dinners and our Association Annual Dinner.

On more positive news, we are hoping to rearrange our Annual Dinner for October and our original guest, the Rt Hon Baroness Morgan of Cotes (Nicky Morgan) has kindly agreed to be our guest again. The third Patrons Club dinner scheduled for November will hopefully go ahead as planned and we are intending to run a Patrons Club Christmas Drinks Party at a prestigious London venue with a top-notch guest in early December.

I know, as we continue to emerge from Lockdown, that our Branch Chairmen will pick up the baton and arrange functions of their own for the latter part of the year so that once again we can come together, where possible, to socialise and perhaps swap Lockdown stories over a socially-distanced drink or two.

In terms of meetings, these too were curtailed. We can now hold Executive Council meetings via Zoom and we will do this for the first time toward the end of this month. And of course, Branch meetings have also been similarly impacted.

Please keep checking on the '[Social Events and Meetings](#)' section of our website for up to date information.

### **Association History**

For those of you that enjoy history and have an interest in how our Association has developed, I have been doing some research during Lockdown and I have now updated the '[Our History](#)' section of our website. If you follow the links, you can now see listings of our Presidents and Chairmen going back to the 1950s along with some details of our various office locations and a couple of pictures. We also have details and pictures of the four previous MPs before Jeremy going back to 1904.

If any of our members have any information or photographs that would enhance this, please do get in touch.



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### **Closing Thoughts**

Following the AGM, the Officers of the Association will bring before the Executive Council the Strategy Plan for 2020/2021 for their approval before the end of the month. Inevitably, some of what we hoped to achieve this year will have to be tempered by the reality of the past four months.

However, we will be working hard to ensure that your Association remains focused on the key responsibilities of all Association; namely, to sustain and promote the objects and values of the Party in the Horsham constituency; to provide an effective campaigning organisation in the Constituency; to secure the return of Conservative candidates at elections; to raise the necessary funds to achieve these objectives and to contribute to the central funds of the Party.

With your continuing support and generosity, I know that we will continue to achieve all of these and set an example to others.

**Adrian M Lee**  
**Chairman**  
**7 July 2020**

### **\*CONGRATULATIONS\***

Our warmest congratulations go to our former CPF Chairman, Mrs Katie Nagel and her husband, Tim on the birth of their daughter Hannah Mary yesterday, 6 July. Mother and baby Hannah both doing well!