**DAVENTRY CONSTITUENCY CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION**

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2019**

I present my report for the year ended 31st December 2019.

**Politica**l

As you may have noticed, we fought a general election in December and Chris Heaton-Harris was returned with an increased majority. This was a great effort by Chris and his team of volunteer campaigners. Rob Chamberlain acted as Chris’s campaign manager and Amy Howard as his agent and we are grateful to them and all the canvassers for their efforts. You may not be aware that at the start of the campaign we found ourselves no longer welcome in the offices we have occupied for several years in St George’s Avenue and in need office premises from which to run our campaign. Charles Jackson stepped into the breech and lent us his office at White Barn in Long Buckby for which we will be eternally grateful.

We fought two byelections for Daventry District Council during the year. Lauryn Harrington-Carter stood in Brixworth but lost to the Liberal-Democrat candidate who lived in the village. We were not helped by the fact that the sitting Conservative candidate had been required to step down for attending insufficient Council meetings.

Lauryn then stood in the byelection in Abbey North, Daventry and was successfully returned. She must be one of the youngest Councillors in the country!

**Fund raising**

We held two events during the year in conjunction with the South Northamptonshire Conservative Association. The first was a teatime event at Whittlebury Hall with Jacob Rees Mogg and was a great success. The second, also at Whittlebury Hall, was a dinner when Liz Truss was our guest. It was a pleasant evening but could have been better supported. Rose Freeman organised a quiz and fish and chips evening at the Daventry Golf Club which was great fun. Rose makes Jeremy Paxman look like a pussycat. Once again Lady Morton hosted a Christmas party. Sir Desmond Swayne was an amusing and interesting speaker and the party was financially our most successful event. Lady Morton ran the evening practically singlehanded and we are enormously grateful to her.

Once again, the branches were active raising significant sums both for the Association and for the Fighting Fund. My management committee and I are, as always, grateful to them.

Chris Heaton-Harris’s Breakfast Club, chaired by Clive Brown, held 4 meetings in the year. These meetings give Chris the opportunity to brief local businessmen on the political scene but also allow them to question him and to comment. It is very much a two-way street.

The Patrons’ Club also raised £3,321 for both Associations in 2018. Mark Grineaux has taken over from Michael Savage who, you will recall, sadly died last year. Mark is doing a great job.

We are very grateful to all those who give up their time, energy and homes in this way. It does mean that we have been able to run the office and provide support to candidates at the district, county and parliamentary level and, as our Hon Treasurer will report, we find ourselves in a healthy financial position.

**Future**

We are currently preparing for the Unitary Council elections in May. We have approved and selected 24 candidates to fight all the seats in the constituency for the West Northants Unitary Council. Jo Gilford was instrumental in organising the approval and selection process which, I have to say, is rather tortuous. Rob Chamberlain is managing the candidates’ campaign and Lydia Ball (nee Smith), who used to be our agent, is advising us and acting as agent for the candidates.

You will remember that Daisy Peck left us in early February. We are fortunate to have been able to recruit Amy Howard as our administrator. She works for us on a part time basis and has slotted into the role very successfully.

**Conclusion**

We owe a great deal to Rose Freeman who has maintained our membership records over the year, tales the minutes at the Management and Executive meetings and at the AGM and generally keeps us on the straight and narrow.

I am very grateful to my Management team, especially Michael Orton-Jones who hosts our meetings at his home and to the members of the Executive for their support.

John Stephenson

12.03.2020