

Chairman's Report August 2023

I am delighted to write this annual report as your chairman as we approach the AGM for 2023. As I write (in Scotland on a weekend away) there is sunshine, and it is very mild; a far change from the dreadful weather we had in July.

Locally, much has happened. The reorganisation of local government took effect in April 2023 with the demise of the district and borough councils. The elections to the new North Yorkshire Council took place in May 2022 and Thirsk and Malton's 8 councillors took up their posts immediately as a shadow council, taking up the reigns formally at the beginning of April 2023. Four of our councillors sit on the Executive: Cllr Gareth Dadd is Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Finance and Resources, Digital Champion, Cllr Keane Duncan has responsibility for Highways and Transport, Cllr Greg White is Executive member for the Environment and Cllr Janet Sanderson has responsibility for Children and Families.

In addition to this, we have seen a change to the boundaries of the constituency. We have lost three wards – Easingwold, Huby and Raskelf & White Horse to the new constituency of Wetherby and Easingwold and gained two wards – Bedale and Tanfield - from Richmond. I understand the reasons for boundaries to be changed, but the configuration of our "new" constituency has baffled me as it is bisected by the A1 and as we all know it is very difficult to get across roads of that size. I fear the lifespan of this constituency will be quite short as it could well be changed at the next review of boundaries.

So, we have lost about 5,000 voters giving us a constituency size of 76,623 voters. We wish those leaving well and welcome those coming into the constituency. We will be expected to provide funds to Wetherby and Easingwold in respect of the members leaving us but will hopefully gain funds from Richmond Association

This has been a trying year politically at a national level, and economically the country is still wrestling with the twin disasters of Brexit and the pandemic. Inflation, an inevitable outcome of both these events has come back with a vengeance, something many of us will not have seen since the 1970s. The political infighting at Westminster has been a sorry affair and has not shown the MPs in their best light.

One of the highlights of the year so far has been the selection of Keane Duncan as Conservative candidate for the York and North Yorkshire mayoral election in May 2024. The selection took place last month from a shortlist of 3 candidates when 200+ members selected him. We know Keane well and are delighted that he won the selection. We wish him well for May 2024 and know that we will be supporting him and much as we can to enable him to be elected next year.

Fundraising has been easier this year. A combination of good locations, and excellent speakers, and the willingness of members to travel to events has made it a more successful year than 2021. The online auction we held in April was hugely successful, raising £4400. My thanks to all who helped with these events, and whilst it is invidious to single out people, I must thank Gilly Tuplin and our Deputy Chairman, Claire Docwra for all their hard work with these events.

Our membership stands at 620 - some 90 down from 12 months ago. This is a combination of losing members to the new association and the general malaise within the Conservative Party which has seen some resignations. I have no doubt this downward trend will reverse in due course.

I would like to thank my fellow officers for their support over the last 12 months. Claire Docwra, George Jabbour and Sue Graham have been an enormous support to me. Similarly, I would not have been able to do my job without the great help I have received from Melanie and Gilly in the office. My personal thanks to all. I would also like to offer my thanks to Keane for his help.

Our MP, Kevin Hollinrake has also been hugely supportive to me personally, for which my thanks. We talk and meet on a regular basis, which I find very helpful.

The signs are that there will be a general election in late 2024 or early 2025, which I know will be challenging for the Conservative Party. I believe it will be after our next AGM, but it could conceivably be before. Whenever it is, there will be a lot of hard work for all of us to undertake.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and dedication over the last 12 months and I hope to see you either at the AGM or at a future event.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Hall', written in a cursive style.

Robert Hall

Chairman | Thirsk and Malton Conservatives