

Regional Chair's Report 2021
James Read

2021 has been a very different year from 2020. Last year we had no elections, and our Regional Conference and AGM was virtual for the first time. I am very much looking forward to welcoming you to our in-person Conference and AGM on Saturday 16 October, albeit with some Covid restrictions in place.

Regional Executive meetings have continued to be virtual all year, and they are likely to remain this way once Covid is finally behind us, as we have, as an Executive, felt that we can do all regional business required and save ourselves a not inconsiderable drive home – enabling us to join canvassing locally on Saturday mornings in many cases!

After having no elections in 2020, this year we had a very large number of Council elections in May, plus two Police and Crime Commissioner elections in our region. I would like to thank everyone who stood for the party in those bumper elections, and everyone else who campaigned for the party in the run up to those.

It was a tough set of local elections which, following the roll-out of the vaccination programme, the country seemed determined to reward the Tories for. Despite this, there were some excellent results around the region, so well done to you all.

Following the local elections, we then had the Chesham and Amersham by-election. It was fantastic to see many of you there during the exciting campaign, and even more wonderful to see Sarah Green elected as the new MP – huge congratulations to her and the team, and thank you to everyone who volunteered to help in any way.

The Regional Party exists to help Local Parties grow, keep everything legal and constitutional, and of course to help get more Liberal Democrats elected, and we have a staffing team which I am delighted to be able to introduce to you in person at our Regional Conference.

I would like to thank Colin McDougal for all his work last year and the early part of this year. As you may remember, he left his role as Regional Campaign Manager in May and was replaced by Tom Wood who now joins Chris Ward as our two Campaign Managers jointly funded by HQ and Region.

As Tom was our Regional Development Officer we have now recruited his replacement and although she does not start in this role until November I will be introducing Nicky Dodd as our Regional Development Officer on Saturday.

I would like to particularly thank Tahir Maher (our former Chair, and a former Chair of the Party in England) who joined our interview and shortlisting panel for both of the above recruitment exercises. We had some really excellent applicants for both of the above roles, so this was not an easy task – thank you for your time and commitment Tahir!

Part of our Regional Development Officer's time is funded by the Liberal Democrats in England, specifically to help with improving the diversity of our members, candidates, and elected representatives, and your Local Parties will see more in this

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regard over the coming months, and indeed in some of the training sessions at Regional Conference.

My time as Regional Chair has included liaising with HQ and ALDC regarding our regional staff and their objectives, answering emails from members in regard to various matters, making sure members in the Region are kept informed via our website, Facebook and the regular all-member emails that we send. The most satisfying of these was of course announcing that Sarah Green had won in Chesham and Amersham, and I think I received the most replies to that as well, with many people wanting to pass on their congratulations to the team!

Thank you to Simon Sansbury, our Regional Administrator, who updates the website and our Facebook, and makes the words that I send him for inclusion in an all-member email look presentable including adding pictures and graphics!

I would like to thank all of you – every member and registered supporter in our region for your continued support and for everything that each of you do for the party.

And finally, I would like to thank every member of the Regional Executive who have done so much for the Region again this year, and I look forward to continuing to work with you all next year.

James Read

October 2021