

Cambridge City Conservative Association constituency report 2019-20

The 18 months since the last AGM have seen an unprecedented series of events for the Association. There have been a number of events that have affected the Association.

In particular there have been:

- City Council elections;
- Newnham City Council By-election;
- European elections;
- By-election in the nearby marginal Peterborough constituency;
- Resignation of the Prime Minister and leadership election;
- A general election returning a significant Conservative majority;
- The UK leaving the European Union and entering the implementation period;
- The resignation of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner and selection of the PCC candidate; and
- Global Coronavirus pandemic postponing elections and disrupting the country in a manner not seen since the Second World War.

Throughout this the Association has focussed on maintaining engagement with supporters and voters as well as ensuring that the organisation continues to modernise and build a base of volunteers to ensure that the Association can increase its activity.

There has been a large amount of activity for the above situations as well as the work that was put into the elections which were due to be held in May 2020, particularly focussing on being able to identify sufficient local candidates for the “All-Out” elections.

Due to the delay, it is expected that in May 2021 there will be “All-Out” City Council elections, County Council elections, a Police and Crime Commissioner election and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral election. This is both an opportunity for Conservatives in the city as well as a logistical challenge.

Membership and branches

The association has no active branches, and had 294 members on 17 September 2020; this is up over 25% from the last AGM, for a combination of reasons:

- General rise in party membership, particularly affected by Brexit, the leadership election and the general election;
- Recruitment efforts;
- Improved communication with existing and former members; and
- Improvement in CCHQ's operation of the central membership activities as well as the Association's understanding of how the system operates.

At the most recent AGM in 2019, the Association's rules were amended to include representatives directly elected by the Association to represent areas in which there are no branches; these areas are the four quarters of Cambridge used by the City Council for various administrative purposes; the Executive Council has authorised the creation of branches for each of those areas at such time as the officers are satisfied that a branch would be viable, and there has been some progress towards the establishment of branches in these four areas, but efforts are largely on hold as a result of the coronavirus restrictions.

Campaigning activity

As mentioned, previously there was a large amount of campaigning across the last 18 months with results and impact being heavily influenced by national trends.

During the local City Council elections, it was challenging to ensure that there were sufficient candidates and at the time, confidence and enthusiasm was relatively low within the Party.

This was followed by unusual European Union elections which now stand as the last such elections prior to the UK leaving the EU. Campaigning was lower key than in previous elections although volunteers did persevere and support the Eastern region candidates.

There was a positive General Election campaign with a committed team of volunteers and an impactful candidate in Russell Perrin. Reflecting the wider political landscape, Cambridge City was challenging with Brexit as a particular focus of the election campaign. Although support for the Conservatives remained fairly static, increased support was seen in traditionally Labour areas with a potential impact on future City Council elections.

Campaigning was mainly based around canvassing, with increased use of Votesource providing efficiency and helping the Association remain GDPR compliant. There were some new

techniques trialled in the General Election including use of a van and paid for delivery. In addition, as requested by CCHQ, efforts were directed towards supporting South Cambridgeshire to ensure that the seat could be won back after the previous MP had changed party (multiple times).

Election results for Cambridge are widely available online on a permanent basis, to a much greater extent than in the rest of the country. Results relating to Cambridge are available as follows:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Cambridge_City_Council_election
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_City_Council_elections (Newnham by-election)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_of_England_\(European_Parliament_constituency\)#2019](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_of_England_(European_Parliament_constituency)#2019)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_\(UK_Parliament_constituency\)#Elections_in_the_2010s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambridge_(UK_Parliament_constituency)#Elections_in_the_2010s)

During general election counts it is possible to gain an informal and imprecise idea of the relative strengths of parties/candidates at the level of individual polling districts (roughly two thousand voters), though the officially published results relate only to the whole constituency, which has over eighty thousand voters. It appeared that the Conservative vote was much higher than expected in certain areas that have not traditionally voted for the party.

Financial situation

The Association is currently in a stable financial position after having taken steps to reduce expenditure on the office, which had previously been subsidised through sharing with David Campbell Bannerman. Despite the unexpected general election campaign which increased expenditure a surplus was generated for the year, in part due to a successful election appeal.

Trustees

- Linda Yeatman; 9 Clarendon Road, Cambridge, CB2 8BH
- Martin Keegan; 7 Greenway House, Otter Close, Cambridge CB2 9EF
- Philip J Salway; 195 Victoria Road, Cambridge, CB4 3LF
- Daniel John; 23 The Coppice, Impington, Cambridge, CB24 9PP
- Poppy Simister; 77 Mawson Road, Cambridge, CB1 2DZ

Committees

The Executive Council

- Lord Balfe of Dulwich (President) (resigned)
- Tim Wheatley (Vice-President) (resigned)
- Daniel John (Chairman)
- Philip Salway (Deputy Chairman, Policy and Campaigning) (resigned)
- Martin Keegan (Deputy Chairman, Policy and Campaigning) (appointed by the Executive Committee)
- David Smith (Deputy Chairman, Membership and Finance)
- Ilma Bogdan (VC Communications & Secretary)
- Mike Harford (VC Recruitment)
- Benedict Smith (VC Young Conservatives)
- William Phelps (VC Canvassing)
- Mark Bishop (North Area Representative)
- Shapour Meftah (South Area Representative)
- Alex van der Warteren (East Area Representative) (resigned)
- Harry Clynch (West-Central Area Representative)
- Jon Pither (Co-opted)
- Md Delowar Hossain (Co-opted)
- Linda Yeatman (Co-opted)
- Tim Haire (Agent, non-voting)

Honorary Vice Presidents, etc

- Lady Perry (Patron)
- Tim Wheatley

Approvals Panel for local government candidates

- Linda Yeatman
- Graham Gudgin
- Eric Barrett-Payton
- Mike Harford
- Md Delowar Hossain
- Shapour Meftah
- Tim Haire (Agent, non-voting)
- Pamela Douglas
- The Chairman
- The DCP

Pamela Douglas and Dr Graham Gudgin represent South Cambridgeshire Conservative Association's Queen Edith's Branch, of which they are Chairman and Deputy Chairman; Queen Edith's is not part of Cambridge City for parliamentary purposes, but *is* for city council elections.

Other Committees

Very shortly before the coronavirus outbreak caused the effective suspension of much party business, the Executive Council established committees for the South of Cambridge and for Young Conservatives. These committees have accordingly not yet met or conducted business, but with the growing acceptance of video conferencing may now be able to do so.