***Bristol Liberal Democrats AGM 2020***

***Chair’s Report***

***‘2020 – What a Year’***

***Campaigning***

We have had a busy year despite the limitations of COVID 19 and postponed elections. I’m proud of the way we have responded.

A special thank you is due to Jos Clarke for the way she stepped in to take over Chairing the Campaign Team from Stephen Williams. Jos has done a superb job.

***Candidates***

The postponement of the local elections has resulted in candidates in target seats needing to stand down due to changed personal circumstances, such as moving away, needing to concentrate on studies and health reasons. Sadly James Cox, our Bristol West and Redland ward candidate, won’t get the chance to fight an election in Bristol this time.

But I’m very pleased to report that we will finish the 2020 with a great slate of candidates in our target and non-target seats. All our target seats are now filled. New activists have come forward to fill the vacancies that the natural churn of the past year has created. Welcome and we very much look forward to working with you.

***Staff***

We also started the year with 5 members of staff, James Arrowsmith, Tara Murray, Amy Eskenazi, Fergus Ustianowski and Alex Hartley. They were recruited to work for us until the May 2020 elections so left us at that time. Thank you to all of you for your hard work.

Alex Hartley joined us in May 2020 as our full-time organiser and has been a joy to work with. Alex has transformed the local party and been a real driving force for positive change. Alex, just thank you.

***Accommodation and Printing***

It became apparent in May 2020 that our print society, King print, was no longer a viable entity. Thank you to the Trustees and volunteers who helped at King print for your hard work.

We decided to close it and subsequently we closed our office in Greenleaze. We are hoping to find some suitable temporary accommodation in January 2021.

Our treasurer, Merche Clark, has worked tirelessly all year to provide us with accurate financial information. Thank you Merche!

***Executive***

The Executive has met 4 times this year. Each meeting has been well attended and constructive. The minutes and executive papers are available to any member who would like to see them.

We also created a new Diversity post to ensure that we prioritise being a diverse political party and so all voices are heard. Tara Murray, our Diversity officer, has run a number of Diversity sessions on areas such as issues relating to BAME members, disability, and LGBTQ issues.

***Membership***

Our membership has fallen by 25% over the last year. The national picture that has seen the overall national membership of the Liberal Democrats drop by 35%. Engaging members during lockdown and against the backdrop of COVID 19 has been difficult. It is a priority for the local party to use the opportunity of campaigning for the May 2021 elections to reactivate our membership. Every passing month presents us with more reasons why our liberal voice is essential.