

Dear Member,

As this year draws to a close I reflect on how many positive changes there have been in the last twelve months. I am delighted to have some new members on our Executive who are taking on new roles: welcome to Paul Williams and Joe Jordan. And I'd like to thank Colin Saunderson who retires as Secretary for all his hard work: Ste Greenall will be taking on the role. Perhaps the most significant one is how many welcome letters we have sent to new members and how many existing members have asked to get more involved in local activities. 2017 is looking like a great year to be a Lib Dem in Huntingdonshire.

Devolution Update

As you will know the local District and County Councils covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have agreed the Devolution Deal. We will now have elections for a Mayor to lead it next May. In return for having a Mayor, the Government has promised an extra £20 million a year for the next 30 years to be spent in local infrastructure and an additional £170million for new Affordable homes.

The Lib Dems on all the constituent councils were clear that they felt the deal was flawed and that the additional layer of a new Combined Authority and an elected Mayor was unnecessary. The extra money sounds generous but when you allow for inflation over the next 30 years, deduct running costs and spread it over seven councils, it amounts to less than an extra 1% spending power. The set - up costs will be £1.5million, including a mayoral office and staff costing £881,000 per year.

The small additional budget that the Mayor will have will not help to reduce the cuts to public services that we continue to see. Instead we think that its time for a more radical reorganisation to abolish the current council structures for Peterborough, the districts and the county and replace them with two unitary authorities. Have a look at our website for our view on the future of local government
www.huntslibdems.co.uk/localgovernmentfuture.

As we believe it would be better for us to have a Lib Dem Mayor, if we have to have one at all, we are in the process of selecting a candidate. You will received an invitation to the meeting where we will be making this decision and where you will have the opportunity to cast your vote: Friday 16th December 2016, 7:45pm at Milton Bowls Pavilion, Cambridge. If you are looking to lift share please contact Peter Downes (01480 509471) and we will try and put a group of you together.

Annual Dinner with Baroness Smith of Newnham

We had a great evening with Baroness Julie Smith in November. In her after dinner speech she was able to shed some light on the highly topical issue of Brexit, coming one day after the judgment on Article 50! With her background as a Cambridge academic in European Politics and leading on Brexit in the House of Lords, she was able to answer a wide range of questions from guests and allowed us a glimpse into life in the Lords and Westminster. We are looking forward to her book which she finished a hour before joining us for dinner.



Elections in 2016 and 2017

I know many of you have supported the efforts in the Witney and Richmond by-elections - thank you. Closer to home we have County Elections next May. We have a strong team of local candidates in place but not all seats are covered as yet - could you be a candidate for us? If you think this is something you would like to know more about please contact Mike Shellens for a chat about what it involves (01480 456555).

We need help on the ground with local deliveries in all areas. We know that residents really appreciate that we work year round and not just at election time. We'd like to get Focus leaflets out in all wards but to do that we need your help. Could you deliver a newsletter for us on your patch once every couple of months? If you think you could then we'd like to hear from you please (call Mike on 01480 456555)

Sarah

Sarah Conboy, Chair of Huntingdonshire Liberal Democrats