

# **Tonbridge, Edenbridge & Malling Conservative Association**

Executive Council Meeting  
Thursday 04 March 2016  
Hadlow Manor Hotel, Goose Green Hadlow

7:30pm

## **MINUTES**

### 1) Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7:30pm and whilst welcoming those present commented that unfortunately it appeared that the Prime Minister continued to ignore the Associations and had come to his own conclusions with regard to the best way forward for the Party. The grass roots were being ignored in the proposed structure. By contrast, our Member of Parliament makes up his own mind but before doing so first speaks and listens to Members.

The Association would remain neutral in relation to the forthcoming referendum on Europe.

### 2) Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from: Owen Baldock, Jenny Cooper, Gill Levine, Julian Walden, Janice Browne, Jon Botten, Jean Atkinson, John Cleeve, Anne Cleeve, Liz Holland & Sophie Shrubsole.

### 3) Minutes of the previous meeting of 12 November 2015

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record of proceedings.

### 4) Matters arising from the Minutes

- a) Eighteen Members of the Association had campaigned in Sidcup last Saturday for Zac Goldsmith to be Mayor of London and we would be providing further mutual aid there on Easter Saturday. The southern part of the constituency was also providing assistance to Tunbridge Wells for their Borough elections in Capel and Five Oak Green whilst the northern section was assisting Fant ward in Maidstone.
- b) Unfortunately of 600 invitations sent out only a couple of positive responses had been received for an evening to relaunch a branch of the Young Conservatives and the event had to be cancelled. Billie Negus intends to start with a low key meeting of those interested.
- c) The by-election in Ashford had seen Alex Howard returned as a Borough Councillor by one vote, showing the importance of our mutual aid.
- d) Many Members had attended the selection meeting where Matthew Scott was duly elected as our candidate for the Police & Crime Commissioner elections in Kent.

### 5) Correspondence relevant to the meeting

There is to be a Kent Area Meeting on Thursday 17 March at Lenham to review the proposals in the Feldman Review. The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the Association should be represented at that meeting by himself, together with Matthew Dickins, John Botten and Michael Payne.

The main proposals in the Feldman Review are firstly to centralise membership and secondly to create Multi Constituency Associations (MCA's). This contrasts to the West Kent model

where the office is a service centre for five autonomous Associations. The intention is to be able to continue outreach and campaigning and the Chairman's view is that Associations should be sovereign.

Andrew Kennedy informed the meeting that he had been involved with the review process but had hoped replicate what had been achieved in West Kent but no new groupings had been formed in the past two years. Lord Feldman had been a good executive and thanks to him the Party was out of debt. Unfortunately he has less experience and understanding of campaigning and volunteers.

In Kent the Party holds every seat and all but one council. Of the £70K spent on elections in Kent during 2015, £55K had been spent in West Kent. This was out of a total of £600K raised in the county. Andrew Kennedy believed that the reason so little of what was raised was being spent on campaigning elsewhere is that it is being diverted into retaining and maintaining unnecessary property.

Furthermore, the Feldman Review proposes allowing Associations with 200 or more members to opt out from MCA's if they wish. This could mean that those that most need help opt out of MCA's. Also centralised membership would mean loss of contact locally.

The way forward is likely to be a review of the review. This would then be taken to Conference to be followed by a report.

6) Treasurer's Report to the Executive Council

The Treasurer was pleased to report that the deficit figure had reduced since November. This was due to extra income from branches as well as from Sevenoaks councillors. Unfortunately the income from the appeal hadn't offset the expenditure for new candidate introduction. Janet Sergison queried the Hadlow budget figure but it was explained that the budget had been set before West Peckham and Mereworth had been removed from the ward.

7) Adoption of the 2015 Accounts

The 2015 Accounts were adopted unanimously.

8) Agent/Campaign Director's Report

We continue to promote Tom Tugendhat and our district councillors. An A3 letter was being sent out from Tom to pledges to encourage people to sign up for postal votes. Enclosed was an invitation to join the second 500 Club and an application to become a registered supporter. This had been possible due to funding from the Tonbridge & Malling group, even though they did not have elections for another three and a half years. Consequently they were effectively investing in the PCC & County Council elections and it should be minuted that they are to be thanked and applauded for being able to see the broader picture.

88,000 envelopes have been hand written for letters from MP's to endorse Matthew Scott as the Kent PCC candidate. These letters would be ready for delivery by 12 April and as postal vote forms will be sent out on Monday 21 April it effectively means there are just ten days to deliver all 88,000 letters! It is expected that turnout will be 25%, of which half will be postal votes and hence the importance of the letters.

Maidstone only requires 444 votes to overturn Liberal Democrat control; the Association is to be thanked for any mutual aid that it can provide in Fant Ward for Stephen Payne.

9) Matters Brought Forward by the Officers of the Association

(a) Deputy Chairman Political

Michael Payne drew attention to the start time of the Association's AGM on 12 March which is to be 10:00. We would be joined by Matthew Scott the candidate for Police and Crime Commissioner in Kent at the elections in May. After the AGM he would be meeting the people of Tonbridge on the Big Bridge in the High Street and at 2:00 would meet the residents of Kings Hill outside Asda. Tom Tugendhat would be attending both sessions and all support would be gratefully received.

(b) Deputy Chairman Membership & Fundraising

Matthew Dickins reported that the Association's membership had been retained in the 640 region. Forthcoming events included two evenings with Charles Moore and Boris Johnson. He also thanked Howard Rogers for taking on the maintenance of the website. Matthew also announced that he had decided not to stand for re-election to the Executive next year.

10) Other non-statutory reports

(a) Local Government Committee

Ann-Marie Nelson was not present but the committee would be selecting country council candidates in the summer.

(b) Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Nicolas Heslop reported that the council budget was a measured step of raising taxation by £3.71 per week. However, next year there would be no government revenue support grant and there would have to be savings of £1.9m over the next four years. The borough and the county were working together to deliver benefits. The review of the local plan had led to the identification of 200 potential development sites which were now undergoing scrutiny.

(c) Sevenoaks District Council

Peter Flemming noted that about a third of his council was actually in Tonbridge & Malling constituency. The budget proposal had meant that the government would start clawing back business rates and eventually council tax monies. Accordingly Greg Clark MP was to be thanked for looking again at the situation. Peter Flemming noted that savings could be made by reducing bureaucracy but that council tax should be fair. Investment income was to be achieved from a new development. The second Sevenoaks local plan aimed to maintain the 93% Green Belt as a target figure and a requirement of 300 new homes per year.

(d) Kent County Council

Richard Long reported that Kent too had a difficult budget and that its share of the Council Tax would rise by 4%.

(e) Patrons' Club

The Chairman reported that it is hoped that Lord Astor would speak at the next event.

(f) Website

Howard Rogers requested any further information in order to be able to continue to update the contacts and to let him know about any events that need promoting.

11) Matters brought forward by branch representatives

No matters were brought forward.

12) Address by Tom Tugendhat

Tom noted that it was a tricky time for local government and was therefore very grateful for what had been achieved. The Police and Crime Commissioner and Mayor of London elections matter as well as keeping campaigners fit! There had unfortunately been some bad behaviour on both sides with regard to the referendum. It was important to still be friends on 24 June as there are many other things that matter to fight for together as Conservatives.

Sadly both Tony and Trish Robinson were in hospital and Tom had visited Trish to pass on the Association's best wishes. Tom had also recently introduced his electronic newsletter and felt it important to support a sharing community.

Finally, Tom thanked Alan Bristow for all his work as treasurer, Matthew Dickins for his exemplary work over the last four years and Jacques Arnold for being a very good friend as well as a helpful guide.

13) Other Competent Business

None

14) Date of next Meetings

The date of the AGM of the Association is confirmed to be:

Saturday 12 March 2016 at 10:00 Venue: Council Chamber, Tonbridge Castle

The date of the next meeting of the Association is to be:

Thursday 29 September 2016 at 7:30pm Venue: Council Chamber, Tonbridge Castle

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 20:47

**Signed:**

**Dated:**