

# Members' Newsletter



Labour Party —  
Evesham Branch

May 2023

## From the Vice-Chair: Sue Wood-Griffiths

Congratulations everyone, we did it! We now have Labour councillors on the district, town and two parish councils. In previous newsletters I have referred to how busy members of the Evesham branch have been in working for this election success. The effort that members have put into the campaign: going out with the gazebo, delivering leaflets, talking to constituents and local businesses cannot be underestimated and these election results have raised our visibility significantly. Thank you to you all! It would have been great to have had a clean sweep and have all our candidates elected to both the district and town councils but to temper any disappointment we must remember that Evesham has not had Labour representation elected to the district council since 1999. Now, we have Councillor Mary Tasker elected (the picture shows her making her acceptance speech) and taking a place on the Wychavon Planning Committee. We extend our congratulations to her, Heather Kelleher (Evesham Town Council), Mary Campbell (Badsey Parish Council) and our Chair Matthew Rea (Offenham Parish

Council). We know that they will all do a great job for their respective communities and the Labour movement and as they move forward, we will do our best to support them.

As ever, thank you to members who have contributed to this newsletter. Now the election has passed we would like to report on our wider activities, so please contribute stories, updates and images to our newsletter inbox [newsletter@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:newsletter@eveshamlabour.org) along with details of forthcoming events so we can add them to the calendar.



## May Branch meeting

The branch meeting on 10 May was the week following the election and, as the executive had not had an opportunity to plan any formal input, we decided that we would update members on the election results, take an opportunity to review the campaign and what we have learned from it and finally to engage members in a quiz which tested both our general and political knowledge.

We had good attendance at the meeting and this provided us with the opportunity to extend our thanks to all our candidates and congratulate those who were elected. They too were able to thank all members and supporters who had contributed to the planning and

campaigning. The process has helped build a strong team with complementary skills and leaves us well placed to fight any future by-elections and a general election. We welcomed two new supporters, Sarah and Harry, who had been drawn in by the gazebo and hope that they will feel inspired to join us.

After a short comfort break, our Quizmaster Dave Tasker presented a lively and challenging quiz which was enjoyed by all. The additional "Picture and political constituencies" round provoked great interest and discussion and seemed to be the deciding factors! At the end of the evening Mary Tasker ran the monthly raffle which raised £53 for our funds. Thank you, Patrick, for selling the tickets again.

## Heather Kelleher: Mayor Making

Heather was joined at the Evesham Mayor Making at Evesham Town Hall on Monday 15 May by branch members Will Jarvis, Brian Gregory and Mary and Dave Tasker.

Here she shares her first impressions as an Evesham Town Councillor.

"If there was one thing I really noticed in Evesham Town Hall last Monday evening it was that there are people who care very deeply about this lovely but somewhat troubled riverside town, and through the tradition and pageantry, warmth and even a little humour shone through.

The Mayor Making was quite unlike anything I have ever experienced before, hardly surprising as I am a new councillor. In fact, when we were donning our robes, some people had hats and a couple even had maces, I was put in mind of preparing the kids for a school play, which I am familiar with and is probably the closest thing you'll ever find to herding cats!

Eventually the very patient town clerk put us in lines and talked us through the order of events. The old hands obviously knew the score and the new ones acted like they knew what they were doing and I resisted the temptation to ask where the sorting hat was. In we marched, ceremonial seats were taken and the performance began in front of a packed audience.



Mayor Making is a formality; the mayor and deputy have already been voted for, so this is about thank you speeches, appreciation of service from various council officers and an exchange of ceremonial roles. What struck me was the warmth and gentle humour being exchanged throughout the process. Evesham needs change for sure and we will be part of that. The real work of the Council begins next week, agendas will be set, committees decided upon, but it was an honour to take part in that ceremony and to represent the people who voted for me. People genuinely care about Evesham and that's something to work for!"

## Offenham Parish Council

Matthew's first impression as an Offenham Parish Councillor:  
"I certainly felt like the newbie, being the only new person to join the council, so for the first meeting I adopted a watch-and-learn approach.

Our meeting included an open forum and this was attended by half a dozen local residents, all of whom were fairly vociferous about significant local issues. Probably top of the list was speeding — an issue we had highlighted through our leaflets. The discussion centred around getting a Community Speed Watch group up and running. It was clear that this is well supported and there were strong feelings about dangerous speeding along the Evesham Road and Newtown. Residents would really like this reduced to a 30 mph limit. I left the meeting confident that there are plenty of ways to make a difference in Offenham and am already engaged in a lot of follow-up on the points discussed".

## A manic month for Mary Tasker

Since election Mary has been busy, busy, busy, assimilating her role as District Councillor. On 10 May she was inducted in Pershore where she took an oath, was issued with an iPad, and introduced to the CEO. She was also identified to sit on the planning committee. At her first council meeting there was much consternation as to where she would sit as a lone Labour councillor. She responded she would sit anywhere! Mary and David were also invited by the Evesham mayor to attend the Mayor Making.

Mary describes herself as a sponge and has thrown herself into all the training offered by. All this, on top of securing a room for ward surgeries, supporting the litter pick and working full-time. Mary, you are magic!

## Mary Campbell at Badsey Parish Council

Although I have been a Parish Councillor before, the changes were very evident and mostly for the better. The biggest issue seems to be the approval by WDC of large-scale housing projects. The Council is going to actively address this imminently.

The welcome was mixed! Suffice it to say from some in was a little frosty. I enjoyed being involved and look forward to contributing to the issues raised in support of all residents.

**B**ranch Member Seth has raised an e-petition which he encourages members to sign. As a young Labour activist, he is concerned about the proposed online safety bill and says...

*"The Online Safety Bill is marketed as something to help protect people on the internet, however it inadvertently undermines people's*



*digital rights by requiring encryption to have a backdoor. This would make ALL online communications less secure and would enable the government to view everything that everyone does. This would trigger companies like WhatsApp to pull out of the UK, and it would make any activism much harder to safeguard.*

*This Bill will put people at risk and will enable a surveillance state."*

Please consider offering him your support by signing his petition at:

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/634725>

## YOUNG LABOUR

**W**hen we sent out the first newsletter, we received an email from James indicating that he would be interested in helping with the newsletter. James joined the Labour Party on his 14th birthday last June.

When we replied inviting him to come and participate in meetings or support us with the gazebo, he indicated that he would struggle to do this because of his schoolwork and volunteering at the Evesham Hospital Stroke Rehabilitation ward at weekends.

He met with Sue to talk politics and in conversation indicated that his political villain was David Cameron for calling the referendum to placate his dissenters! When it came to political heroes, he identified four heroines: Shabana Mahmood, Nadia Whittome, Angela Rayner and Rachel Reeves. He clearly knows some of our influencers. Sue suggested that to start off with, he writes his own political biography and we hope that this will be the first of some regular contributions from James.

*"Hello! I'm James, your youngest CLP member. I've been asked to write a little bit about myself to help show you the issues that really matter to young people, and the issues that I personally hold close to my heart. So, I humbly ask that you bear with my ramblings for a while.*

*I've been interested in politics for as long as I can remember, despite both my parents being fairly apathetic. Ever since I was younger and would rail against how unfair my parents were being, I've always wanted to make things fairer and better, an ideal I still hold close. Many people my age don't really notice, or even care, about the government and politics and I think this is a dire problem that needs to be resolved. We can do this through youth outreach programs, investing in our children's futures, and even just being open with our friends and family about politics. The only way to de-stigmatize politics and create a new generation overflowing with interest is to hold a true, enlightened discussion."*

### Young Labour priority list:

1. Climate change. We need to plant more trees and see more wind and solar. If we don't do something serious about it soon, it will be too late.
2. Electoral reform: We need Proportional Representation and an English first minister – the same as Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland
3. Brexit: It has messed up the economy and our access to Europe. Something needs to be done to remedy this
4. Education: The system is built for the people who do well academically. The people who struggle don't get much help and it doesn't prepare us for the real world,
5. Poverty: Too many people are living below the poverty line.

## Forthcoming events

**10 June** Litter pick (Big Paddle Cleanup)

**14 June** Branch Meeting. Guest Speaker Mick Hurst Director, Battle of Evesham and Medieval Festival.

**17 June** EVWR Refugee Concert at All Saints Church, Evesham, 7.30 p.m. An evening of music and friendship with "Vocal High". Look on Facebook for "EveshamValeWelcomesRefugees"

**17 June** at 11.00 a.m. the Constituency Labour Party AGM will be at Ecgwins Private Members Club, 117 High Street, Evesham WR11 4EQ, at which new officers will be elected. We urge members to attend to support these elections.

From Tuesday 27 June Mary Tasker and Heather Kelleher will be holding a monthly surgery on the last Tuesday of the month to meet and support constituents.

The surgery will be at The Oat Street Chapel, (opposite Wallace House) from 5–6 p.m.

Appointments to be made by email:

[mary.tasker@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:mary.tasker@eveshamlabour.org)

[heather.kelleher@eveshamlabour.org](mailto:heather.kelleher@eveshamlabour.org)

## Litter picking at the Medieval Market

At Heather's request, and to support her as a councillor, members of Evesham Labour joined the Evesham Anti-Litter group to pick litter at the Medieval Market on Saturday and Sunday 20–21 May. It was pleasing that the site was actually very clean and our role was more one of mobile litter bins and bin emptier than litter pickers. The atmosphere at the event was wonderful and it really enlivened the town. The volunteering also gave us the opportunity to see the Evesham Tapestry. A wonderful community project depicting the history of Evesham which really is a "must see".



## From the Chair: Matthew Rea

Firstly, I must add my thanks and congratulations to our entire branch for the recent success in the local elections. Everyone involved worked very hard and it feels like we have, at long last, started to change the political landscape in Evesham. Success indeed!

Now our attention turns to how we follow this up. We have already held a review of our election campaign and have identified a robust strategy to take the branch forward. Our key objectives for the future are to grow the membership, continue to raise funds, and support the work of our elected councillors whilst trying to make sure the branch meetings remain engaging and enjoyable for all who attend. Our mission is very simple: to be in position to fight bigger and better at the next

election, be that another district or town council vacancy or the much-anticipated general election in 2024. This is all about building on our success.

I'm pleased to report that we already seeing the fruits of this. Through the election campaign we have met many new supporters and seen contributions from active youth members increase significantly — as witnessed through our newly-added Youth Labour section to this newsletter. We're clearly not going to rest on our laurels; over the next few months I am confident you will all start to sense this growing momentum. Add to this that now we will be able to report real action from our elected councillors and, as everyone knows, nothing speaks louder than action.

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