



Helen Grant
Your Conservative Parliamentary
Candidate at the next election

Maidstone & The Weald Matters



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SAVE OUR HOSPITAL SERVICES.. SAVE OUR HOSPITAL SERVICES...

CONSERVATIVES AT THE HEART OF THE FIGHT

Helen Grant joins Maidstone Action for Services in Hospital

Helen Grant, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Maidstone & The Weald and hopeful successor to the Rt Hon Ann Widdecombe MP, has accepted an invitation to become one of ten key members of M.A.S.H. (Maidstone Action for Services in Hospital).

MASH is an organisation of highly influential local people united to define the services Maidstone wants in its hospital to campaign for the retention of services that are under threat and ensure the return of those that have already been lost. Helen Grant has a great deal to offer the executive committee of MASH as she is a former non-executive director of one of the largest Primary Care Trusts in the country. Helen's mother and grandmother were both nurses and her father and two sisters are all medical professionals.

When asked to comment on her appointment Helen said "It is only when a diverse group of special

people come together like this that real opposition can be mounted against decisions that are wrong for the people of Maidstone. I am very proud to be asked to become a part of this essential local campaign and I hope my experience will help to achieve the best possible outcome".

MASH is already showing its considerable weight in the campaign for services at Maidstone Hospital, having been immediately invited to meet the top people on both the Maidstone Hospital Trust Board and their overseeing Primary Care Trust board.

The Chair of the executive committee is Conservative Councillor Eric Hotson and other members include Bob Bounds of the Kent Messenger and Dennis Fowle of the Downs Mail newspaper, who moved for the formation of MASH



Helen Grant with her fellow members of the MASH Executive Committee at their inaugural meeting on 21st July 2008

at a meeting on 21st July at Maidstone Town Hall.

The medical profession are represented by Dr Paul Hobday, chairman of the Maidstone branch of the British Medical Association. MASH also has the full support of Ann Widdecombe and Hugh Robertson, the two Tory MPs whose constituencies are most affected by the threats to hospital services.



THINK YOU CAN HELP?

Write to Helen and let her know how. Contact details are on the back page

PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE BECOMES PRESIDENT OF MAIDSTONE MUSEUMS' FOUNDATION

The Maidstone Museums' Foundation have appointed Helen Grant as President of their board of Trustees. Helen will be acting as an advocate to support and promote the work of three museums including; Maidstone Museum & Bentlif Art Gallery, The Carriage Museum in Mill Street and the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regimental Museum.

Helen joins the Trust just as plans for the East Wing Development at Maidstone Museum & Bentlif Art Gallery are getting underway. A lottery grant of £2m will be matched by funds from other sources to finance the project. The development will significantly enhance the museum's public and educational facilities and create more access to its outstanding collections. In addition it will allow the Council's Visitor Information Centre to be relocated to the museum, offering a better service in a more visible location. The redevelopment will promote tourism and economic growth and assist the Council in meeting its life-long learning agenda.

Right: Maidstone Museum & Bentlif Art Gallery



Helen said "I am very flattered to have been invited to become President and I am thrilled to take up this position. I will do all I can to help the Trustees achieve their goals. History was one of my favourite subjects at school and I have always been interested in archaeology too. In fact my first business venture at the ripe old age of 8 was digging up old bottles and artefacts on a Victorian dump near my home in Carlisle, and selling them to local curio shops."

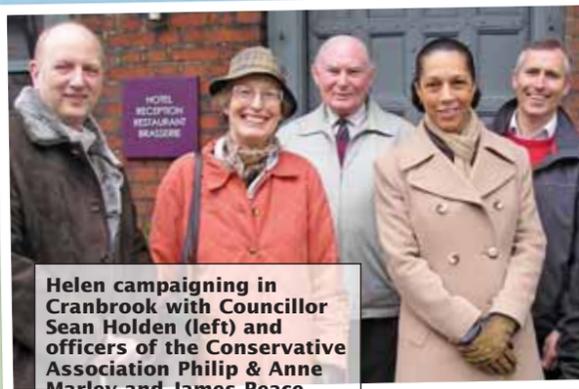
CONSERVATIVES HELP SAVE MAIDSTONE RIVER FESTIVAL

Conservative run Maidstone Borough Council has played a major part in the continued success of Maidstone's River Festival by providing a significant cash injection. Earlier this year it was doubtful that the highly popular event would take place due to a lack of funding from the now defunct Lib Dem coalition.

When the Conservatives took control of the Council in May, it committed to increase the Council's grant from £4,160 to £10,000 a year. Not just for this year, but up to 2010! Upon hearing the news, Helen Grant said "This is very good news for Maidstone. It is reassuring that the River Festival will be a regular feature once more and I am sure the event will continue to go from strength to strength. I know how hard the river festival committee works every year to provide our community with such a fabulous event. It just goes to show how much can be achieved when local people and the Borough Council work together."



Saving the River Festival - Conservative Leader of Maidstone Borough Council Chris Garland handing over the cheque for £10,000.



Helen campaigning in Cranbrook with Councillor Sean Holden (left) and officers of the Conservative Association Philip & Anne Marley and James Peace

THE CALL OF THE WEALD

Getting a good new community centre is what people in Cranbrook have been telling Helen they most want for their town and the Weald.

Helen has been working with borough councillors to help the people to get what they want and need. "It matters to people in a town like Cranbrook that they have a focus for their community life and that's the kind of politics that drives me," Helen said.

The closure of the redundant council office site has left many local groups like Age Concern, the Blind Club and History Society with nowhere to meet and Helen has committed herself to finding a way to restore a home to the hundreds of users and volunteers.

Helen has already had discussions to try to find a way forward with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the volunteers of the Weald Centre Project, who have put together a plan for a community centre on the council office site. "As a rural girl myself, I understand the issues in the Weald and the needs of the people in Benenden and Cranbrook. I will never allow the interests of such communities to be pushed aside or taken for granted."



TOP TO BOTTOM: The Old Council Offices in Cranbrook and the artists Impression of the proposed new Weald Centre

CONSERVATIVES DELIVER ON ELECTION PROMISES

Maidstone Borough Council's new Conservative administration has been working hard since winning the local elections in May to deliver its election promises.

When the national concessionary travel scheme was introduced on 1st April this year, the previous Liberal Democrat administration withdrew some of the previous benefits of the old travel scheme, including companion passes and travel vouchers.

The Conservatives have always been committed to find new ways to fill the void left by the loss of travel vouchers. Cabinet Member for the Environment, Mark Wooding said "From day one we recognised that disabled people and their carers would be greatly affected with the introduction of this new scheme with many effectively becoming prisoners in their own homes. At the Council's budget setting meeting in February this year, we put forward a proposal to support them but this was rejected by councillors from all the opposition parties. When we won the election in May, on day one we instructed officers to draw up proposals to implement a replacement scheme".

Helen Grant said "This is fantastic news. It will greatly benefit those who, through disability, just cannot use a bus. This new travel assistance scheme will continue to give those affected by the changes the flexibility and independence they deserve, and which were suddenly taken away from them in April".



Councillor Mark Wooding Cabinet Member for the Environment

STOP PRESS

The Conservatives have also agreed to re-instate companion passes to the national bus pass scheme which will enable those disabled people who are able to use buses to be accompanied whilst travelling. This is expected to be in operation by the end of September.

Interview with Helen Grant

A strong voice for Maidstone & The Weald

Helen Grant is bidding to become the next MP for Maidstone & The Weald. Since her selection to fight the seat for the Conservatives last January she has been out and about meeting members of the community far and wide in the constituency. Many people have asked her similar questions so for those who have yet to meet Helen, 'Maidstone & The Weald Matters' decided to find out how she will deal with the job of being an MP and what makes her tick...

Question: What led you into the world of politics and how long have you been in it?

I have always had strong views and have fought for what I believed in. Individual freedom combined with personal responsibility, free enterprise and a non-interfering state are important issues to me. I have also always felt strongly about being compassionate toward other people too and have firm opinions about families, women, social justice and social mobility, probably because of my work and my personal background.

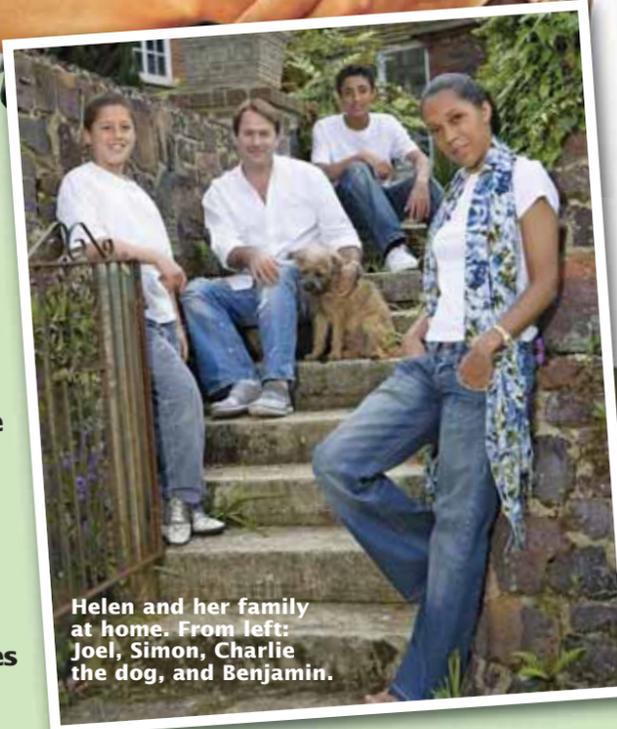
My party political awakening came in 2004. The children were no longer babies and were becoming more independent and my business was maturing with a good management team in place. I was ready for a new challenge where I might be able to continue helping other people both as individuals but also on a broader scale. Politics seemed to be the obvious route.

At that time the Labour Party were holding themselves out as the champions of social justice, which was important to me. In order to have a closer look I became a member for a few months but I quickly realised that they were not the champions of anything. Moreover they were failing to deal with the aspirations of normal people in our country. It was a brief and politically alienating experience and at no time did I ever 'stand' for Labour, or apply to do so, in any capacity.

When David Cameron became leader of the Conservative party in December 2005 I was inspired by his views on all of the issues close to my heart, re-engaging me with party politics, and I joined the Conservative party shortly after, in January 2006.

How has your background as the daughter of a single mum and growing up on a council estate informed your politics?

I would say it is fundamental in my politics. It has certainly provided me with an understanding of how life can be from the point of view of some of the more disadvantaged in our society. I have learned what it takes to improve one's position from a humble start, and how important the role of parents and other role models are in that process.



Helen and her family at home. From left: Joel, Simon, Charlie the dog, and Benjamin.

Helen Grant Factfile

Name: Helen Grant

Status: Married with 2 children aged 13 and 16

Secondary Education: Comprehensive School, Law Degree at Hull University

Employment: After qualifying as a solicitor in 1988 Helen quickly became a partner at a firm in South London. In 1996, after taking some time off to bring her two children into the world, she set up Grants Solicitors, a specialist firm focused on dealing with family breakdown. From humble beginnings in Helen's front room at home, the practice now looks after well over 10,000 clients in the South London, Surrey and West Kent area.

Political Achievements: Helen's political résumé includes; Special advisor to the Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP, member of the Conservative Party Family Law Reform Group, member of the Conservative Party Social Mobility Task Force working with former Shadow Home Secretary David Davis to make practical proposals in promoting social mobility in Britain, member of the Conservative Party Social Justice Policy Group (Family Division) providing professional knowledge, opinion and creating policy and initiatives that support British families. In January 2008 she was selected as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the Conservative Party for the Maidstone & The Weald Constituency.

Question: You have a reputation as a formidable self-made business woman and lawyer. Will that help you in the House of Commons?

As a lawyer and a professional person I have made a good living for twenty years by working hard, being well prepared, going to court, speaking on behalf of my clients, fighting for their rights and for Justice. As a business woman and an employer I have gathered the skills needed to run a substantial business. So yes, I most certainly believe my experience has equipped me to speak up for the people of Maidstone & The Weald in Parliament.

Question: If elected as MP, what will you bring to the county town?

I will continue where Ann leaves off and I am working hard with her already. In particular I would like to see Maidstone Hospital put its troubles behind it and regain its position as a full service hospital at the heart of the community. As a mother of two myself, I understand how important it is for all children to have access to good local schools and I am a strong supporter of Grammar Schools. I would like Kent International Gateway to be defeated to protect our beautiful Kent countryside from predatory developers. I would like to see us all doing our bit for the rural economy by supporting our local suppliers and producers as much as we can. I will also engage with the business community and do what I can to help attract new businesses to the area for increased employment opportunities, growth and long term prosperity.

Question: How do you feel about fitting into Ann Widdecombe's shoes?

Well, as she is a size 5 and I am a size 7 that will be a tough call, but I seriously don't think anyone will ever step into her shoes. She is unique and we are very different people. Ann is a high profile and eminent MP who has worked very hard for the last 21 years. She has shown you can speak out in accordance with your conscience and still survive in British Politics. I will strive to emulate this and maintain the integrity of service that she has given, in my own way.

Question: What attracts you about the constituency and where will you live?

Maidstone is an historic county town not unlike my childhood home in Carlisle, another famous market town set amongst beautiful rural farmlands. Perhaps that is why I feel very at home here. The people are warm and genuine and I have already made many friends. Simon and I have been registered with agents since February but have yet to find the right home and, like everyone, we are worried about falling house prices. We are looking for something old with character that we can do up and make our own. If anyone out there can help, please get in touch.

If you would like to ask Helen a question do email her on helengrant@helengrant.org



Helen Grant

Helen Grant will be the Conservative parliamentary candidate for Maidstone & The Weald at the next election.

You can contact Helen at:

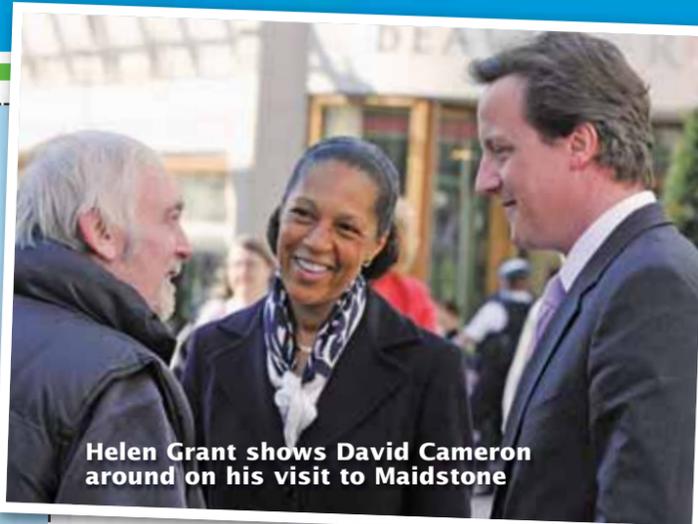
 Maidstone & The Weald Conservative Association, 3 Albion Place, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5DY

 07703 202002

 www.helengrant.org

 helengrant@helengrant.org

The Rt. Hon. Ann Widdecombe MP is still your Member of Parliament and will remain so until the next General Election. If you need her help, please call 01622 752463.



Helen Grant shows David Cameron around on his visit to Maidstone

David Cameron Visits Maidstone

The Conservative Party leader has visited Maidstone twice in the last six months, pictured above on a walkabout in the town centre where he talked to local people and visited the offices of Age Concern with Parliamentary Candidate Helen Grant.

Mr Cameron then set out his policies on violent crime and anti-social behaviour to the Borough Councillors and members of the Conservative Association in a private meeting in the Bishop's Palace before giving a press interview to the Kent Messenger.



Please take a moment to fill out the crime survey and let us have your views on how we can help mend our broken society.

Crime Survey

Q1 Have you been a victim of crime in the last few years

Yes IF YES, PLEASE TICK TYPE OF CRIME BELOW No

Anti-Social Behaviour Car Theft Burglary
 Physical Attack Identity Crime

Q2 If yes did you report this to the Police

Yes No

Q3 Do you agree with us that Police should be freed from unnecessary paperwork to spend more time on the beat?

Yes No Unsure

Q4 Do have a problem with Anti-Social behaviour in your area

Yes No

If yes please tell us where

Q5 What do you think about Labour's plan to introduce ID Cards

Agree strongly Agree No Opinion
 Disagree Disagree strongly

Q6 What do you think about the Conservatives proposals to introduce a Border Police force to protect our Country from illegal immigration?

Agree strongly Agree No Opinion
 Disagree Disagree strongly

Q7 If there is anything else you would like to tell us please let us know here.

Q8 Which Party did you support at the last General Election?

Con Lab Lib Dem UKIP Other

Q9 If there were an Election tomorrow who would you support?

Con Lab Lib Dem UKIP Other

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel/Mobile:

Email:

YOU CAN RETURN THIS SURVEY TO HELEN FOR FREE:

Maidstone & The Weald Conservative Association, FREEPOST MA827, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 5BR

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The information you supply us with will be treated by the Conservative Party in the strictest confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be passed on to any third party. From time to time we may contact you with further details of Party policy, special members offers etc. By giving us your e-mail address you are agreeing to receive communications and information from us. If you do not wish to have your data stored by the Conservative Party, please tick this box:

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Can we help you?

Please let us know of any issues you would like us to deal with locally or nationally...

Can you help us?

If you would like to help your local Conservatives please tick a box(s) below...

- I can help deliver leaflets
- I would like a postal vote
- I would like to help local campaigns
- I would like to join the Local Conservatives
- I would like to make a donation

Please return to:

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