

# SOUTH NORTHANTS CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

4<sup>th</sup> August 2016

Dear Member,

Thank you so much for your support over the last few months - whether you personally supported the 'Vote Leave' or the 'Better Off In' campaign, the Conservative Members of South Northamptonshire have continued to be as loyal and good hearted as ever.

My own efforts in recent months have been entirely focussed on the best interests of our great Country. I campaigned to leave the EU because of my profound belief that our best future lies outside that organisation. I stood for the leadership of our Party and our Country because I felt it vital that those who supported leaving the EU should be willing to carry out the task of making it a success. My decision to withdraw from the contest was in recognition of the fact that our new Prime Minister had a huge majority among MPs, that she had made clear she was committed to Brexit, and that it was very clear to me that what the country needed most was a speedy resolution that would unite us, rather than a damaging nine week campaign. I hope that you will agree that my decision was the right one in the circumstances. I enclose for your interest an article written by Graham Brady, Chairman of the 1922 Committee, who explains very clearly from his own perspective, the events around my decision to withdraw.

I would like to take the opportunity to address a small number of points that arose in the campaign and which you may have read about in the media. I will, of course, be happy to answer any detailed questions you may have about any of them, or any other issues, but I am keen in the meantime that you hear directly from me on these matters.

First, my CV is entirely as I presented it throughout the campaign, and you can read the proof in the form of evidence from the Chairman of Barclays, the Director of DPFM and the CEO of Invesco Perpetual on my website ([www.andrealeadsom.com](http://www.andrealeadsom.com)). It remains important that we have politicians who have had experience outside Westminster and I believe myself highly qualified in that regard.

Second, I have made it clear that I emphatically reject the newspaper article that claimed I said being a Mother would make me a better Prime Minister. I am sure you will agree that whether we have children, extended family or none, we all have an equal stake in, and contribution to make to, our society.

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Third, with regard to comments about male carers that have been attributed to me, I want to be clear that I had a superb male nanny for my own children for five years, and have for many years tried to encourage more men to teach or become carers and thereby serve as vital role models for children. I believe that men as much as women are equally suitable for these important roles.

Turning to the future, I am truly delighted to be the new Secretary of State of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). When the Prime Minister called me in to offer me the job, I assured her of my full support.

My new challenge, in leading a department which is highly driven by EU rules and regulations, is to ensure we maximise the superb opportunity to make UK food and farming, and our environment better, stronger, more productive and more successful than ever before. Nothing could be more important than the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. I am very excited about the months ahead!

Once again, may I finish by thanking you for your support and encouragement over the last few months, and assure you of my commitment to our own beautiful South Northamptonshire and all its residents.

Very best wishes,



Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom  
MP for South Northamptonshire

Encl.



# Commons DIARY

Maintaining his best poker face to the end of the race, **Graham Brady** sees party contest go through with no catch for the '22

**D**ean Martin famously quipped that 'you're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on'. Well, however sober we may be, after the last week, I think we are all holding on. When the second ballot for the Tory leadership opened at 9am on Thursday, we still had three candidates for Prime Minister. Shortly before 4.30pm I declared the result: Michael Gove 46; Andrea Leadsom 84; Theresa May 199. Michael Gove was eliminated, Leadsom and May would go to a postal ballot of Conservative Party members. The Conservative

Party board had decided to over-rule the unanimous recommendation of the 1922 Executive for a speedy contest and planned a protracted nine-week election. Perhaps I was a little mischievous to say that the result was 'currently' planned to be announced on 9th September, but given the widespread clamour for certainty and direction it did seem hard to believe that we could let things take that long.

After the vote I met with the remaining campaign managers, Chris Grayling and Tim Loughton, to brief them on the way the process would unfold. Later, I took a call from

Andrea, mulling over the maths of the contest in parliament and obviously deeply concerned that nine weeks of uncertainty might have a damaging effect on the economy.... Reading between the lines, I took the precaution of exploring the constitutional implications, should one of the two remaining candidates choose to withdraw, as well as the proper interpretation of the party's own rules.

Back home on Friday for a meeting with Manchester Airport. Hearing about their impressive plans for investment and improvement. Then into a weekend of slightly eccentric events connected to the Altrincham French festival – now in its fourth year. Britain has voted decisively to leave the political structures of the EU but once a year, my bit of South Manchester still turns a little bit Continental...

Monday morning in London, I take the call from Andrea Leadsom. Very calm and dignified. Her decision was made. It would be good for the country to have an early resolution and there was only one way it could be delivered. In many ways the easy thing for her to do was to carry on. I am left thinking she has been principled and brave, it would be deeply unfair if anyone thought the decision was made because of some unpleasant weekend media.



Arriving in Portcullis House, Sam Coates from *The Times* says hello, 'It'll be a long nine weeks!' he calls. I try my best poker face. By the time I know that Andrea will be breaking the news to her team, I call the Cabinet Secretary to give him the news and ask for advice. The Palace mustn't discover from the telly that we will be recommending a new prime minister rather sooner than expected. The civil service whirrs into action and the legendary flexibility of the British constitution comes into its own. More calls to check the party's rules and to consult Rob Semple the chairman of the voluntary party.

As Andrea gives her statement in Cowley Street, I prepare to go and brief the media outside St Stephen's entrance. There is speculation that candidates previously eliminated might re-join the race or that the whole exercise would have to be repeated. Thankfully the rules were clear, the withdrawal of one of the final two candidates must be agreed by the chairman of the '22 and the party board but surely it would be absurd to force a candidate to stand for election against her wishes? Once the withdrawal was approved there would only be one candidate remaining...

I feel slightly bad that my announcement interrupted Angela Eagle's campaign launch.

Early in the afternoon I receive confirmation that the



board has consented. I call a special meeting of the 1922 Committee at which I will make the formal declaration. Theresa May then joined us as our new leader, with a date confirmed for her to become the party's second woman prime minister, and all done properly, on merit and not by positive discrimination! Did I imagine any of this when Theresa and I joined the Education and Employment select committee together in 1997?

Tuesday, I am delighted to do a Q&A with sixth formers from Sale Grammar. They remind me that I confidently predicted a Brexit vote when I spoke at the school a few months ago. I tell them that I hope our next grammar-school educated prime minister might scrap the silly statutory prohibition that stops people having any new grammar schools in areas where there is demand for them...

Wednesday saw David Cameron's last PMQs, after

which I went to speak to the Association of Conservative Peers. Last week nearly all the questions were about how the leadership election could be accelerated. At least this week I could give them an answer!

Some colleagues are thrilled that we have our new prime minister, some are sad that there was no final contest. All are glad that we have avoided the paralysis that grips Her Majesty's Official Opposition. In the time that it took the Labour Party to work out what its rules are, we have conducted all stages of our leadership contest and installed a new prime minister. I think our rules (drafted in opposition) need re-visiting to meet the needs of a party in government .... but maybe we aren't so badly off after all. ■

Graham Brady is Conservative MP for Altrincham and Sale West and chairman of the 1922 Committee