Richard Chamings stood as a parliamentary candidate for the UK Independence Party in the general election last May. Born in Devon, he graduated from Edinburgh, and is a companion animal vet at White House Vets in Malvern, which he established in 1985.

What is the experience of standing for election like?
I first stood as a parliamentary candidate in North Herefordshire in the 1997 election, the one that Tony Blair won with a landslide majority. At that time UKIP was somewhat eclipsed by the Referendum Party; we were basically a single issue party – coming out of the European Union. I only got about 400 votes, but as a first foray into serious politics, and making up policy on the hoof, it was a lot of fun. Since then I have stood in Worcester City twice, but this last election was the first time that I have stood in the same constituency as the one in which I work. I have never previously wanted to mix business with politics. However, apart from one French lady taking her custom to another practice, my clients were generally supportive. A lot voted for me (or so they said), and a lot agreed with me but still voted Conservative for various reasons – and even those who disagreed with UKIP policies seemed to respect me for having the courage to put my head above the parapet.

How long have you been involved in politics?
I originally joined UKIP because I was convinced that Britain would be better off – in every respect – outside the EU. My view, if anything, has hardened over the years as I see us handing billions of pounds over to Brussels every year, having lost control of our farming and fishing industries, being inundated with red-tape and bureaucracy, having no control over our borders, and being unable to set up trading agreements with the countries of our choice. Our own public services are being cut to the bone, our national debt continues to rise, and yet we continue to subsidise the poorer countries of Europe.

Do you enjoy campaigning and canvassing?
The most daunting part of the campaign was taking part in the numerous candidates’ hustings that took place around the constituency. One has to have the answers at one’s fingertips, and it is certainly a leap from the relative comfort zone of general practice. Rather like Question Time on TV, I always hoped that I wasn’t asked first so that I had time to gather my thoughts. One question was ‘What have the candidates achieved locally?’ The other candidates were all involved with local government in one way or another, and could talk about an issue that they had been involved with. My wife was having kittens in the audience wondering what I was going to say, and, fortunately, I was not asked first. After initial panic, I talked about the trafficking of puppies from Eastern Europe – bringing more puppies into the country when our local rescue kennels are bursting at the seams. As well as a welfare issue, it is also a result of the EU’s open border system.

What was your proudest moment?
My proudest moment was getting nearly 8000 votes and coming second in the constituency. My slogan ‘Vote for the vet’ had obviously helped. Nationally, the result was disappointing. UKIP got four million votes and returned one MP. In comparison, the Scottish National Party polled 1.5 million votes and got 56 MPs.

What do you do in your spare time?
Aside from work and politics, I have little spare time, but I like to walk my dogs, Chipper and Dilya, over the Malvern Hills. I also play bridge and enjoy the odd pint of real ale. I recently stood down from the board of the Malvern Hills Conservators so that I have more time to devote to the forthcoming EU Referendum. Bring it on!

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Ten-minute chat

Richard Chamings

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