

Chairman's Report 2012/13

My first thank you must be to the District Councillors for their support over the past year and for the welcome they have given me when I have visited their towns and villages. I have tried to visit every ward in the district. Councillors have warmly greeted me at their community halls, schools and churches and have so proudly informed me about their communities. I would also like to thank the Deputy Chairman, Cllr Alan Pett, for his valuable work during the year and of course the officers and staff for their support.

I have been fortunate to be Chairman for this particular year of celebration with the Jubilee and the Olympics. The first Jubilee event of the Summer was in May at a sunny Jubilee Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace followed by Jubilee events all around the District in June which were exciting community occasions.

25,000 people lined the streets in July to see the Olympic Torch bearers pass through the District and we were blessed with a day full of bright sunshine for the cheering crowds. I welcomed the torch into the District at Seal, saw it travel through Sevenoaks Town, passing the District Council offices and then leave the district at Bessels Green. The stewards, police and council officers all did an excellent job. The atmosphere was electric and the day was a glorious occasion which everyone will long remember.

In September, to complete an eventful summer, the District Council hosted the Road Cycling Paralympics at Brands Hatch, this was certainly a big occasion and a big responsibility for the district but the council officers really rose to the challenge. The week was a wonderful success and I was proud to represent the District Council and to host Lord & Lady De L'Isle. I must give a special mention to the volunteers who were responsible for so much of the success of both the Torch Relay and the Paralympics, it could not have been done without them and the District Council hosted a 'Thank You' event at Dorton House. The summer of 2012 was certainly Sevenoaks District Council's 'Moment to Shine'!

No sooner had summer ended than Christmas celebrations seemed to start with concerts, carol services, nativity plays and pantomimes, it was a magical season. Spring has been a busy time and a flurry of last minute invitations arrived in the last couple of months.

I attended over a 150 engagements ranging from grand formal occasions to small local charity events but all have been enjoyable in different ways. The towns of Sevenoaks and Swanley are well served by their Mayors but I know other parts of the District rely on the Chairman of the District to attend their events and this year a record number of invites were received from the North of the District. It was interesting to see parts of the District that I didn't know (thank

goodness for satellite navigation) and I have visited all our neighbouring Boroughs and Districts and a few further a field. The most memorable event was the Battle of Britain Memorial Day at the National Memorial to the Few held on the famous white cliffs as spitfires flew in from the channel.

The charities and voluntary organisations, some funded by SDC, I have visited are too many to mention but it has been a privilege to attend and I have been pleased to receive photos, news and return visit invitations. I am impressed by the enormous number of volunteers who work so hard in various capacities in the many charities in this District. Often an area of a charity does not follow council boundaries so I have made a number of visits outside the area whilst prioritising Sevenoaks District. I have used the office of Chairman to raise the profile of a couple of small local charities and this has been very rewarding.

This was the first year the Chairman has not had a designated officer to organise the diary but it seemed to work well as the role is becoming less formal with many invitations received by e-mail direct to the Chairman. Duties have evolved more streamlined and local but that is probably not a bad thing. I would like to thank Philippa, Charlie, Vanessa, Katie and Daniel for their patience and assistance.

My final thanks go to my husband, Ray, for his good humour over my two years as Deputy and as Chairman. We have recently been blessed with a long awaited first grandchild so we are looking forward to having more free time with our family. We have enjoyed our year and Ray and I will have fond memories.

I was determined that the theme and comments during the year would not be cuts, changes and frugality but a more positive theme of 'celebration and fun' and I hope in this Jubilee and Olympic year that this has been achieved. It has been a historic year in the history of Sevenoaks District and I am proud to have played a small part.

Good luck to Cllr Alan Pett and to the new Deputy Chairman for the coming year. I wish District Councillors and officers well in the challenges ahead and my best wishes for 2013/14.

Cllr Dee Morris

