

SDC Chairman's report 2016

What a year! Previous Chairmen have reeled off statistics about the copious events they have attended as SDC Chairman, but I have had to be selective in which events I agreed to attend – both because I wanted to focus on those invitations that had a more tangible benefit for Sevenoaks – such as the many charity AGMs - and encouraging the immediately neighbouring Mayors & Chairmen in their events – and because this year personally turned out to be somewhat traumatic and busier because of unexpected external incidents. Although still memorable and productive, I am afraid that in the end it has not been possible to organise a Civic Service this year – for a variety of reasons outside my control - and that omission has very much disappointed me more than anything. But we have forged some particularly good friendships with several of the other mayors & chairmen throughout Kent.

I spent time with senior personnel in many charities, to encourage them to look outside their current over-dependence on dwindling and/or single funding sources - such as SDC & KCC - helping them plan for a more robust future or at least a more diverse funding reliance. And the offer is still open to cast my experienced eye (the blood-shot one) over the next steps in their campaigning and future planning.

I mostly avoided tea parties and the like, especially if far-flung such as in Kent's coastal towns or Essex (or beyond), but in focussing on how other Councils or their partners run things, I did manage a trip to the Royal Observatory in Greenwich (the day when their computer doing the night-sky projections crashed); and Dreamland in Margate (unfortunately before the treasured Scenic Railway was ready to open); and The Battle of Britain Memorial (in Capel-le-Fern in July when the weather was so awful that the flying displays were all cancelled), and to see Eynsford Concert Band in concert in Sevenoaks, with quite a good supporting act that night (the Grenadier Guards). The Royal Engineers museum in Gillingham was a good one too.

Back at home, I hosted 2 events deliberately to show off to surrounding Mayors & Chairmen some of our local attractions (and to show them how we can organise events to make these assets really entertaining for visitors): In September, two dozen came to Lullingstone Castle & World Garden for the day, where the Mayors & Chairmen were expecting to be taken around the

church and stately home by a professional or Blue Badge guide, but they got me instead (and believe me we had a lot of fun), and Tom Hart Dyke gave a very special tour of his World Garden. Then we had a private viewing of Lullingstone Roman Villa, to round off what they all thought was a great day out.

Early this April, working with Les Robus, a previous tenant of this chair, we had 19 of them attend an exclusive day at the White Oak Indoor Bowls Centre in Swanley – where again they enjoyed a special day out (much better than the usual Stately Homes, they said) and superb lunch. Highly recommended.

I should say that both of my events were self-funding through the ticket sales, and in fact raised a few extra quid for the DAVSS (Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service). But my main objective was to show off our local attractions.

One of my oddest events was playing guitar (with our vicar's wife and a friend), while wearing chains, at a fund-raising concert for the D'Vine Singers (a charity group in 7oaks, using music as a therapy). And a DVD of the event does exist.

The stats? In my cutting down I am afraid I only attended just over 140 events, but still clocked up just over 3,500 miles around the county. And almost every Kent District & Borough was covered, though we sadly missed Gravesham - for no apparent reason.

Several of the events were at local schools and of course The Stag – and I am immensely grateful to all those who kindly invited me to their various events.

I am particularly grateful to SDC Officers, especially Jo Middleton who replaced Charlie (a girl) and Georgie (a boy) for the invaluable support. (By the way, Jo is a girl too – it is all getting very confusing). And of course Pat Smith (another girl!), who has now had enough of me, and is retiring. And to Vanessa and David as well, in Democratic Services.

But a special thanks to Vice-Chairman Cllr Simon Raikes who has been able to attend probably more events than he was expecting as my deputy – but I know he loves it really, and I suspect he will be particularly good as my successor.

And thank you to my wife and Chaplain and Consort (not necessarily in that order), Dorothy.

And finally a big thank you from both of us to everyone who extended their hospitality towards us; to everyone who attended my 2 events; and to those

who supported us throughout the year; and to all of you, especially for your
patience, thank you.

Cllr Philip McGarvey May 2016