

“My dear Margate and friends from afar,

It is my honour to stand before you today as your new Mayor. It's inspiring to see so many of our community in the room. So have a look around you, and get to know each other, because I truly believe that together we can achieve anything.

For this speech, I am going to thank a few people, mention the food and refreshments we have, talk about empowerment, a bit about hope and fear and finish off with the objectives I have set myself as your Mayor.

To our departing Mayor Cllr Heather Keen, I would like to send my sincere thanks for her tireless effort, she has attended 133 events and has taken us to the point where a Margate Town council community governance review is just round the corner.

By my side is my Mayoress, I feel proud to have as my friend Iris Johnston, a former councillor for 24 years in Margate and one of the most well connected and well-loved people in the town for her tireless effort on behalf of the residents of Margate.

And a final thank to Ingrid Spencer, the Margate Town Clerk, Mick Tomlinson and Horace Shrubbs who have done so much to organise some of our fund-raising events, that allow us to give back to the community through the Margate Mayor's Fund.

So, after the formal part of this meeting is finished, we will be inviting you in the next room for some sandwiches from Sundowners, and freshly baked pretzels from Gina's bakery (highly recommended). And once the food is eaten, you are welcome to join us at the George and Heart pub for a beer!

So last year I mentioned empowerment and asked questions of the audience to see what you wanted from the Mayor. I am keen to put my words into action as your Mayor so I have already spoken to Ingrid about doing a piece of work with the current Margate seafront lights and seeing what options are available for colours and brightness, and then let you the people of Margate decide what you want. And then, as we approach a Town Council over the next few years, we will need your input even more as we find out what priorities you want us to focus on. So, stay tuned for some participatory democracy.

I don't know if all of you know this, but I recently left my wind farm job in Ramsgate, to, in effect, be a full-time politician, both as Councillor and as your Mayor. This may seem a strange decision and to be honest with you, I am quite scared about it. But what gives me hope, what encourages me, is seeing so many people in this room, in our community who have taken risks too. A few weeks ago, I attended the 10th anniversary of both Margate parkrun, and Thanet Food link groups in Margate. These groups rely massively on volunteers to keep Margate fed and healthy. Now, imagine how it must have felt for them to start these organisations from scratch, to turn up to the first Margate parkrun waiting and hoping for people to join whilst volunteers anxiously wait around a brand-new course. Or trying to set up a foodbank from scratch and keep it going over 10 years, through the pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, handing out 40,000 food parcels. So, what I am saying is this, thank you. Because it is when people allow the chance of failure into their lives, that most often society comes together to help each other succeed.

And a quick quote from the film Coach Carter starring Samuel L. Jackson, “As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we’re liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others”.

So, thank you to all of you in the room who have taken risks, whether that is joining community groups, setting up businesses, volunteering, or helping Margate become the brilliant place it is today. We want to support you and see you thrive so do get in touch.

My key performance indicators are simple for the upcoming year; Carry out some participatory democracy and allow the people of Margate to make more decisions starting with the seafront lights, and secondly, to get the Margate Town Council over the line so we can become a more useful organisation to serve the residents of Margate.

Thank you”.