

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, and Fellow Residents.

Good evening and welcome. It is a privilege and an honour to stand before you today as the mayor of our wonderful town. I am deeply grateful for the trust you have placed in me, and I am committed to serving our community with dedication and integrity. Thank you to Cllr Keen and Cllr Currie for their kind words and nominations. I would like to start by placing it on record a huge thank you to our outgoing Mayor Cllr Rob Yates and Deputy Mayor Cllr John Edwards along with Iris Johnston Mayoress and Pat Edwards, Johns wife. Rob has dedicated the last year of his life serving the Margate community and has huge success supporting the refugees, town council progress and attending events in Margate and beyond. They both have left big shoes for me and the incoming Deputy Mayor to fill.

A town council has always been a top priority for the Charter Trustees, and I am pleased to report that there has been some excellent progress with the formation of a town council looking even more promising in the next two years. This is down to the hard work of my fellow Charter Trustees and the work of Rob in the last year. And I promise you my commitment to continue the excellent work of my colleagues and carry on working on bringing Margate the town council it deserves.

Without the presence of a town council our beloved high street has suffered some neglect over a period of time. It is essential that we tackle some of the key issues to ensure economic development can blossom with in our town. We must attract new businesses, support the existing businesses and local entrepreneurs, and create job opportunities for our residents. Our town can be and will be a thriving hub of innovation and commerce, and we are all committed to sustaining this momentum.

During my year as Mayor, along with my Mayoress, Deputy Mayor and her consort, alongside the work Rob has started we will be focusing on 5 areas:

### **Youth services**

Visiting, working with and promoting the incredible youth services and organisations in the area. As many know I started my service to the community in the Air Training Corps who are here this evening along with other youth organisations. We are lucky and thankful that we have volunteers who work hard to ensure these organisations are available to our young people – Thank you. We have an opportunity to bridge the gap between their youth services and longer term opportunities once they become an adult and no longer volunteer with that organisation.

### **Mental Health**

It is no rumour that mental health is on the rise and not only in adults but we are seeing it more within our young people. We have recently seen Mental Health Awareness week where East Kent Mind delivered the Wear It Blue campaign to highlight the excellent work that happens already within our communities. My role as Mayor will be to support and promote these campaigns to ensure everybody can access support when they need to.

### **High street**

I have spoken briefly about Margate High street. The bonus of being the Mayor is it is not a political role. It provides a great opportunity to bring together those of different parties to tackle a key issue within our town. Not only this but, working with the high street businesses to solve key issues such as high traffic levels, poor parking behaviour and the general look of the area.

### **Regular Fundraising**

The role of the Mayor and the team is to fundraise for local community organisations. Funding for smaller charities and community groups is becoming harder to access so it is important that we raise as much money as we can to be able to make small grants to our community groups. Alongside this it is also important to champion key organisations in the VCSE sector such as Social Enterprise Kent, Kent Community Foundation and similar organisations who hold the gateway to great funding opportunities and developments.

And the final one is the **Town Council**.

But none of these accomplishments would be possible without the incredible support and involvement of our residents and businesses. Your volunteerism, community spirit, and willingness to lend a helping hand are what make our town truly special. Whether it's through neighbourhood associations, charity events, or local campaigns, your contributions are the heartbeat of our community.

In a moment I will appoint the Mayoress who will accompany myself and the Deputy Mayor in achieving what has been laid out this evening. When seeking to appoint the Mayoress, I wanted to appoint someone who would roll their sleeves up and not afraid to be hands on. The Mayoress, I am sure you will agree has achieved so much for a wide range of people from supporting female leaders in business to forming a first class platform of Thanet Virtual High Street and everything in between including being nominated for make a difference award. I am looking forward to working with them for the next year.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor receives an allowance each year. Myself and the Deputy Mayor have opted to donate this into the community fund pot. This means on top of what is in the account there will be readily available money for community groups to access.

Looking ahead, there is still much work to be done. We must continue to listen to each other, work together, and strive for excellence in everything we do. We want to create a town where everyone feels valued, where opportunities are available and grabbed with both hands, and where we can all thrive together.

In closing, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you. Thank you for your trust, your support, and your unwavering commitment to our shared goals. Together, we will continue to build a brighter future for our town.