

## Message from the Chairman of Kent County Council



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## Chairman's Diary July 2017

Here are a few things I have done in the last couple of weeks, in case you want to see how the other half live, or, perhaps, tut contemptuously at a life wasted.

4<sup>th</sup> July High - Sheriff's Garden Party – the County out in force with many hats in evidence. There were at least 150 of the great and good and the whole was dominated by the High Sheriff himself, George Jessel. George is a man of unlimited enthusiasm and energy who combines a strong sense of duty with the desire to have fun whatever it takes. He has a splendid 18<sup>th</sup> century uniform which he wears by default. It's a three piece in black velvet, worn with stockings, buckled shoes and a fore-and-aft admiral's hat and he clearly suffers in hot weather.

Your chairman, happily, has no such dress code to honour. There's a modest badge of office dating from 1945 and that's it. Matched socks advisable, but not compulsory.

6<sup>th</sup> July and most Thursdays - Citizenship Ceremony – a great pleasure to convey a sense of occasion to new citizens with a brief ceremony at which Certificates of citizenship are presented by the Chairman and a Deputy Lieutenant is present and each makes a high-flown and mercifully brief speech. The ceremonies take place at the Archbishop's Palace and the officers see to it that 25 people are processed in half an hour without it seeming in any way to be a process.

7<sup>th</sup> July – County Show – a day for standing around in tweeds trying to remember people's names. The KCC stand was much reduced from former times but focused on apprenticeships. Much better than just worthy, with bright young people there to show what their world is going to be like.

11<sup>th</sup> July – Kent Foundation Trustees Meeting – the Chairman of the County Council is a member of the Board for his year. The Foundation brings together young entrepreneurs and new companies with experienced mentors to very good effect. A hidden gem.

13<sup>th</sup> July – County Council – one of the six formal meetings of the year. These involve a certain amount of ritual, which I try to keep to a minimum, although it provides a sense of continuity. There are formal questions, which are submitted in advance, and a report from the Leader on matters with which he has been concerned followed by responses from the opposition leaders. You just have to get through it all. This time there were papers on the latest iteration of the Local Transport Plan (which personally I find engrossing, trying to find affordable solutions to the problems of creating infrastructure to meet the planned growth in population and housing numbers), and Members' remuneration. I'm not going there.

14<sup>th</sup> July - Kent Challenger Games – at the Julie Rose Stadium in Ashford. A sporting event for children at school from all over Kent with an emphasis on those with disabilities. There's a strong connection with the military and how serving men and women can engage with young people to help them build the foundations for a good adult life.

19<sup>th</sup> July – West Kent Mind AGM at Sevenoaks. An organisation to help grow an understanding of mental health issues among adults and young people and children providing training and services to promote wellbeing. A wonderful organisation. I made a speech emphasising the value of the work Mind does and expressing the gratitude of the County Council. An evening typifying the best part of the Chairman's job.

21<sup>st</sup> July – Premier Coatings Ltd - Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, and I visited Premier Coatings Ltd., a company in Smarden that has just been awarded the Queen's Award for Industry. Located in what had been agricultural buildings, the company manufactures Corrosion Prevention and Sealing Technology. Their range of products has been used for over 25 years and has a proven track record and they are proud to be the foremost company in this field. The range comprises of a variety of specialised pipe coatings including tapes, brush and spray applied liquid coatings, mastics, primers and sealants based on materials such as petrolatum tapes, butyl rubber bitumen tapes, plastics and epoxy resin. Systems are tailor-made for individual anti-corrosion and sealing problems developed with the realities of an onsite application in mind. Their extensive product range is suitable for use in a wide range of highly corrosive environments with operating temperatures ranging from sub-zero to 250°C.

Terry Capps, the managing director, showed us the manufacturing process on state-of-the-art machinery. Debt-free, the company is investing at home and abroad to service its overseas markets. A 40-ft container leaves the site for overseas customers most days.

Premier Coatings employs twenty people, many of whom have been with the company for decades and who love their jobs.

Mark and I were hugely impressed with this company of likeable people who are not without competition, but succeed with their apparently unbeatable products and their appetite for growth.