

# Chairman's update: August and September 2020

## Sheds Virtual Visit

On 6 August, I joined a virtual meeting of the Kent Sheds programme via Zoom. The programme, originally started in 2014 to combat loneliness, social isolation, and mental health problems, has had great success in moving to virtual meetings following the lockdown in March this year. However, even with restrictions being lifted, many members are unable to return to their shed sites due to the limited capacity within their buildings, and the virtual meetings allow them to continue their weekly activities. Kent Sheds have set up the Virtual Quiz Shed and the Show and Tell Shed for those who want to continue with shed activities virtually and at home. There are also two Chat and Share Virtual Sheds, where members can meet for a coffee and a catch-up. Members can attend virtual talks and learn how to complete their projects at home and then share their successes via the online meetings.



## VJ Day 75

On Saturday 15 August, both the Vice-Chairman and I attended socially distanced VJ Day events in the County. I attended a wreath-laying ceremony in Margate in the morning, while the Vice-Chairman attended an event in Folkestone. In the evening I attended a wreath-laying in Canterbury and a special evensong in Canterbury Cathedral, while the Vice-Chairman went to an event in Dover. Both the Vice-Chairman and I were pleased to represent the Council at these events to mark such an important occasion.



## Visit to Porchlight Housing Project in Maidstone

On Monday 17 August, I visited Porchlight's Housing First scheme - the first of its kind in Kent. The scheme is designed to help rough sleepers with the most complex mental health needs, who often struggle to engage with typical homelessness services. Under Housing First, they are moved straight into a home of their own, giving them a sense of ownership and empowerment. The project is run in partnership with Maidstone Borough Council and Golding Homes. I really enjoyed seeing the project and hearing about the successes of the programme, including winning the Kent Housing Group's Excellence Awards 'Excellent Partnership' category.



## Merchant Navy Day

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September is Merchant Navy Day and due to the Covid-19 pandemic this year, we have been unable to mark this day in the way we usually would. I was so pleased to be able to join the Chairman of Dover District Council, a Merchant Navy Veteran and the Chairman of the Kent Merchant Navy Association, to lay a wreath (socially distanced of course) at the Merchant Navy War Memorial in Dover.



## Canterbury Pride Exhibition

Each year, Canterbury holds a large Pride event to celebrate the LGBTQIA+ community. This year, celebrations were postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions, so instead there was a Pride Exhibition at The Beaney in Canterbury and on 8 September, just before the exhibition closed, I was able to visit and mark the occasion.



## Charity Walk

After months of planning, reviewing, risk assessing and training, the first of the four-day walk for Porchlight finally dawned. I was met by Lauren Sullivan and Peter Harman at Ebbsfleet Football Club and headed off on my 56-mile walk. I met with many friends along the way and I am grateful to all who supported me. I thoroughly enjoyed walking along the Pilgrims Way from Thurnham to Charing Hill. If you ever find that you have a couple of hours spare, I can highly recommend this as a wonderful walk with some fantastic views. I completed the walk at Canterbury Cathedral and enjoyed a cup of tea with the Dean. I am delighted to say that, to date, I have raised **£3,956** with donations still coming in. I cannot thank everyone who supported me and donated to Porchlight enough. Your generosity is humbling, and I am truly grateful to everyone who helped me complete the walk and exceed my fundraising target.



## Charity Virtual Bridge Tournament

On Sunday 20 September, the Tyler Hill Bridge Club held a virtual bridge tournament via Zoom in aid of my charity for the year, Porchlight. I am delighted to announce that this event raised £530 for Porchlight and I am extremely grateful to Tyler Hill Bridge Club for organising the event and supporting my charity.

## Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Kent Virtual Meritorious Service Awards Ceremony

On Wednesday 23 September, I attended the Lord Lieutenant's Virtual Meritorious Service Awards Ceremony via Zoom. The Awards recognise members of the Reserve and Cadet Forces who demonstrate the volunteer ethos and build and nurture the enduring relationships that are so important to the County and local community. It was great to see the recipients and hear their inspiring stories. All the Awards were well deserved, and it was an honour to be part of the celebrations. Congratulations to all who received an Award this year.



## Together4Dover Virtual Visit

On Monday 28 September, I joined both the Lord-Lieutenant and High Sheriff of Kent at an online virtual presentation from Together4Dover. At the beginning of the pandemic, Together4Dover was formed by a core team of representatives from various local organisations and groups to offer Covid-19 support to the most vulnerable people in Dover (operating under the umbrella of Dover Big Local). During the presentation we heard from founding members of the group and some volunteers were given the opportunity to share their stories. Together4Dover is a brilliant initiative that has helped vulnerable, isolated and lonely people at a critical time. I hope that the strong spirit that has been created will be an inspiration to continue to support the most vulnerable people in our communities as we move forward through the pandemic and afterwards.

## Virtual Civic Reception

During the early evening on Monday 28 September, I hosted my first virtual civic reception, with the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff attending. It was great to hear what everyone has been up to during these extraordinary times. It was also an opportunity for me to welcome all the new Mayors and Chairmen as well as those continuing their term of office. During the evening we heard from Porchlight about their activities during the pandemic and from Kent County Cricket Club. We auctioned a Kent County Cricket bat signed by the 2019 Men's Squad, with Rob Thomas submitting the winning bid. It really was a lovely evening and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many of Kent's Civic Dignitaries.

