

Mayor's Report – 29 January 2024

As this is the first meeting of 2024, I'd like to begin by wishing all councillors a very happy new year. It's been a long while since my last report so here's a quick overview of the events I've attended in my role as Mayor.

On 13 December, Cllr Bright and I were lucky enough to be invited to attend the East Kent College, Inclusive Learning group's Christmas concert. This was a mixture of songs, sketches and readings from a group of young people who rarely get the chance to be heard. I've got to say that this was one of the most enjoyable and inspirational events I've had the pleasure of attending.

Later that day, we met with the Student Voice team at Charles Dickens High School – who were discussing some of the work they're doing on trying to make the streets in Broadstairs safer and the ways in which they could volunteer in the community. I have high hopes that we've got a ready source of volunteers should we need them!

After a much-needed Christmas break by first civic duty of the new year was to attend the Greek Orthodox Blessing of the Seas in Margate. This event has been ongoing since the 1960s and was well attended by Mayors from across Kent, the MP for North Thanet and diplomats from the Greek and Cypriot missions. Cllr Bright and I were joined at lunch by a young man from Egypt, who is Greek-Palestinian in descent. He told us that he sadly lost 18 members of his close family during an Israeli attack on the Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza City back in October. This, more than anything, brought home the terrible situation everyone is facing in that part of the world right now.

It was our pleasure to take a tour of St. George's Secondary School on 10 January, and to meet with the Assistant Head and Head Teacher. They told us about the challenges they have as a school and the day-to-day challenges faced by many of their pupils. We were impressed with the great work they are doing, particularly for those children outside the normal curriculum and they, for their part are incredibly enthusiastic about the work the Council is doing. I hope we can work closely with them in future.

As we move into 2024, I'm delighted to see that Vanessa has begun work on the gardens and that this hasn't gone unnoticed by Broadstairs' residents. I'm sure we're all very much looking forward to seeing the results of her hard work come the spring. I'm also pleased that TDC have finally removed the shelter in Pierremont Park – which had become a magnet for antisocial behaviour. This is just the first step of reclaiming the area and I'm excited about the potential for a new community event later this year.

I'm sure we're all delighted in the progress being made on so many of our projects and I look forward to many more successes throughout the year.

Finally, councillors will have noticed that KCC are proposing a change of use for the former Canterbury Christ Church campus student accommodation. They want to use it to house unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the UK. Whilst this is being met with some concern amongst residents, I believe our duty as councillors should be to explain the process and work with all stakeholders to allay any fears and make every effort to turn this into a positive for our community. Having got to know everyone on this council over the last few months – I know that we can make a positive difference on this front.