



The Right Worshipful the Mayor of New Romney, Councillor Patricia Rolfe's final address at the end of her two year tenure as Town Mayor and Chairman of New Romney Town Council at the Council's Annual Statutory Meeting on 15th May 2017

Right Worshipful Mayors, Worshipful Mayors distinguished guests - which means every one of you here tonight

Wisdom, Clarity and Kindness – we all need a dose of that each and every day. As I stand here tonight, my beautiful daughter Emily Rose will be praying for me and for this Town at Lambeth Palace together with fellow members of the St Anselm's Community of which she is a part. I am confident that many people have been praying for me and for our area over my tenure as Mayor – and their prayers have, I believe, been answered.

It has been a privilege to serve as Mayor of this Ancient Cinque Port town for the past two years. I have met and engaged with so many wonderful people and have been given and pursued the chance to open doors to new opportunities for our area. There are so many individuals and organisations that are doing so much to benefit our Town, our district, our county and our country. It is both humbling and inspiring to meet them, to hear their stories and to be given the opportunity to

promote their work for the common good. Some cynically say that it is only 'bad' news that sells – well I strongly oppose that – everyone needs to be made aware of all that is positive in our society and in our world and by shining a light on that we can definitely make a difference.

In the bible, the prophet Micah observes that each of us should "Do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God". This should, I believe, be directed, in particular, at those who hold public office, and I have tried to do that.

So how can I summarise two of the most exhilarating and challenging years of my life. I have made personal friends on the circuit – the well renowned members of the Chain Gang – those positive ambassadors of their communities, and embraced a complete spectrum of events. From sleeping rough – as part of "the Big Sleep" in Folkestone to raise awareness of the issue of homelessness, to attending a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace representing the Shepway division of the Kent Association of Local Councils. My Deputy Mayor, who accompanied me will confirm that HRH Prince Phillip was rather attracted to the Mayor of New Romney's glistening chain and came across to talk to me – much to the astonishment of his Gentlemen at Arms who were leading him in a different direction. I can personally confirm that – yes – he does have a very regal twinkle in his eye and I enjoyed the opportunity to talk briefly to him and mention our wonderful Cinque Port Town.

There has been a range of local, district, county and even national events at which I have represented our special area. So many joyous occasions – from the opening of the Country Fayre in New Romney, attending the Mayor of Canterbury's charity dinner and dance at Canterbury Cathedral, the formal installation of the new Deputy Constable of Dover Castle or the beating of the Retreat at Chatham Barracks. However, it must be acknowledged that there are more solemn occasions at which it has been important that New Romney be represented. The passing of the late Lady Fleur Boyce led to my attendance at her funeral. A handful of Cinque Port Mayors attended the funeral at a tiny village church in Hampshire that was full to overflowing – when the coffin passed, followed by our wonderful Lord Warden, Lord Boyce, he quietly acknowledged the presence of a row of gold chains. It was very moving but it was important to be there to demonstrate the respect and affection that this town has for him and had for his late wife. Likewise, attending the service at Canterbury Cathedral to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Cheronobyl disaster as well as meeting some of the children who live in that still ravaged environment and still suffer from the after effects of that nuclear disasster is a memory that I will keep hold of.

The Cinque Ports Confederation's link with HMS Kent has been amazing and I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to attend some receptions aboard the Royal Navy Frigate. I met with members of the

ship's company several times and was afforded the 'once in a lifetime' opportunity to spend a day at sea with them last June sailing from Portsmouth on a clear, sunny and thankfully, calm day.

As Civic Leader – one has a golden opportunity to raise money for good causes. I announced at the last Annual Statutory meeting of Full Council that I would be guided by a new Mayoral Mantra – Courage, Caring, Creativity and Competence which, by the way, I believe should apply to and guide all good Councils. I therefore chose 4 charities that linked to that: The Salvation Army represent Courage; Demelza House Children's Hospice represent Caring, JAM on the Marsh represent Creativity and the New Romney Sea Cadets represent Competence. Last Friday, by optimising fundraising opportunities throughout the year I was able to present a total of £4600 raised over the past year to representatives of my chosen charities - £1000 to each of the aforementioned inspiring charitable institutions and an additional £600 to benefit St Martin's Field Charity which together with a private, personal donation will fund the installation of a bespoke bench in our local heritage park that celebrates and acknowledges the role of past, present and future Mayors of this Town. Looking round I see many of you here today, so this legacy will celebrate your good work.

As Leader of the Council, I have encouraged a seismic shift in its direction and path. We have, over time, made

significant changes to the internal and external workings and policies of the Council such that it is now perceived as one of the most dynamic Councils of its size in the County of Kent. This was evidenced by my being afforded the opportunity to be guest speaker at not just one, but two KALC Conferences. I was asked to make presentations on the strategy of the Council and its projects, and then later, to focus on Public relations for local Councils and New Romney Town Council's approach to this. Delegates from around 50 Councils across Kent seemed enthralled by our approach and it was encouraging to receive the very positive response from those present. New Romney Town Council is, without doubt, a positive force to be reckoned with.

What have we achieved? Extension of Free Parking along the High Street to 2 hours, the introduction Long Term Parking within West Street Car Park, the installation of a new play feature on Fairfield Road Recreation Ground, complete and sympathetic refurbishment of the Ground floor and internal hallway of this Town Hall as part of the rolling maintenance programme, complete overhaul of the local Allotments agreements such that a more business-like approach to the areas management is achieved, appointment of a Professional Project Management team to assist in the progression of the much- needed new Sports Pavilion and Community Hall, appointment of a well reputed, award winning firm of architects to assist in the Design of the same, three simultaneous public consultations to feed into the potential development of the Community

Hall, a new Emergency Plan and seeking feedback on the potential for a new Bandstand to be sited on St Martin's Field.

On behalf of this Council, I have led the campaign on Romney Marsh to improve health provision for rural areas. This has ranged from initial letters of concern sent to the Secretary of State for Health, to chairing local meetings here in this chamber involving senior managers from NHS England, the South Kent Coastal Clinical Commissioning Group; and the assistant to the Chief Executive of SECamb – as well as our MP . We have made a difference – in that some resources have been redirected to our area as a result and I am, and will continue to be, in constant dialogue with these major providers.

The key to success is 'teamwork' I have encouraged a much closer working relationship with our local District Council – its officers and members. As an example, this Council and its officers proffered a way to release space for 50 additional graves in the local cemetery as well as an area for larger ashes plots that was accepted and implemented by the District Council and has allowed a short term solution to the issue of lack of cemetery provision on Romney Marsh.

A key regeneration project has been the complete refurbishment and upgrade of the New Romney Garden

of Remembrance. Overseen by this Council the project brought together a range of organisations for a common cause and promoted the principle of “Respectful Remembrance”. Council officers and I garnered both moral and financial support of the Royal British Legion, the local Scouting group, local businesses and individuals as well as both our District and County Councillors, We have also negotiated the transfer of the land from the District Council back to Town Council ownership and the legal process should be completed with a few short weeks

One of my long term goals has been to ensure that a strong path to regeneration is established for this area. Two successful grant applications secured a total of £15,000 to fund the development of a socio-economic plan for the Town and encourage the creation of a New Romney Coastal Community Team. This document entitled “From Town to Tide – Creating a shore path to success for New Romney” (please forgive the intended pun) was drafted by economic regeneration consultants – Regeneris, and myself, – in close and direct consultation with the newly formed CCT which consists of key organisations linked to the economy of New Romney. It contains a wide range of suggested initiatives to help boost the economic prospects of our Town– from improvements to public realm amenity spaces to support of new and emerging events and initiatives linked to the four themes of Community & Service, Tourism & Heritage, Art & Culture and Business & Enterprise. Many of the projects will need applied

public consultation to proceed and significant grant funding however, it has already opened doors – we are now a part of the newly established National Coastal Culture network and I was able to attend the launch of this artistic network at a reception held in the House of Commons in February.

Expressing gratitude and acknowledging good work has also been a key theme for me. Last year I introduced a “Pride of New Romney” award scheme to celebrate local community heroes who do so much in our area. I was delighted to present a second round of awards at this years Annual Town Meeting last month. The New Romney Sea Cadets, the Royal British Legion, Miss Rebecca Godden and Mrs Veronica Bailey were all congratulated for their valuable contribution to our Town. The New Romney Christmas Tree of Love was introduced last year and we have ensured that a Town Christmas Tree can and will be installed on Cinque Port Place in future years enabling local people to place a ribbon on public display to celebrate at that most special time of year, those they love, or have loved and lost.

These are just a few of the initiatives that have been progressed and implemented for the benefit of all those who live, work or visit our Town. For those who say a local Council can do and does nothing – I can clearly show that there is strong evidence to the contrary. A good local Council with positive leadership can be a dynamic driving force within any community it serves

providing it leads, it works and it listens.

So – the role of Town Mayor and Chairman of New Romney Town Council has been both exciting and challenging. I embraced the opportunity to make a difference and I have given my all. My faith, my Mayoral Mantra and the love of my family have anchored me throughout my tenure and kept me strong. From the bottom of my heart I thank my husband, Spencer, the Mayor's handsome Stallion – for your unswerving and deep love and support. To my Mayoral Chaplain, the lovely Reverend Julie Coleman. I thank you for your wisdom, kindness and above all your friendship. To our Town Clerk, Cathy – it has been a pleasure to work alongside you. Your calm and objective professionalism in all you do has enabled this Council to flourish and I thank you for that. To Tracy, Marlene, Anne and Sue, Shaun and Phil – thank you for all you have done to support me and this Council. To my Deputy Mayor, Peter and fellow Councillors I again express gratitude to you all, it has been a positive if sometimes, eventful journey and through your ability to engage and expand we are taking this Town on a definite march forward. And to all of you in the community who have expressed support for me, for what this Council has done and for what it intends to do – I am grateful. It has been an honour to serve you and I will continue to do that albeit from a slightly different perspective releasing time to focus on leading and further developing some of the projects being undertaken, most notably the Community Hall project. I wish my successor – Councillor Coe,

every success in the coming year and will do what I can to support him.

I will end with one of my poems written some time ago entitled "Wise Words"

Words are a powerful tool.

One golden rule.

Use wisely well.

Said, spoken, heard.

A word of hate

Will generate

A ripple of destruction

Buffering all shorelines of goodwill.

Write, whisper, tell.

One word of love

Soars high above

To those celestial plains where Peace Hope reigns.

Angel of unity for Man.

Shout, listen, sing.

A word of Truth

Promotes Man's youth.

Shedding cloaks of age, discord and rage.

Innocence restored.

Wisdom regained.

So – I will formally finish my mayoral tenure with four sweet words “God Bless New Romney”

Councillor Patricia Rolfe

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of New Romney (2015-2017)

