DOVER AND DEAL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS - 2026 AGM

REPORT ON SANDWICH TOWN COUNCIL BY CLLR. MARTYN PENNINGTON

This year has been a mix of the ceremonial and administrative. The ceremonial is linked to the importance of Sandwich as one of the key Cinque Ports, and the Lord Warden Admiral Sir George Zambellas has visited us and taken an interest in the town's progress. We celebrated this year in particular because the current mayor, Cllr Emmet Csuka, is the 800th mayor of the town.

Council business has been intense, well-conducted and forward-looking. I have produced a draft paper on the Council's response to climate change which was submitted to the Heritage and Townscape Committee and published in the Council's magazine. Also as a member of HTC I have strongly advocated a closer partnership with the town's small businesses, and was pleased to see this bear fruit recently in the creation by the businesses themselves of a forum to interact with the Council. This immediately proved its worth in enabling Sandwich to speak with one strong voice in relation to the damage to and closure of the Toll Bridge.

One complex issue has been the creation of the Georgina Maddox Charitable Trust, which has absorbed much energy and legal work, but is now up and running. As a member of both the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee, and the Sandwich Toll Bridge Fund (STBF) Finance Committee, I have been involved in the key decisions on the improvement of the Council's financial management and in particular its management of the assets of the Council and the STBF.

Politically the predominance of independent councillors endorsed by the local grouping 'Sandwich Matters' on the Council was maintained by the election of their candidate in a by-election in July; their candidate is however known to share the Lib Dem 'DNA' although she is not a member. We were relieved that Reform did not put up a candidate but with the shambolic demise of the Government's plan for Local Government Reorganisation we shall face elections in May 2027 as the main political opponents of Reform.