

Members,

It is now time for my final announcements.

First let me give a warm welcome to our Alderman who have come to grace us with their presence. They are: Patricia Banks, Susan Glasspool, Felicity Hindson, Roger Kimber, Margaret Snaith-Tempia and Michael Woodhall.

You will all have a list of the latest engagements that my vice-Chairman and I have attended on your behalf, so I won't go into any detail on them at this time. It has been a great honour and a rare privilege to have had the opportunity of representing you as your Chairman for the past year. Thank you.

It has been a year in which many important anniversaries of events in our nation's history have been commemorated.

The Battle of Waterloo 200 years ago in 1815 that ended Napoleon's aim to dominate Europe and seize our British Empire; the Centenaries of the outbreak of World War One in 1914 and Gallipoli in 1915 in which our forebears sacrificed so much to preserve our freedoms.

The 75th year anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two in 1939, when once again our gallant forces had to defend our shores, free thousands from Hitler's death camps, and liberate countries under the heel of occupying enemy force while our folks at home bore the brunt of wartime austerity and the terror and destruction wrought by the Luftwaffe and the Nazi Dictator's doodlebugs and V2's.

The 70th anniversary of the D Day Landings in 1944 and the Celebration of Victory In Europe Day that quickly followed this in May 1945, that set us on the path to peace and the prosperity we enjoy today.

It was a year in which a marching band from the Army beat the retreat outside our Great Hall and an RAF band carried out a similar ceremony at their base in Odiham to celebrate the years of service our much loved Dame Mary Fagan devoted to Hampshire as she completed her term of office as our Lord Lieutenant, and the year when we welcomed Nigel Atkinson, her highly respected successor who had spent many years in her service as her Vice Lord Lieutenant.

It has indeed been a great pleasure for me to have had the privilege, on your behalf, to host events that have commemorated these occasions and to host and attend the many other events that have taken place across the County during the past year. Including, our armistice-day service commemorating the sacrifices made by our Council's servicemen and women to defend our freedom, which took place for the very first time before the new war memorial, now located in the courtyard outside our Great Hall.

Like you, I have long been aware of the work that individuals and voluntary groups do in their local communities, but my role as your Chairman gave me the opportunity, on your behalf, to acknowledge their efforts and to experience for myself the dedication and compassion that unpaid individuals, volunteers and voluntary groups

freely give to their communities year in and year out over the length and breadth of the County. They are often helped to do this with the support given to them by the County Council and we at the County Council would find it difficult to meet all the needs of the people and the communities we have the duty to serve without the work they do. It was a pleasure to visit them and congratulate them on your behalf for the work they do.

Just a few weeks ago the Leader and I were both very proud and privileged to host a reception on your behalf in the Great Hall, to make awards to a representative number of these volunteers who had been nominated by the people they had helped, and so to have their commitment formally recognised and rewarded.

At the start of my Chairmanship, I said the theme of my year would be to support business in Hampshire and the families of our servicemen and women who were in need of help. I am grateful for the donations that have been made to support the Soldier Sailors and Airmen's Families Association by guests who have attended a number of the commemoration and social event that I have had the pleasure of hosting.

I would also like to thank our officers for supporting me in my aim to support business in Hampshire. Particularly those in our Economic Development Department who helped me to host a meeting between Hampshire Business Chiefs and our Leader, Chief Executive and the appropriate members of the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team, to explore ways to co-operate in growing the local economy, increase job opportunities for our residents and bring greater prosperity to the people of Hampshire. I understand that this has led to an improvement in the communications and links between the Hampshire business community and our Council's officers that has been helpful to business needs and the development of the Council's economic policies.

I would also like to thank the officers who have helped me to acknowledge and reward the efforts of the increasing number of apprentices in our employ who are already making a valuable and innovative contribution to the work of the Council. This has resulted in the establishment of a Chairman's "Apprentice of the Year" award with others to be granted to those who are judged to have made the most significant contributions to the work within the areas of work they have undertaken during their training.

I had the pleasure of hosting the first of these events recently and was enormously impressed with the way that these bright young people had responded to the opportunities the Council has given to them and the added value their contributions have made to the departments to which they have been assigned. These young people are our future and we are fortunate to have them with us.

We have an outstanding Music Department and they went out of their way to add music and colour to the many events I have had the privilege of hosting during this time and to meet challenges the year presented. In particular for the Choir's outstanding performance at our Carol Concert where their very first rendering of Handel's Halleluiah Chorus won a standing ovation.

Also, I would like to commend them for the variety of music and songs featuring the popular music from the World War periods that were performed at my Chairman's Concert this year. Familiar rhythms and ballads that recalled how Marie Lloyd, Glen Miller, Vera Lynn and many others had done so much to boost the morale of our troops and the people on the home-front during those difficult times.

Not least, was our Music department's achievement of taking an honoured place in the Guinness Book of Records by winning the world record for the largest number of musicians gathered together to play the Ukulele. An event that encouraged literally thousands of our young people not only to listen to music but to learn and enjoy how to make music themselves, and an event at which the Mayor of Southampton and I together with some of my Councillor colleagues were delighted to take part.

I would also like to thank all of you Members, for the support that you have given me this year.

You have made it a real pleasure to Chair these meetings and to see how in these difficult times, Members of all groups have worked constructively together, with our dedicated officers, to take the sometimes difficult decisions that were necessary to protect the vital interest of our residents.

Thank you very much for this.

Finally I would also like to place on record my gratitude for the tremendous efforts of my PA Natalie Jones; Sue May the County Council's Civics Functions Officer and the County Council's facility management and catering teams who have worked so hard to facilitate not only the events that I have hosted, but also to organise the collection of donations for my theme to support the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen's Family Association to whom I now have the pleasant task of presenting a cheque for over £1,000 that has so generously been donated by guests who attended some of the commemorative and social events I have hosted over the past year. May I now invite Mr Noel McCleary, Secretary of that organisation to step forward to receive it.

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