

Councillor Susie Hosford's Mayor Making Speech 2017

High Sheriff, fellow Mayors, distinguished guests, fellow Councillors, friends and family – a very warm welcome to you all and thank you for joining us tonight.

I'd like to start by thanking Trevor for his kind words in proposing my nomination, Peter for seconding and my colleagues for demonstrating their support by voting for my adoption to serve as the Mayor of Dorchester for the second time.

It is wonderful to see so many people here and I am sure that you will all agree that the Town Hall Keepers and our Outdoor Services Staff have done a marvellous job of dressing this historic building so beautifully for the occasion. I am also indebted to Gina, our Mayor's Secretary, who has the unenviable task of coordinating all the arrangements and making sure that everything runs smoothly.

When the subject of local politics comes up, people often ask 'why do you do it?' to which I often reply "well, nobody makes us do it so I suppose we must enjoy it!"

I am pleased to be able to say that being an elected member of the Town Council is far removed from the dramas and intrigues of national Politics. I am confident that my fellow Councillors would agree with me when I say that it is not about Politics – we all do it because we love our Town and we want to be involved and contribute towards preserving and enhancing all that is good about it and creating opportunities for everyone who lives and works here.

But the fact that we have put ourselves forward and been fortunate enough to be elected does not make us the sole custodians of the Town and its future. We are here to represent and support the views of the people who have elected us, but we can only do this if we know what those views are. It remains the responsibility of everyone in our community to take an interest in what is going on, find out what is being proposed, take part in the seemingly endless consultations, form a view and make it known! That is the only way that we can work together to make our Town the place that we all want it to be.

There are so many different ways in which people are actively involved and contributing really positively to our community. We are fortunate to have a wonderful richness of voluntary groups and many organisations who are working hard to make Dorchester a really special place and on a smaller scale there are many examples of like minded people joining together, getting their voices heard and making a difference. People sometimes avoid becoming involved with the excuse that 'one person can't make a difference', but in our Town there are countless individuals who do make a real difference by doing their bit, quietly and without fuss. They are the unsung heroes of our Community who contribute so much in all sorts of ways, often with no recognition or support at all.

I first moved to Dorset in 1980 and not surprisingly I have remained here ever since! Dorchester is a wonderful place to live and to bring up children, a safe Town full of friendly, welcoming, helpful people and this enriches everyone's experience. It is a standing joke in my family that it is impossible to walk down South Street on a Saturday morning in less than an hour because we meet so many people to stop and chat to! We are a close knit and caring community which responds to the needs of others and I have every confidence that the Syrian families who we hope will be making their homes here later this year will receive a warm welcome and many offers of friendship and support.

Dorchester is a very beautiful town, with fabulous buildings, rich in history and surrounded by stunning countryside which is only five minutes' walk from the town centre. It has a wealth of heritage assets and a wonderful literary legacy and with the development of the Shire Hall, the major expansion of the County Museum and the prospect of a fabulous new Arts facility at the

Maltings there is even more to value and be proud of. But we must work together to make more of this unique heritage, championing it, displaying it and promoting all that Dorchester has to offer to encourage people to visit, enjoy and share the many delights of our County Town.

Of course we want to preserve our beautiful buildings, green spaces and sense of history, but we don't want to live in a museum and I am pleased to be able to say that Dorchester is also a vibrant, developing town! When I first came to live here there was no bypass, Thomas Hardy Gardens was a boys upper school and Poundbury was a housing development to the North of Bridport road which bordered on open fields. On a good day you could inhale the pungent smell of hops drifting across the town from the Brewery! What an amazing pace of change in 35 years!

That change continues today, with new Poundbury and the development at Brewery Square forging ahead, the development at Red Cow Farm completed and the prospect of Dorchester Prison being transformed into flats and houses. In the future we have the prospect of yet another major development bringing a significant number of new houses and whilst we welcome the opportunities for more people to make Dorchester their home, we must take on the challenge of ensuring that there is a focus on much needed housing for young people and families to help us to create the more balanced community that we want to achieve. We are still desperately short of Affordable Housing and we will continue to do all we can to secure delivery on development sites. I am extremely proud that the Town Council is taking a lead on this issue by working with Housing Associations to identify potential sites for new Affordable Homes in the Town.

There are other significant challenges ahead with Local Government Reorganisation, further cuts in vital services, the development of our Town Centre and continuing problems with traffic and parking. We are living in a time of change and change brings challenges, but change also gives us opportunities and we must make sure that we are proactive in recognising those opportunities and take full advantage of them so that residents, businesses and visitors can all benefit.

This year I will be supporting the work of two local charities – the Citizens Advice Bureau and Cavernoma Alliance UK. I'm sure that all of you will know about the CAB, but it is surprising how many people don't realise that although there is a national umbrella organisation, all the local branches are independent charities responsible for raising their own funds to enable them to continue their vital work in their local communities. In the past year, the Dorchester Office helped nearly 4500 clients, sometimes with a complex pattern of multiple issues and often some of the most vulnerable members of our Community who are the first to be affected by cuts in services that they rely on. Cavernoma Alliance UK is a wonderful example of how one person can use their own experience to reach out and support others in similar circumstances. The charity was established in Dorchester in 2005 by Dr Ian Stuart following his own diagnosis with the condition, in response to the difficulties he experienced in obtaining information and support. The charity now supports over 70 families throughout the UK, campaigns for research and raises awareness of the condition amongst the medical professions.

There is so much to say about the fantastic work of both these Charities so I am delighted that Daniel from CAB and Sian and Debs from Cavernoma Alliance UK are all here tonight. They will be manning information points upstairs and have come because they value the opportunity to chat to you about what they do, so please help to make it a worthwhile evening for them by making a point of talking to them and taking away some information.

Toni and I have a very hard act to follow because Tim and Anita have done such a wonderful job over the past year. They have been totally committed to their roles and their sense of fun has been irresistible – we have all learnt to expect the unexpected and that the unexpected comes in many

different forms! I know that many, many people have enjoyed meeting them and have appreciated their presence at a huge variety of events and it is very reassuring to know that I can rely on their support throughout my year in Office. I know that I can also rely on the support of our excellent team of Town Council Staff, my fellow Councillors, Toni and the rest of my family and George who has kindly agreed to take on the role of Mayor's Scout, so I feel I am in good hands!

I now look forward to a busy and exciting year ahead promoting our exceptional Town and spending as much time as possible meeting local people and finding out more about everything that makes Dorchester such a special place.