

## Rogate Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024

It has been nearly a year since I was elected as the District Councillor and quite a lot has happened in that time at the Council.

There has been a renewed focus on the Environment and a continuing emphasis on investing in the long-term health and well-being of our communities. In addition to these priorities we have been working on a regeneration strategy for Chichester city and the towns within the district and working hard to get our (woefully overdue) Local Plan up and running. All of this has been undertaken within sustained pressure on budgets and spending.

The council (CDC) is preparing for a new Climate Action Plan with a consultation which is about to launch. We have been working hard to reduce emissions within the council – decarbonising our buildings and reducing vehicle emissions – we are now looking at how we can help the wider community in this task. We are moving forward with the Chichester Harbour Investment and Adaptation Plan to look at nature-based solutions and habitat creation as part of our sea defences – recent coastal flooding has emphasised the importance of this. We have begun work on a new biodiversity strategy and are looking at ways to restore chalk streams in the district.

There is continuing support for those feeling the pressures of the cost of living crisis and the continuing challenges around housing. The *Supporting You* scheme helps with debt and employment advice as well as budgeting support and advice on health and wellbeing. The social prescribing team aim to give people the opportunity to talk through some of the non-medical issues which are having an adverse impact on their lives. CDC operates a Council Tax Reduction Scheme and offers Discretionary Housing Payments. Homelessness continues to be a problem and the cost of short-term Bed and Breakfast accommodation has become a significant drain on resources. Fortunately, the Council has managed to secure additional temporary accommodation to relieve this pressure. There has been some concern about the selling-off of social housing within the area. This has been addressed and should not be a problem in the future. I continue to hold regular meetings with Hyde Housing.

One of the important factors in ensuring that the local economy continues to thrive is keeping young people in the area. We have been talking to the university and have set up a nighttime economy working group. We have given permanent funding to a Growth and Sustainability officer as well as supporting the various Vision groups around the District. It is now a year since the Midhurst fire. The

council stepped in to offer significant support to the town with a package of over £300,000, as well as business support on the ground and marketing activities to encourage people back to the town. The funding has been used to provide grants to eligible businesses, pay for a new website to promote the town and to provide coaching from a retail specialist. The Town Team is also developing a new Midhurst Business Partnership. In addition, we are working on an events programme to encourage people to visit and spend within the town, with more things planned with Midhurst Town Council. CDC has also been working alongside the Midhurst Partnership to support several projects in the town – including improvements to the Grange green walkway. Residents and businesses have been resilient throughout and they have been committed to helping the town bounce back as quickly as possible. The Council will continue to champion the town.