

## About Cllr V. A. Liote - The Mayor of Sandwich



Kikou and I moved to Sandwich from France 11 years ago. When we arrived we did not know anyone but joined in many of the activities available in the Town and were soon made to feel very welcome.

I was keen to do something for the benefit of the Town so started in small ways.

I had a lovely garden which I opened to the public for the Little Gardens Day. I also hosted many fundraising events for CR, the charity I support, which became part of the program for Sandwich Festival.

I am an artist so I put on an exhibition in St Peter's Church.

Being fluent in French, one of the first things I did was to join Steve Laslett in re launching the Sandwich Twinning Association with Honfleur. This had been languishing for some years and we started to create events and build up membership. It has gone from strength to strength and continues to build on our friendship with Honfleur today. ( fond memories of serving Cassoulet to 50 people to celebrate the Beaujolais nouveau)

When we first came to Sandwich there was only one yearly event, The Sandwich Festival in August.

The more I became involved with the Town the more I realised that Tourism was essential to the survival of Sandwich. Here was this absolute gem of a Town not making the most of it's potential.

I had become a close friend of Delia Greedy who encouraged me to become a Town Councillor, which I did in 2011.

In the same year we celebrated the 250th anniversary of the invention of the sandwich by the 4th Earl. I was asked to organise a Food Fayre. In that first year I had 18 stalls on the Guildhall forecourt. Seven years on I have over 50 stalls spread out throughout the Town and it has become a well established and popular event.

Money raised by the event was paid in to, what was then, the STCA. These funds went on to help set up the Folk and Ale Festival which is now a major event bringing hundreds of people to the Town from all over the country.

In 2015 I was re elected to the Council with 12 and per cent of the votes. Only Cllr Bragg gaining more at 13 percent. This inspired me to stand for election as Deputy Mayor which I did not do until the following year as Cllr Dunay wanted to do a second year. In 2016 I was duly elected Deputy Mayor and held that post for the next two years.

Three years ago I worked again with Steve to create Sandwich Arts Week and this year I had the idea to start a literary festival. Initially this is being incorporated into the Arts Week but I hope it will flourish and become a stand alone event.

In 2018 I was elected to be Mayor of Sandwich. I continue to pursue my interest in Tourism and am working closely with Visit Kent to put Sandwich on the map and move onto a more professional approach.