

# yourlocalinterview

## QUESTION & ANSWER

### CRAIG MACKINLAY



**Q** Can you tell us a little about yourself?

**A** I was born in Chatham and educated at Rainham Mark Grammar. I am chartered accountant and chartered tax adviser with my own practice in Chatham. I am also a trained actor and people may have seen me treading the boards at the Medway Little Theatre.

**Q** How and why did you get involved in the Round Table?

**A** My family has always been involved in the community, so when Round Table was suggested it seemed a natural thing to do. City of Rochester Round Table was suffering from low membership and I'd like to think I've been an important player in keeping it alive and helping it thrive.

**Q** What sort of things do you do?

**A** In Round Table the motto is fun, fellowship and fund-raising. In my 18 years we must have raised and distributed close to £100,000 and have been key in local anti-graffiti activities. Round Table isn't just about fund-raising. We have days out – sailing, fishing, paintballing – and have made use of the international network for visits around the world.

**Q** How passionate are you about the graffiti campaign?

**A** Graffiti is a first indicator of the breakdown of a community. Where graffiti starts,

dilapidation follows and with it anti-social behaviour, creating a climate of fear. It is a dreadful form of criminal damage. I would like to see Medway graffiti-free and have used community service offenders in the work. I introduced the partnership of Round Table and the probation service to the national Round Table Association and won the national community service award last year with clean-up projects initiated across the country.

**Q** Why did you decide to run as a councillor?

**A** Becoming an elected councillor was a natural progression of being a community activist. I also felt that my career skills would be an asset towards the efficient management of an annual council budget of £500 million.

**Q** How pleased were you to be voted in?

**A** To be voted in as a community leader is a unique opportunity and I was delighted to be elected, with the win sweetened by the knowledge that the ward had never elected a Conservative before.

**Q** What are the main areas that need to be addressed in River ward?

**A** River is a unique ward, with both inner city deprivation and the relative affluence of St Mary's Island. Drugs and prostitution are a problem. The regeneration of Chatham will bring other challenges of a bigger population

and congestion. River ward has some of Medway's finest historical features – Fort Amherst and the Dockyard – and the opportunity of World Heritage status will place Medway on the international map. The High Street requires careful nurturing to make it a thriving regional shopping centre, creating jobs and investment. It's an exciting time.

**Q** What are the best parts of your job?

**A** We all have causes to gripe about one public service or another. Being a councillor means your own gripe, or one raised by a constituent, gets a response. A call to the police area commander, local MP, head of the NHS trust or chief executive of the council will be answered and action will be taken. To know your influence has improved a decision or prevented a bad one is particularly satisfying.

**Q** What do you like to do when you're not working or Round Tabling?

**A** I'm a keen sailor and keep a boat at Gillingham marina. I'm passionate about the river and believe it should be an integral part of Medway's regeneration.

**Q** Anything you'd like to add?

**A** I'd like to wish Yourmedway a successful future and I look forward to continuing partnerships as we try to make Medway a better place.

**QA** The Conservative councillor for River ward and Round Table stalwart spoke to **Simon Robinson** about his job and his hobbies outside work plus what made him become a community leader