

## Letter from Westminster



**Steve Brine:**  
Winchester MP

FITTINGLY for the season, last Friday I took part in a special Prayer Breakfast organised by Winchester Churches Together at the Guildhall.

It was the first time such an event has been held, and I hope it is repeated. Brian Draper, who many will know from

Radio 4's *Thought for the Day*, led a panel discussion and I was honoured to be part of that.

Over bacon and eggs, we subsequently had some stimulating and refreshing table discussions - ours led by the excellent Rev David Rowe of Christ Church - with a range of guests including Winchester Basics Bank, Winchester Vineyard, local police and schools, the army and the Leaders of both Winchester city and Hampshire county councils.

As was intended, it got us thinking about what we are, and crucially who we are, as a city. To the thousands who visit our Christmas city at this time of year, we have a unique heritage, the perfect backdrop as a canvass, fantastic independent shops and of course the Cathedral and the magical Christmas market with its iconic ice rink.

But for us Wintonians, the city is not just about what we look like, it's about our people. I would argue - and indeed I did at breakfast - our richness in talent, charitable giving, compassion and sheer kindness neatly complements the history that surrounds us.

Winchester of course has a strong thread of faith running through it, not just because of the Cathedral and all that goes with it, but the Christian foundation we have here which remains so strong.

A few years ago, I met with the Charity Commission in Parliament, and they told me (alongside Bath) Winchester has the highest ratio of charities per head of population in the land. I suspect the two facts are linked but modern-day Winchester of course has many faiths (and none) and we all rub along together for the common good as it should be.

Finally, I was delighted to announce this month the winner of my annual Christmas Card Competition. Every year, I invite all of our primary schools to take part, and with generous prizes from Marwell Wildlife and Theatre Royal Winchester, Winchester Discovery Centre kindly showcases the winning entries until Christmas. Congratulations this year go to Findlay Robertson from Sherborne House School in Chandler's Ford for his stunning effort.

Our country may have many challenges at this time but they're nothing for a people with the generosity of spirit matched only by the ultimate trust.

I wish all readers of the Hampshire Chronicle the best Christmas possible and a peaceful New Year.

**Steve Brine**  
MP for Winchester and Chandler's  
Ford