A person in a suit and tie

Description automatically generated**District Dispatch**

Now the schools have broken up for the summer break, many of us will be heading to a beach here in the district or further afield. Living close to our stunning coastline, it’s often easy to take it for granted, but we are very lucky to live near such an amazing place.

As a council we are responsible for nine miles of foreshore between the opening to Pagham and Chichester Harbours. We look after the beaches at Selsey, Bracklesham Bay and East Wittering. Although West Wittering beach is in our district, this is privately managed by West Wittering Estate. Another privately owned area is Cakeham Manor.

We want everyone who uses our coastline to have fun, but most importantly, to be safe. The area is used for various activities including swimming, sunbathing, surfing, windsurfing, walking and running, so it’s important that we’re all considerate to one another. It’s also important to ensure that we keep our coastline clean and tidy. Although our cleansing staff litter pick the beaches and we are proud to support the litter picking groups that come together periodically, we should all remember to play our part in keeping them litter free as well.

One of our Foreshore Officer’s key priorities is to carry out regular beach inspections and safety checks of public rescue equipment – for example life buoys and throw lines. This includes liaising with other council services who can assist with any hazards or issues that arise on the foreshore.

Raising awareness of beach safety is also a key area for our Foreshore Officer and part of their work will be to liaise with local schools and offer to talk about keeping safe at the beach. While it’s wonderful to be so close to the coast, it is also important for people to be conscious of just how unpredictable and dangerous the sea can be. There are many hazards such as rip tides which can occur at some of our beaches that are close to the harbour. Using inflatables can also be dangerous, especially if there is an offshore wind as you can be blown out to sea. In light of all this, I wanted to share some advice from the RNLI with you which I also hope you will be able to relay to your family and friends.

If you’re in the sea and get into difficulty, the key advice is to float. This keeps your airways clear and conserves energy. Although our instinct is to swim and move, if we panic, we can lose energy very quickly. The RNLI advice is to tilt your head back with your ears submerged and then try to relax and breathe normally. You can gently move your hands to help you stay afloat if you need to. Spread your arms and legs out to improve stability. The RNLI also say that it's okay if your legs sink as we all float differently. Once your breathing is under control, you are then in a better position to call for help or swim to safety. The RNLI have produced a fantastic video which shows you what to do if you end up in difficulty in the water which you can find on their website at: [**https://rnli.org/safety/float**](https://rnli.org/safety/float) I would definitely urge everyone reading this to watch and also share the RNLI’s social media posts about how to float, as it really could save your life.

Being close to Chichester Harbour means we have lots of sailors in our community. If you’re planning on getting out on the water, then check the weather conditions with the coastguard and weather centre. Ensure your boat’s details are registered with the Coastguard Yacht and Boat Safety Scheme too. This means that if you get into difficulty, HM Coastguard have the right information to launch a search and rescue operation. You can find out more at [**https://www.gov.uk/register-boat-coastguard-safety-scheme**](https://www.gov.uk/register-boat-coastguard-safety-scheme)

Whatever activity you’re doing in the water, do check the weather and tidal information through the Foreshores section of our website before heading out: [**www.chichester.gov.uk/article/38633/Contact-foreshores**](http://www.chichester.gov.uk/article/38633/Contact-foreshores)

**T**here is also a wealth of advice at [**https://mli.org/safely**](https://mli.org/safely) and also at [**https://hmcoastguard.uk/**](https://hmcoastguard.uk/)

As I say, living close to the coastline is wonderful, but knowing a few simple actions that we can take to protect ourselves can make a huge difference.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Brown,

Cabinet Member for Environmental Strategy at Chichester District Council

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| A logo with text on it  Description automatically generated | **Sarah J Parker** Communications Manager Communications Chichester District Council |

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