

## President of the Republic meets with British Community

On Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> July the President of the Republic Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa held an informal gathering with a small group of British nationals resident in Loulé.



The meeting was organised by the Mayor of Loulé Vitor Aleixo and took place at the Palácio Gama Lobo – Loulé Criativo” and lasted around two hours. Among those attending was David Thomas President Safe Communities Portugal.

Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa started by outlining his, and his family connections with the Algarve and how the region had developed as a place where many foreigners live. During the meeting the president gave his insights on various social, economic and political issues concerning both Portugal and overseas, as well as the pandemic and how Portugal had dealt with it. The approach was informal and engaging.

He outlined the current situation concerning Covid-19 and the outbreaks, referring to Lisbon, the illegal party in the Algarve and the outbreak in Monsaraz.

Points raised by those attending concerned safety in the Algarve in respect of Covid-19, concerns over the economic impact in the Algarve especially in the tourism industry, financial assistance especially to smaller businesses and how they would survive, as well as how Portugal is reflected overseas as a safe country and ways this could be strengthened.

Safe Communities Portugal was able to make a number of observations reflecting feedback it had received from the foreign community over the last 4 months, which overwhelmingly praised the excellent work of the Portuguese government, and the robust way in which it had managed the pandemic.

Safe Communities made suggestions concerning a more standardised approach to assessing risk and that although figures are important, the initiatives that are being taken to help keep the Algarve safe, plus the level of compliance, should not be overlooked.

Towards the end of the meeting Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa reflected that there was a great effort on the part of the British Community to do much, to the extent of their possibilities, to “show how you are received, how

you live here, how you like to live here, how you want to work for the good relationship between the two countries. Naturally, in the economic part, in the business part, but also in the personal part”.

He added: “This is very important, because diplomacy is not just about ambassadors, ministers, governments and heads of state. It is made of people. And the people who live here – and there are many, almost 50 thousand – know the Algarve very well, since the vast majority live here permanently. They know what the reality is, they present the reality and that has a lot of strength to convince, to persuade, first, their compatriots and, later, the political leaders, he reinforced.

In addition to the community residing in this Algarve municipality, there are others working proactively to lift restrictions. He gave an example of mayors “who are making videos and testimonies of those who live here reach British society. It all helps a lot, it takes time, but it helps”.

Marcelo Rebel de Sousa reflected on the longstanding association between Portugal and the UK that goes back many centuries. He was hopeful that restrictions on flights from Portugal would be lifted by the United Kingdom well before the end of the summer. He was hopeful and encourage more British nationals to choose to live and invest in Portugal in the future.

It was a unique opportunity to gain an insight into the views and vast experience of the President of the Republic, in a most open, relaxed and positive environment.

We wish to thank the Mayor of Loulé Vitor Aleixo for his very kind invitation and for organising this.

By David Thomas

President Safe Communities Portugal