

Acting Town Clerk's Report – Annual Town Meeting 27th April 2010

12 months have passed since Lord Lytton presented the Council with its certificate of Quality Council status.

The Council theme for the past year has been one of continuous improvement and building on its quality council status. The Council is one of the first in East Sussex to achieve this status as well as the Power of Wellbeing. This has only been possible due to the dedication, determination and full commitment of the Council's Officers and Councillors. The Council amongst other duties can now engage in funding a wide range of community services, activities and events.

Possible future boundary changes could have a serious impact and many implications with far reaching consequences on the tax base. The issue of uniting Saltdean is gathering momentum with all concerned parties committed to a boundary review. Needless to say any future boundary change may have a substantial impact on the financial administrative viability of the Council.

Telscombe Town Council has a small tax base to draw upon with only 2700 'D' band rated or equivalent properties. The Council has to maintain and fund considerable land and property assets as well as local accessible services from this tax base. The Council continues to prudently manage its assets and income given its operational constraints and lack of funding and because of this has achieved a zero rated increase in the Council's precept for the 2010/2011 period and without having to draw on reserves.

The Council continues to maintain its assets and thus maximise the longevity of equipment and property. A retention of funds is being held back for long-term improvements and refurbishments to the Council's three play areas. Replacement of old and outdated equipment still remains a priority and replacement and refurbishment quotes are being sourced in this respect. In the current financial climate the traditional sources of funding from Central Government and the Principal Authority have been curtailed for the foreseeable future. The position is further blighted due to the lack of new development in the area which prevents the Council from acquisition of section 106 refurbishment monies.

Improvements to the Civic Centre are underway as you can see by the removal of the rear Council Chamber wall which will be replaced with folding sliding doors, and this will enhance the flexibility of the building, in turn creating greater rental space and be far more flexible for Council events and public hire. The Civic Centre has been repainted externally and the brickwork and patio areas repointed. A suitable fund retention has been made for internal redecoration when required during the current period.

The external appearance of the Civic Centre has also been greatly enhanced by the long overdue removal of the air monitoring unit with the exposed ground area being re-turfed. This coupled with the current alterations will greatly improve the asset value of the Civic Centre and enhance the marketing and rental income potential of the building. Rental income for the

2009/2010 period achieved a staggering £6,000 over budget. As a major focal point, the Civic Centre is viewed as an essential community facility and income generator.

The Council has made a future commitment to improvement during the current period by agreement to purchase two eco friendly boilers as well as solar panels to generate electricity. Both are expected to cut Civic Centre running costs as well as carbon emissions . The funding for the eco friendly boilers is being met by the majority of Councillors who have agreed to forego claiming their personal allowances for the current period. The Council thanks its Councillors for the kind generosity.

The Council's needs to maintain and manage its assets. Regarding Telscombe Tye:-

- The Milton Report on the Tye has generated a workable action plan as well as offer guidance on addressing the more long term issues.
- The disabled access to the eastern side of the Tye has been completed and the existing steps have also been improved.
- Vehicular access prevention to the Tye from both bridleway 8 and the old funeral track is under review and full consideration.
- An allocation of £27,397.00 for the current period has also been set aside for implementation of the action plan works.
- The prolonged saga of the bundling has since been resolved with East Sussex County Council and I am pleased to advise with a minimum contribution from this Council.

Contracted services have been market tested resulting in significant savings:-

- Re-tendering of the grass cutting contract achieved a substantial saving of £17,836.82 over the past 12 months.
- Cleaning of bus shelters has also achieved a saving of £452.45
- Re-tendering of the grounds maintenance contract coupled with in-house management is also likely to achieve a saving in the region of £10,000.

Whilst no additional staff have been deployed, Janet Ingle has replaced John Baldwin who retired after 7 years service. The Council's challenge in the forthcoming year is to maintain its financial standing, successfully implement and support new and existing projects and improve service delivery and community engagement.

The commitment and dedication of both council officers and Councillors has produced a modern forward thinking eco friendly aware Town Council which is not scared to embrace change or adapt to future development initiatives and can quite rightly hold its head high among the elite band of Quality Town Councils.

Stella Newman, Acting Town Clerk, Telscombe Town Council