

## Financial Report from the Town Clerk Mr Martin Duckworth

### LIVING WITHIN OUR MEANS

#### BACKGROUND - LIMITED TAX BASE

Telscombe & East Saltdean has a relatively small tax base with only 2,700 band D equivalent properties. The Town Council has to maintain considerable land and property assets from this small tax base and provide local accessible services. The small tax base and large property portfolio partly account for the relatively high level of Council Tax in Telscombe and East Saltdean when compared with other Town Councils in the District

The year 2009 to 2010 will have a Council Tax charge for a Band D property of £1,627. As you can see from the chart 69% goes to ESCC, 12% to LDC, 8% goes to Sussex Police Authority and 5% to East Sussex Fire Authority, ONLY 6% goes to Telscombe Town Council. Of the £1,627 paid by residents of Telscombe and East Saltdean only £97.36 for the entire year will go towards the services provided by Telscombe Town Council. The service provided whether through legislation, history or request include Telscombe Tye, Chatsworth Park including 2 Children's Playgrounds, The Robert Kingan playground, Clean and Maintained Bus Stops, Grass Verges cut and a Civic Centre with access to:- Planning Information, Council Meetings, Room Hire, LDC Information Portal, CAB, Regular events, Informational Web Site, Business Services, and last but not least 13 Councillors and myself and my team of 5 here to help,

#### NEED TO MAINTAIN ASSETS AND REFURBISH PLAY SPACES

A comprehensive report on the future management of the Tye has been commissioned by the Town Council and is to be published shortly for consultation. The recommendations from this report should provide for a costed action plan for improvements and the resolution of long outstanding issues.

Monies are being set aside for long-term improvements and refurbishments of the Councils three play spaces. The equipment in all three is reaching the end of its natural life; it is estimate that to refurbish each play space with new equipment and safety surfacing is likely to account for approximately £100,000 per play space the Town Council cannot resource this refurbishment from its own resources.

It is a key requirement that a structured plan for replacement and renewal of play equipment and ongoing maintenance is established. There is a need to source additional external funding for the structured upgrade and replacement of the play equipment.

#### IMPROVING SERVICES REDUCING COSTS ENHANCING INCOME

Against the background of maintaining its assets the Council is continuing to strive to improve its communication with and delivery of improved services to its residents. A regular quarterly newsletter is now produced, an up to date web site has been developed, the opening hours of the Civic Centre have been extended and an information kiosk installed. The Town Council continues to seek value for money through improved contract and partnership arrangements including re-tendering key contracts. Efforts are being made to improve income

from hiring its Civic Centre by proactive marketing also tendering for contracts to other authorities and sourcing maintenance grants for our various assets.

#### COUNCIL TAX AND RESERVES – THE NUMBERS

The Council's financial strategy has been and continues to be to live within its means and this has been achieved for 2008 - 2009 a low % increase in Council Tax was set for 2008 – 2009 assisted by the use of reserves totalling £21,295 that were prudently earmarked at the time of budget setting. A Precept of £248,293 was set giving a contribution of £92.58 per Band D property. (without a contribution from reserves it would have been £269,588) – this would have equated to £100.50 for a Band D property.

No reserves have been used in the setting of the Council Tax for 2009 2010 and significantly at least £10,000 will be returned to reserves from 2008 2009 which will bring the unallocated reserve figure to at least £68,977 an amount in line with the auditor's recommendation to hold un-earmarked reserves at equivalent to value of three months precept.

For 2009 – 2010 the precept was set at £262,875 without the use of reserves making the Council Tax for a band D property of £97.36

The Council Tax set for 2009 2010 reflects the requirement without addition of any reserves. The only new item formally allocated to reserves for 2009 – 2010 is the funding for the community bus of £2,200. The contribution was agreed after the budget setting process and it is anticipated that this amount will be met from the revenue budget by savings and or additional income. Proper management of reserves in addition to the potential use of £21,259 to reduce the Council Tax an amount of £75,000 was earmarked from reserves for specific items as follows.

£2,000 for newsletter production £2000 to be returned to general reserves for 2009 /10  
£12,000 for Park refurbishment plus £6000 from 2008 /2009 current total £18,000 to be increased by 6,000 in 2009 /10 from revenue to bring total to £24,000. £5,000 for Civic Centre Maintenance carried forward to 2009 / 2010 internal and external decoration £10,000 for Information Technology upgrade completed, a balance of £132 to be returned to general reserves and £1,500 to be carried forward as part of structured IT refresh programme. £1,000 for getting minute books binding up to date - balance of £608 to be returned to general reserves, binding is now up to date and future costs will be met from normal stationary budget. £5,000 for security cameras and equipment at the Civic Centre for the protection of staff users and assets at the Civic Centre. £1,410 to be returned to general reserves. £40,000 for Telscombe Tye £33,858 balance to be brought forward to 2009/2010 to help implement action plan from Tye report. £18,492 from these earmarked reserves had been spent at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. £4,150 to be returned to unallocated reserves from completed projects delivered under budget. The Council retained unallocated reserves of £58,977 as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 - this figure will be increased by a minimum of £10,000 being £4,150 from savings on allocated reserves and £5,850 from savings in 2008 / 09. The final figure to be calculated when the Councils end of year processing is completed.

# TELSCOMBE & EAST SALTDEAN ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

## 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2009



### CONCLUSION

#### PROPRIETARY ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE AND AUDIT SAFEGUARD

The Council has invested in and operates the RBS software package to maintain its accounts and produce financial information this is the premier financial system for local councils. The Councils accounts are audited by an independent Internal Auditor and a government appointed external auditor.

Many thanks for listening