



Seaford Town Council

Report 29/19

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| Agenda Item No: | 6 |
| Committee: | Council |
| Date: | 20th June 2019 |
| Title: | Clerk's Update Report |
| By: | James Corrigan, Town Clerk |
| Purpose of Report: | To inform Councillors of key developments and priorities going forward. |

Recommendations

You are recommended:

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
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1. Information

- 1.1 Outstanding Freedom of Information Act requests, complaints and compliments**, since the last Clerks report to the 29th March 2019 Town Council there have been two valid Freedom of Information Act requests both relating to the Neighbourhood Plan and in particular the Downs Health hub proposal.
- 1.2** There have been three official complaints. One was subsequently withdrawn after discussion. The second complaint was regarding the installation of a hopscotch area on a section of unused concrete on the seafront. This has been responded to and subsequently closed. The final complaint was regarding the name of a golf group within Seaford Head Golf Club. This was dealt with by the club themselves. However, there has been a subsequent complaint regarding the behaviour of some golfers during this incident which the Town Clerk is currently investigating.
- 1.3 Staffing update**, the Council reviewed the staffing levels within the offices early in 2019. As a result, a new part time Administration Officer Julie Paine has been appointed and commenced work on the 17th June supporting the projects and facilities team.
- 1.4** Following the return to work of Emily Piper in May to the Projects and Facilities team on a reduced hours contract following maternity leave staff have returned to their original posts and Gemma Sanderson-Baker has taken up a two day per week role at The View supporting the Marketing and events support there. new Gemma has been a superb addition to the team at Seaford Town Council during her temporary contract (maternity cover) and will be an excellent addition to View Team. The Council office team have performed brilliantly during this period of disruption and are all now performing equally well as they settle back into their original roles.
- 1.5** A report will be presented to the next Personnel Committee (August) relating to the arrangements with the Councils Film location Manager, an ever increasing and lucrative role which is thought to now justify a part time position rather than just a fixed fee. Similarly, one of the temporary chef positions needs to become a

permanent role as the demand has increased for chef's doubling and even trebling up for events.

- 1.6 Officer and Councillor development**, twelve staff recently completed NVQ level 2 qualifications in a diverse range of subjects including Leadership, Dealing with Challenging Behaviour and Nutrition. These courses were offered free through Learning Curve and were completed on line. Some staff are completing additional courses again free of charge. The Town Clerk also completed and passed CILCA in six weeks and has also completed his Post Graduate qualification in HR, result awaited. All permanent staff at The View have completed and passed food hygiene qualifications. Ben Clarke at the Golf Course has commenced his NVQ level 3 in Greenkeeping. Finally (staff wise), five employees are being tutored to complete their CILCA qualifications also these are Colin Andrews, Lucy Clark, Tony Jackson, Emily Piper, and Sharon Brydon. All are being supported by Issy Mouland who the area trainer for the CILCA is.
- 1.7** The Town Clerk recently attending an enlightening conference with colleagues from Lewes District Council on the regeneration of the High Street at Stockton On Tees. The interventions carried out by the Council there are staggering including building their own £17 million Hilton Hotel. But equally intervening to buy retail units to rent at a profit, so subsidising other town centre improvements by using low interest available to Councils or to rent at a discount to encourage a specific type of retailer to the town which it may be currently lacking. Further research will be undertaken in this area with a view to presenting a strategy to Council in due course. Conference notes and slides will be shared with all Councillors also.
- 1.8** Following the recent elections there have been **two induction training sessions** with all Councillors invited. There has also been a planning session for in particular the Planning Committee members, but again open to all. These have been very well attended and further courses are already scheduled including a Finance Training Session, a comprehensive Planning session and a field trip on the 6th July as well as a HR session for the Personnel Committee.
- 1.9 Press releases, social media, and website**, since the March meeting there have been 16 press releases issued and over 60 social media posts on the various Town Council Social media sites covering the Town Council, Seaford Head Golf Course, The View, The Mayor and Seaford Skatepark. These have covered a number of topics from promoting the new daily hire beach huts to the successes of the last four years of Seaford Town Council to the appointment of the new Mayor for Seaford.
- 1.10** The Councils social media presence has increased with many posts receiving over 10,000 views. Equally the number of people now following the Town Council Facebook site is over 2100, which makes it the highest number for a Local Council in the South East, indeed the number following is higher than many District Councils have managed to achieve for their much bigger areas.
- 1.11** Issy Mouland is currently working closely with a local Website construction company to develop a new website for the Council. The intention is that this will be much more clear and secure as well as including features that will enable the Council to take payments on line which will save significant resource as the number of payments increases with services such as the beach hut hires and if ever another Shoal like project were to be commissioned.
- 1.12 Outstanding litigation**, the pending arbitration with a former tenant relating to Hurdis House is almost resolved with an offer being made that has been accepted subjected to one or two points of clarification. This settlement is in accordance with the decision made by Seaford Town Council in March 2019. This will end all of the litigation the Council had outstanding.

- 1.13** A new threat to commence legal proceedings from a publisher was defended by the Town Clerk and appears to have not been pursued. The claim was without merit and was not anticipated.
- 1.14** **Corporate Governance and Policy review**, as planned within the policy schedule policies continue to be developed and reviewed with regularity with new policies being adopted for single use plastic, as well as reviews of four other Policies.
- 1.15** **Elections**, whilst Seaford Town Council does not administer the elections the change in office does create a significant amount of work including preparation and delivery of training, development of information packs for new Councillors, meeting with new Councillors, changing all associated documentation, and generally absorbing the new Councillors team within the organisation. The whole of the office team have done an excellent job of “on-boarding” the new Council.
- 1.16** **Neighbourhood Plan**, the plan has progressed to Regulation 14 stage and is receiving comments from the public, an Inspector is about to be appointed by Lewes District Council with a possibility of a sooner than anticipated completion date for the plan. A number of issues are being addressed including the confusion surrounding the new Health Hub at The Downs Leisure Centre, the proposed use of Homefield Place by East Sussex County Council, and what points need to be addressed by the Town Council prior to the Inspectors assessment. Significantly more time has been dedicated to this project than was anticipated but has been essential to ensure the plan progresses in a timely fashion.
- 1.17** **Leases and agreements**, the memorandum to extend the agricultural tenancy with the Council farmer tenant has been completed as has the lease with The Cricket Club in the park and the licence for the community Garden in the Crouch. The only two outstanding leases now are the football club and the rugby club, both have been written to in an attempt to secure progress as soon as possible.
- 1.18** **The View developments**, the performance of the venue is significantly improving year on year and month on month with the income for the first two months of the financial year being £14,000 greater than last year alone. Bookings are significant and continue to generate significant income. The lengthy appeal for business rate reduction has been completed following the lengthy process imposed by the Valuation office to get to this stage. The appeal was completed in three days of the Valuation Office giving the green light to progress such is the importance of this matter as if successful not only will it reduce the running costs of the course and The View by a total of £27,000 per annum into the future but will also result in a refund of up to £80,000 which can then be utilised to fund the construction of the new pro shop to enable additional revenue to be generated from the facility. Regular one to one meetings between the Town Clerk and the General Manager. The appointment of Gemma Sanderson-Baker for two days per week to support the administration at The View and in particular the marketing will be a great benefit to the venue also.
- 1.19** **Golf course developments**, the course quality has continued to excel and is universally praised for the quality of the product produced by the Greenkeeping team. This demonstrates the value of investing in training employees as well as a continuous investment programme into new machinery. An excellent effort by Simon, Tyler, Ben and Nathan as well as Fraser.
- 1.20** Monthly meetings take place between the Town Clerk, Golf Professional and the Head Green Keeper to oversee the management of the course, including financial monitoring, marketing and communication as well development of the facility.

- 1.21** The Town Clerk is working with the golf professional to look at the future relationship between the Town Council and the Golf Professional, this is taking significant time.
- 1.22** The financial performance of the Golf Course in 2018/19 was a significant profit of over £120,000. The performance in the first two months of the current financial year is a similar £14,000 increase in income over the first two months compared to the last financial year.
- 1.23** The plans for the new Golf pro shop to allow the existing shop to be converted into a spike bar are progressing with a site visit with the planning department at LDC imminent to discuss the proposal.
- 1.24** The new water storage tank for the course irrigation system has been installed, the securing of tenders for the borehole will be progressed as soon as possible.
- 1.25** **Support for the Projects and Facilities team**, support has been given in a number of areas including the new daily hire beach huts, no entry signs to Church Walk, additional Brown tourism signs, developing initial scoping plans for South Hill barn, filming issues and policies, various grant applications, CCTV, planters for the seafront, Cliff Gardens issues, seafront concessions, skatepark and various events.
- 1.26** **Continuation of the Committee Chairman Management Group**, the new team met recently for the first time and discussed various matters with the clerk the agenda and minutes continue to be circulated to all Councillors.
- 1.27** **Liaison with Lewes District Council** continues to grow, with many examples of seamless cooperation, the latest being the joint attendance of the Town Clerk and the CEO and Deputy CEO to a High Streets conference. Regular meetings between the Town Clerk and the CEO are diarised months in advance. The Town Clerk is working closely with senior officers at LDC in a number of areas detailed below.
- 1.28** **Talland Parade**, several meetings have taken place with senior officers at LDC to look at how the problematic building can be completed, and the scaffolding removed. It needs to be noted that LDC and STC have no direct enforcement powers to force this, other means have to be used to ensure this does take place.
- 1.29** **Newlands planning proposal**, several meetings between the developer, The head of Planning at LDC the Town Clerk and the Town Council planning officer have taken place and have proved extremely fruitful as discussed at the recent Planning Committee meeting. It is anticipated that the updated plans will be far more palatable than the original proposal submitted by the developer.
- 1.30** **Playing Pitch Strategy and open space review**, continuous support has been provided to the appointed consultants to ensure they have all the relevant information to enable this study to be completed by the projected January 2020.
- 1.31** **New Councillors**, lastly it would be amiss not to mention the integration of the new Councillors as part of the team at Seaford Town Council. Most if not all have commented positively on what they see the Council doing and are shocked at how much we do achieve for a small local authority. The office team look forward to working positively with you all over the coming four years.

2. Financial Appraisal

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

3. Contact Officer

The Contact Officer for this report is James Corrigan, Town Clerk.

Town Clerk
