



Seaford Town Council

Report 163/17

Agenda Item No:	7
Committee:	Council
Date:	29th March 2018
Title:	Clerk's Report
By:	James Corrigan, Town Clerk
Purpose of Report:	To update Councillors of key developments that the Town Clerk has been involved in since the last Clerk's Report on 19th October 2017.

Recommendations

You are recommended:

- 1. To note the contents of the report.**
 - 2. That the Town Clerk is authorised to apply for up to £5,000 to be allocated to the Young Mayors swing project from the Town Councils CIL holding of £11,005.**
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1. Information

- 1.1 Outstanding Freedom of Information Act requests, complaints and compliments,** since the last Council meeting there have been five new Freedom of Information Act requests two relating to the motorhomes and caravans at Cliff Gardens which is covered elsewhere in this report and three from one resident regarding the seafront development plan.
- 1.2** An appeal to the Information Commissioner by a requester regarding the details of a former employee has also been responded to in detail. The Council was advised recently that the it was correct in law in refusing the information request.
- 1.3** During the discussions with Information Commissioner investigator it was interesting to receive informal feedback on Seaford Town Council's provision of information about which he was very complimentary. Noting that much larger organisations do not provide so much information on their websites as a matter of course.
- 1.4** The Councils openness is a part of its internal culture, for example Seaford Town Council is still the only Parish or Town Council in Sussex that routinely records all of its meetings and downloads the recording on the internet.
- 1.5** The number of informal complaints and compliments is not routinely catalogued, but there have been a number of complaints regarding motorhomes on the seafront. Some for and some against their presence.
- 1.6** Ironically there has recently been one complaint complaining about improvements to the seafront and one complaining that the Council tax should be increased from the lowest in the area to a higher level to spend funds upgrading the seafront.

- 1.7** There have been a number of compliments recently with regard to the Council tax leaflet produced by Seaford Town Council, again the only Parish or Town Council in the area to do so. This was expertly put together by Georgia Raeburn and aims to let resident know what the Town Council does with their money and on their behalf.
- 1.8** There was also a lot of positive feedback on the new temporary concessions on the seafront, the most popular press release the Council has issued for some time as noted below.
- 1.9** **Press release and communications**, since that last Clerk's Report there have been 25 press releases issued to over 20 press organisations and to several hundred residents who have now registered to receive all communications from the Town Council. The press releases covered a diverse range of subjects from the hugely successful Christmas Magic to the new concessions on the seafront, which received more positive comments on Facebook and over 200 "likes", more than any press release for some time.
- 1.10** The Town Councils social media engagements have continued to be of value and reach thousands of residents, some with over 10,000 views. Equally the engagements on posts continues to grow, the vast majority of people giving a positive thumbs up to the Councils activities, no mean achievement on social media.
- 1.11** **Staffing update**, a Personnel Committee meeting on the 15th March 2018 considered a review of the new staff structure adopted on the 31st August 2017 which on the whole officers feel has been successful but with the need for additional resource being a common feedback. Officers have been asked to review what is possible and will report back in due course.
- 1.12** The maternity leave of Emily Piper the Projects and Facilities Supervisor commenced this month, we all wish her an enjoyable and rewarding leave period. Existing employees Sharan Brydon has temporarily replaced Emily and Sue Treadwell has similarly replaced Sharan. This has occurred seamlessly as has the appointment of Jemma Sanderson-Barker on a temporary contract to cover for Sue Treadwells position as Mayors secretary and Administrative support. The lack of any issues during this transition is testament to the abilities of these staff and their colleagues.
- 1.13** The View is now fully staffed with an excellent team in place following the appointment of Lee Blackford as a Chef de Partie and Ashley Nicholson as the Assistant Manager. The team at The View are performing very well and continue to improve the overall service there.
- 1.14** Eight members of staff from the Council offices, the greenkeepers and The View recently qualified as First Aiders following a three day course held at The View, well done to Lucy Clark, Georgia Raeburn, Tony Jackson, Craig Nichol, Ashley Nicholson, Natasha Naylor, Rebecca Sandals, and Ben Clark.
- 1.15** Additional qualifications secured recently include Ben Clark passed his PA1 and PA6 spraying qualifications, Nathan Sutliff passed his NVQ 2 green keeping qualification, Simon Lambert passed his NVQ Level 2 Assessor Training Qualification.
- 1.16** The Councils commitment to continuous personal development of its employees has also included many staff attending various Training courses including the recent SALC Conference, SALC Clerks networking day, grant funding course, East Sussex in Figures and Social Media training.

- 1.17** Almost all of the Council staff have undergone an Appraisal over the past few weeks. These are a vital tool in the development and performance Management of individual members of staff and are a means of determining training needs and setting targets which are in line with the Councils strategic objectives. The last few appraisals will be complete over the next couple of weeks.
- 1.18 Councillor Development,** Councillors underwent a training session on the budget in November and several Councillors have attended individual events including Councillor Brown and Lower to the SALC Conference and SALC networking days which were both very informative. Some information from these has been percolated to fellow Councillors via a report from Councillor Lower more will be shared in due course at the next Councillor training session.
- 1.19 Central Management Team,** the Town Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Finance Manager and Projects & Facilities Manager have now established a CMT team and agreed on its remit and frequency. This will ensure that the communication within the Council is improved and compliments the new internal meeting structure recently adopted by Officers to ensure communication improves across the organisation.
- 1.20B Budget Setting,** this was a comprehensive piece of work supported very ably by Karen Singleton and Lucy Clark. The work on the budget was more comprehensive than in the past in that a five-year budget was developed, a first for the Council. However, this is not the end of the improvements, an investment strategy has recently been developed and systems are being put in place that more readily manage the Councils resources. These will be reported on in due course.
- 1.21 Community Infrastructure Levy Funding (CIL)** as reported in October the new system of collecting funds from new developments came into place within and £11,000 was allocated to Seaford Town Council. This money can be used for any suitable project, which must be approved by Lewes District Council.
- 1.22** Councillors will be aware that the existing young Mayor has done an amazing job in raising over £5,000 for a disabled user swing. However, due to the safety features of this swing it must be individually fenced off and have safety surfacing also. This will cost an additional £4,000 approximately. It is proposed therefore that an application be made for CIL funds to be used for the final amount to undertake the works to be submitted as soon as possible to enable the swing to be in situ prior to the end of the current Young Mayors term of office in May.
- 1.23 The View support,** as was anticipated the level of support required for The View has continued to reduce as the team led by Craig Nichol continue to blossom. The support given now is what would be reasonably expected and will continue at this level. Currently the main area of support is the marketing strategy for the venue.
- 1.24** The development and subsequent adoption of the new business plan was a time-consuming exercise but very much worthwhile as the team now work to the objectives set in the plan. The number of events being booked at the venue continues to grow and is promising to deliver the most successful year since the venue opened in line with the continued growth in business and performance. The Golf and View committee were recently very pleased with the most recent year on year improvements figures with a congratulatory letter to all staff being agreed as a result.
- 1.25 Seaford Head Golf Course support,** continues but is at a minimal level as the course continues to thrive with record society bookings projected for this year and a promising start to memberships for the year. There have also been a number of compliments about the course both within the venue from members and from visitors

as well as on social media. This was recently cemented by a five-star rating from the website Golfshake.com. The agreement to invest in essential new machinery at the course over the next five years has also allayed fears of existing golfers and sent a powerful message that the course is very much open for business and looking to maintain and improve its very high standards. Many golfers have already made positive comments about this initiative which was highlighted in their covering letters asking to re-join this year.

- 1.26 Leases updates**, the process of resolving all the lease issues has continued with the lease for The Crypt recently being completed as well as that for the Old Town Hall. The signing of the Crypt lease will save the Town Council £5,000 per annum every year in Business Rates as the group running The Crypt will be exempt from paying this. A meeting is being organised to discuss the additional requirements from the Rugby Club as there has been a change in these since the new lease was agreed, this may require Council approval at some stage if it is possible to achieve.
- 1.27** There have been some issues with the previously entered into lease with the Crouch Bowling Club as this required approval from Lewes District Council in accordance with the 2001 transfer agreement but not noted on the deeds. This unnecessary complication created a lot of extra work for both organisations which does not serve any real purpose. This is an issue which will apply to other parcels of land so will be looked at once other land issues have been resolved
- 1.28** The leases outstanding but nearing completion therefore are;
- (a) Seaford Rugby Club – Organising a meeting to discuss their needs.
 - (b) Community Gardens (The Crouch) - Sent engrossed lease for signature on 18th August but recently advised of a change of signatories, looking to complete lease imminently.
 - (c) Seaford Cricket Club - Awaiting response from Cricket Club on draft lease.
- 1.29** Since the lease was entered into for the Crouch Bowling Club, the club have done a superb job in progressing the build of their club house extension. There have been some issues with damage to the grass as a result of this work, it this has been rectified and will be fully restored once the growing season starts. But the major improvements to the facility as a result of getting the new lease resolved are a big bonus for the towns bowlers for many years to come.
- 1.30** The Management agreement for Blatchington Pond with the society required renewal for a period of five years and should be in place by the time of the Council meeting.
- 1.31 The land registration process** also continues with a number of new anomalies recently emerging including the failure to register some land transferred some time ago. Although not urgent this needs to be properly registered and will be once resources allow,
- 1.32 Capital land projects**, together with the Planning Officer Geoff Johnson a planning application will be submitted imminently for the housing at Southdown Road. This does however require significant background work to ensure the application is as strong as possible. The outline designs are complete as included in The View Development Plan. If approved the funding from this sale will be utilised to progress the Councils Strategic Objectives. Soundings from local estate agents are that the land will sell very quickly once planning permission is secured.
- 1.33 Litigation**, the claim against a former employee for overpayment of wages has now been given a date by which the detailed claim has to be submitted, namely the 9th May. As a counterclaim has been made the court hearing is now due to take

place at Oxford County Court. The Council decision to offer to withdraw the claim if this is reciprocated has not yet been responded to.

- 1.34** The pending claim in respect of a former tenant at Hurdis House is due to take up a significant amount of time as research, collection of statements and collating of evidence is completed prior to the undertaking of mediation. has not progressed.
- 1.35** The possible claim for compensation that arose due to the development of The View has now been fully settled and completed in accordance with a recent Council resolution.
- 1.36** **Neighbourhood Plan**, the Neighbourhood Plan continues to make progress and is nearing submission to Lewes District Council post collation to all the public responses to the initial plan consulted on in accordance with Regulation 14. If the plan has any significant changes as a result of the consultation Regulation 14 consultation may be undertaken again prior to submission to LDC.
- 1.37** The Council resolved at its meeting on the 8th March to create a slimmed down steering group to see the plan through to completion. The work undertake by some of the volunteers to date has been outstanding and very difficult to quantify a value to such is the extent to the work that volunteers have done. A huge thank you to all involved.
- 1.38** **Securing grants**, work is ongoing with The Projects and Facilities Manager to expose potential grants to a greater extent that the Town Council has done in the past. This will enable the Town Council to progress more of its Strategic Objectives without the need for Council Tax payers to pay the full costs. One such grant that is being investigated is via the Lawn Tennis Association for upgrading of the Tennis Courts in The Salts another is for match funding for the new skatepark from Veolia.
- 1.39** **Design of the Martello toilets**, as the construction of the new toilets cannot commence until capital receipts have been secured and not in the summer advantage has been taken of this break to review the design, taking into account the high tender amounts received. The main two issues looked at were looking at reducing the number of cubicles, to reduce costs, but also having the capacity to add more if the number proves insufficient. And in response to comments looking at having an indoor seating area. Once the new design is complete this will be presented to the Council for consideration prior to the tenders being sought.
- 1.40** **Review Policies**, the Councils is due to review over 40 policies this year in accordance with the Councils policy schedule, accordingly work is ongoing in reviewing many of these at present with several appearing elsewhere on this agenda. Work is ongoing on a number of these policies including the Communications Strategy, and the Strategic Plan. Over the past few months some policies have been very time consuming such as the Martello Entertainments Area, this is usually where there is no perfect solution for all the interested parties.
- 1.41** **Traffic Regulation Orders for the seafront** and Cliff Gardens are progressing via East Sussex County Council. Significant time has been dedicated to this project the end product of which will be powers to issue tickets to motorhomes parked in Cliff Gardens but also allows motorhomes to park overnight at the HGV area of the Buckle car park and at Splash Point (but not during the day) Motor homes will be allowed to park on the seafront during the day only as well. A detailed position statement has been supplied to Councillors on this matter and is available via the Town Council website. This does however continue to be the issue which

attracts the most correspondence from the public, particularly some residents near Cliff Gardens.

1.42 **Bye election, north ward**, following the recent vacancy on the Council and the calling of an election the costs to run a bye election were analysed. Consequently, contact was made with LDC to seek permission for Town Council staff to deliver the poll cards rather than LDC posting them and recharging STC. This was agreed and a number of staff stepped up to the mark to deliver the poll cards with Georgia Raeburn doing an excellent job in coordinating matters. As a result the Council will save approximately £1,000 and the staff will pick up a small additional reward for their efforts. The process was not of course straight forward as a first run but was successful and will hopefully be extended to the main election in May when significant savings could be made. A review is taking place currently so that improved arrangements can be made for the next election which will hopefully not be until May 2019.

1.43 **Risk management**, recently a significant amount of time has been dedicated to assessing all of the potential risks to the Council. This has been time consuming but using the supplied software has been a very worthwhile project. Work will be put in over the coming months to address all of the highlighted risks with a view to reducing them to acceptable levels where this is possible. Having undertaken this task for a first time using the specific software it will be a less time consuming exercise next time and in future years.

1.44 **Partnership Working**, relationships with Lewes District Council continue to prove fruitful and provide positives for both organisations. Working with East Sussex County Council has been more problematic, but it is an organisation going through significant change. Recently the Town Clerk was invited to join the Heritage Coastline group made up of a number of key stakeholders, the first meeting was interesting and provided some very useful contacts. The next meeting is due to take place at The View.

2. Financial Appraisal

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

3. Contact Officer

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

Town Clerk
