



Seaford Town Council

Report 64/18

Agenda Item No:	7
Committee:	Council
Date:	21st June 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 10th May 2018.

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 Council meeting there have been two Freedom of Information Act requests.
- 1.2** One was regarding The View and Seaford Head Golf Club which was straightforward as the applicant was referred to appropriate pages on the Council's website which is good practice to save valuable staff resources.
- 1.3** The second application was more time consuming with the applicant requesting clarification on various matters and seeking additional information as well as a significant bundle of papers. These papers had to be analysed in detail to have sections redacted to comply with the GDPR and then were scanned in before sending electronically. This complex application which appears to be to enable the applicant to review every transaction of the Council over a period of time has taken up significant staff resources with the Consultant Accountant, Finance Manager and Finance Assistant all dealing with the matter at various times, one even had to come in on a day off to work an extra half day to deal with the matter.
- 1.4** These unforeseen and non-productive (in terms of service delivery to residents) uses of officer's time are often an issue in ensuring main priorities are completed on time as has been the case here. This is a relevant consideration for later items in the confidential section of the meeting.
- 1.5** There have not been any formal complaints during this period although there have been a few issues to resolve with the public who when given the correct or appropriate information are all generally grateful and thankful.
- 1.6** Areas where potential complaints have been dealt with include the seafront Traffic Regulations Orders, caravans on the highway, noise in the Crouch, vandalism to the seafront shelter, and grass cutting by East Sussex County Council.

- 1.7** There has been one official complaint hearing on an older matter which was included in the last Clerk's Report, namely placing of items on memorial benches. The Appeals Panel sat for the first time ever and did a very good job of looking at the issues at hand. They upheld the original decision that the officers acted correctly but recommended some changes to the Complaints Procedure which have been dealt with in the draft appearing elsewhere on the agenda. Also, some changes to the Memorial Policy which will be acted upon and reported back to the Council in due course.
- 1.8** Officers regularly receive positive feedback, often verbal but occasionally in writing. This far outweighs the negative feedback.
- 1.9** There has been lots of positive feedback regarding the very successful Shoal opening event, well done Sharan Brydon and Sue Treadwell. Some residents have been very thankful for all the support the Town Council has given to try and resolve the issues at Talland Parade, thanks go to Geoff Johnson. Also, the feedback from the Annual Town Forum was extremely positive, well done Georgia Raeburn and especially Gemma Sanderson-Barker who was organising her first event and did an excellent job. The Council has also received many compliments when manning the Beach huts (there has been an additional sale since the last report) regarding the Town Council's improvements to the seafront. Most residents are extremely positive about these changes and are keen to express these views to the staff when we are on duty there.
- 1.10** **Press release and communications**, since that last Clerk's Report there have been thirteen press releases and position statements. Position statements are a new means of communication and are similar to a press release but perhaps not on a newsworthy item. They are used to advise on an issue that the Town Council may be receiving a lot of requests about, such as the caravans and motorhomes that were located on Cliff Gardens. Having a prepared text reduces officer time doing the same response repeatedly to residents. It can also be placed on social media and the Council's website. The press releases have covered a wide variety of subjects from dogs on the beach to the very successful Mayor's Garden trail, many thanks to Geoff Stonebanks and all the other volunteers for this, especially those who open their gardens.
- 1.11** **Staffing update**, a Personnel Committee meeting took place on the 31st May to update and discuss various matters. As a result of this meeting a report appears elsewhere on this agenda. There have been no changes of note regarding staff since the last meeting. However, the office team have continued to grow and develop and increase their knowledge and effectiveness. The systems that are in place ensure that work can be dealt with effectively and efficiently with service delivery levels being very high. Sue Treadwell has recently attended a course on securing grants and Gemma Sanderson Barker attended one on Meeting Procedures. This brings the total number of courses attended by all staff for the year to 21 with another 7 already booked.
- 1.12** The team at The View are similarly developing and the last recorded financial month of May saw a record ever monthly income for The View of £50,413, this follows the previous months 4th best ever takings of £47,812.
- 1.13** The Greenkeeping team are continuing to excel, without fail every time a visit is undertaken of the facility a golfer ensures they let us know the course is "playing better than ever".
- 1.14** **Central Management Team**, the Town Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Finance Manager, Projects & Facilities Manager and Executive Support

Officers have continued to meet monthly. The Town Clerk was able to go and observe the LDC / EBC CMT recently to see how their meetings operate and was able to pick up a few tips. The meetings are proving to be productive and a useful way to coordinate and manage the Council's performance. It was agreed at the last meeting to involve managers at The View and the Golf Course at future meetings but to only require their presence for as long as necessary. Similarly, to call in other officers as and when needed to discuss items with the group.

- 1.15. The View support**, the level of support required has not been as much as would be preferred due to other work pressures and the attempt to keep work hours at a manageable level. Extra support will be given over coming months to improve internal systems and marketing.
- 1.16 Seaford Head Golf Course support** continues but again is at a minimal level as the course continues to thrive. Support was given to look at securing a new contract for publicity and items of equipment using a company called Whole in One. Hopefully this will come off soon and will prove to be of benefit. The course income levels are on budget despite a poor start to the year with the poor weather in April, so it is anticipated that budgeted income could be exceeded. A review of systems relating to the golf will be undertaken once the work at The View is complete. This will aid the development of the Golf Course Business Plan.
- 1.17 Business Rates at Seaford Head Golf Course and The View**, following research an application has been submitted to review the rates charged at The View and SHGC. If this is successful it could result in a net income of approximately £80,000 and no future liabilities for years going forward which would be an annual saving of approximately £26,000.
- 1.18 Leases updates**, several leases are still at various stages of progression and should all be completed over the next few months, however it appears there may be a new lease to draft for Seaford Town FC once instructions have been received.
- 1.19 Capital land projects**, considerable work has taken place on two of these projects. The proposed land sale at North Way has progressed significantly thanks to support from the Council's Planning Officer, Geoff Johnson. The Planning Application has been resubmitted, but not verified, at the time of writing. The application to set aside an obsolete Section 52 agreement has also been developed and submitted. Similarly, the application to divert the footpath has been completed and will be submitted once the planning application is verified. It is hoped this matter will be resolved within the next 10 weeks, the potential sale value is approximately £500,000 once this process is complete.
- 1.20** The planning application for Southdown Road has also progressed with various environmental surveys being completed. Several habitat surveys are now required for which prices are being secured.
- 1.21** Informal discussions have taken place with South Down National Park Authority on this application and others within the Park. It has subsequently been decided that it would be sensible to submit a pre-application for this site and the other plans at The View / Golf Course site.
- 1.22 Litigation**, a meeting has taken place with one claimant recently which has resulted in the item listed later in this agenda. Arrangements have been made to employ an investigator to collect all relevant evidence in the event that this course of action is needed. The second matter is with the respondent but has not progressed any further.

1.23 Neighbourhood Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing well, and the volunteers are doing a brilliant job. Currently the Chairman is devising a timetable to progress the plan through its final stages.

1.24 Review Policies, thirteen policies have either been either reviewed and updated or created over the past few weeks. This has been an amazing piece of work for everyone to complete, especially due to the efforts of Georgia Raeburn and Tony Jackson who have both done an excellent job. These policies are listed within item 8 of the agenda. The Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were particularly tricky as there was an ambition to remove all duplicity and make the contracts side of the policies more user friendly. This it is felt has been achieved thanks to some great help from Karen Singleton.

1.25 Traffic Regulation Orders for the seafront and Cliff Gardens are progressing via East Sussex County Council. The problems with the draft TRO for the seafront will it appears require this to be restarted and advertised again. This will of course delay implementation. The precise details are not known at this stage.

1.26 Tommies for Seaford, several people have been in touch to see if STC will be pursuing the grants to secure some of the two-dimensional soldiers to commemorate the 100 years since the end of WWII. The Projects and Facilities team are looking to submit a grant application within the allowed timeframe.

1.27 Support for The Coastguard Cottages SOS appeal, the Coastguard Cottages form part of an iconic image within Seaford that is known worldwide. As Councillors will be aware the owners are attempting to secure their future by improving sea defences and are raising funds for this purpose. I met with one of the residents recently and have agreed to present a report on this issue at the next Council meeting. I believe this can be achieved at no cost to the Council.

1.28 The Roof at The View is in the process of being replaced. This is due to the vegetation not taking as anticipated. This is at no cost to the Council and should be completed by mid-July. This has unfortunately meant that scaffolding has been put up around the building.

1.29 Vandalism on the seafront, there was unfortunately a recent incident of a few windows being smashed in one of the shelters. The team did a great job in seeing to it that everything was put back in order and replacement glass ordered. The incident was reported by a resident to the Police, who were on site within 15 minutes and able to arrest and subsequently charge a male with the offence. This reinforces the importance of people reporting incidents to the Police as they are occurring. Thanks also go to LDC's street cleaning operative Phil Sage for his support in this matter.

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


