



## Seaford Town Council

## Report 145/16

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>20<sup>th</sup> April 2017</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Clerk's Update Report</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>James Corrigan, Town Clerk</b>
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	<b>To update Councillors of key developments that the Town Clerk has been involved in since the last Clerk report on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017.</b>

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### 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 on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016 there have been no valid Freedom of Information Act requests. There have been some recent objections from some Sutton Road residents to the Market being held in Sutton Road. Officers will continue to monitor this and look at what action can be taken. Any feedback will be recorded as part of the overall feedback on the market experiment on the 20<sup>th</sup> July to the Council meeting of that date.
- 1.2 Staffing update,** the new team in the Council office continues to develop and perform very well. Since the last meeting, Elizabeth Harvey has left the Council to pursue her career elsewhere, we wish her well. Simon Andrews was brought in as temporary cover, and is doing an excellent job, in the finance section to cover illness absence prior to Elizabeth leaving and has continued to cover the post whilst a re-evaluation of the staffing structure is pending as agreed at the recent personnel Committee Meeting.
- 1.3** Robert McDonald left as manager of The View, as did head Chef Richard Jones. Craig Nichol was appointed as the new General Manager at The View and has settled in very well. He is in the process of sourcing a new Head Chef. Natasha Naylor was appointed as a bar supervisor recently, a position that had been left vacant over the winter, and is also settling in very well.
- 1.4 Officer and Councillor development,** Adam Peck recently passed his tractor mounted PA2a spraying test, which takes a bit of pressure off Simon as he was the only member of staff currently qualified, well done Adam. Nathan Sutliff continues to progress well with his NVQ level 2 at Plumpton College. Some office staff have recently attended a Microsoft Office training course as part of the service contract with ESCC for the provision of IT Services to improve their skills.
- 1.5** The planned programme of training for Councillors has been agreed, it is now just a case of booking the various trainers and dates, this will be done over the next few weeks and Councillors advised as soon as possible.

- 1.6 Press releases, social media, website and Council Tax leaflet**, since the January Council meeting 14 press releases have been issued. These have covered a range of issues from the Council Tax demand to beach hut sales, the Newlands school planning application to the £2.3 million seafront development plan.
- 1.7** There has been a significant amount of interaction on the Councils Facebook site in particular relating to the Seafront Development Plan with an average week having over 4000 views of the STC Facebook site alone.
- 1.8 Outstanding litigation**, the pending arbitration with a former tenant relating to Hurdis House continues to progress slowly. The defence submitted by the claimant to the Forensic Accountant employed by STC has yet to be fully assessed following that a mediation meeting will take place.
- 1.9** The claim against the former Town Clerk for overpayment of salary has been submitted to County Court as instructed by The Council, for approximately £800 of overpaid salary, a counter claim for £3,000 plus for underpaid salary has been made by the respondent. This will be contested at court in due course with the Town Clerk, Town Clerks PA and planning Officer (acting as litigator) in attendance.
- 1.10** The dispute with the Police Authority regarding service charge for 37 Church street has progressed and a meeting is pending to discuss the claim imminently.
- 1.11 Corporate Governance and Policy review**, as planned within the policy schedule there has been a significant amount of work done in this area again The Personnel Committee undertook a review of the personnel policies previously developed which are listed elsewhere on this agenda. The Financial Regulations have been reviewed and listed at the extra ordinary meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> March and are again listed for this meeting for adoption after being subject to substantial work and time to explain and discuss.
- 1.12** The Standing Orders are about to be reviewed ready for the AGM, the policy timetable is also about to be reviewed with a view to ensuring the reviews of policies are a steady flow into the Council meetings for adoption in a timely fashion. Councillors are recommended to review all policies they hold in their packs and if there are any areas they feel need looking at to advise the Town Clerk as soon as possible please. An excellent draft Health and Safety Policy has recently been completed, many thanks to our Health and Safety officer Jenny Hallet for her work on this.
- 1.13 Development of Seafront Development Plan and The Salts Development Plan.** The consultation exercise to feed into the development of these plans was a huge success with over 1000 people visiting the displays and almost 500 completing surveys. There was also a great deal of discussion in town and on social media, mostly positive which was borne out by the results of the survey which were also significantly in favour of the Seafront Development plan building on the previous support given for seafront development by the Community Partnership's earlier survey.
- 1.14** The questions relating to the Salts Development Plan, which is an adopted policy, were to assist with any future grant applications the Council may wish to make. Again, they were very supportive responses as previously reported.
- 1.15** The process of building the beach huts is progressing as is the sale of the five existing beach huts. Designs and pricings for the toilets will be secured as soon as possible. Well done to all the projects team, led by Craig Williams, for supporting this very important development plan and getting it to this stage.
- 1.16 Budget development**, the process to achieve a balanced and financially rigorous budget does take up significant time and was this year completed in very efficient

fashion, many thanks for the support given to achieve this from Georgia Raeburn and particularly Lucy Clark.

- 1.17 Budget leaflet**, for the first time ever the Town Council produced a budget leaflet that was enclosed with every Council Tax bill demand, this was an excellent production and has received lots of positive feedback from those people who read such information leaflets. Again, thanks go to Georgia for her excellent work on this detailed leaflet.
- 1.18 Neighbourhood Plan**, the volunteers on the Neighbourhood Plan project continue to do an excellent job supported by Action in Rural Sussex. Support has been given to the team to locate land ownership details and to review research and review various documents, in particular the Dane Valley project and Scoping Report, as well as meetings from time to time to provide the necessary support. Recently the “Scoping Report” was submitted to the various statutory consultees. This sets out what the Neighbourhood Plan will look to achieve and address within the final plan. Statutory consultees have an opportunity to respond to this within a five-week window. The grant to support the Neighbourhood Plan to the tune of £7,000 plus was successfully secured, an application to secure some additional funds is about to be submitted, many thanks to Faustina Bayo of AIRS for her work on this.
- 1.19 Business Rates 37 Church Street**, following a submission of an appeal and subsequent meeting with the Valuation Office the Business Rates valuation for 37 Church Street was successfully challenged and a reduction which amounts to over £2,500 per annum every year going forward was achieved. Some back payments are currently being pursued.
- 1.20 Hurdis House improvements**, the external works are long since complete and the internal works have commenced by the tenant. A slightly amended second lease has been signed to reflect payment the tenant will be making for the current year of occupation in accordance with agreements reached. The tenant is completing the interior renovation and has sublet the top floor to a graphic design group who are relocating from Brighton.
- 1.21 Other leases and agreements**, the large number of leases that are under review have progressed and some should be finalised in the next couple of weeks. These include The Crypt, The Old Town Hall, the Community Garden in The Crouch, and Seaford Head Nature Reserve.
- 1.22 Land ownership**, a significant amount of work has also been undertaken to review the land ownership and registration of all land belonging to Seaford Town Council. This has highlighted a number of issues, some significant, which are in the process of being rectified. This is a substantial piece of work relating back to transfers from 2001-2003 which will take several months to complete. Many thanks to Georgia for all the support in resolving this complicated piece of work. Work is also ongoing to progress the sale of three plots of land as per the recent Council resolution, one plot at the Holt was recently granted planning permission for one unit, many thanks to Geoff Johnson for his diligent work on this matter.
- 1.23 The View developments**, a significant amount of support has been given to The View, initially to primarily address HR issues and following the support to the existing and new staff. The new manager, Craig Nichol, who has settled in well and has made an immediate impact. Marketing is becoming more focussed and plans are in place to develop the business further. Work on the business plan ceased due to other more urgent matters having to be dealt with. This will however recommence in the next couple of weeks, with a view to it being ready for the next Golf and View Committee to review on the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

- 1.24** A capital wish list has been developed for The View which will be assessed in due course to look at payback periods for the various items that are required to improve the viability of the venue.
- 1.25** **The performance of The View and the Golf** as income centres are in line with projections when setting the budget, so far as it is possible to assess at present. The takings for both the Golf Course and The View for the early part of this financial year are encouraging and up on recent years.
- 1.26** **The View and Golf developments**, a meeting has been organised with planners from Lewes District Council and South Downs National Park Authority to discuss various potential improvements to the site to improve the financial viability of the venue. These projects include some of the Council's strategic targets such as log cabins at the site and South Hill Barn developments, but also include potential solar panel site and potential log cabin for use as an overspill spike bar.
- 1.27** Meetings have taken place with representatives of Seaford Head Golf Club and more are due to find ways for the Club to better support The View and to look at funding a log cabin spike bar.
- 1.28** **New Market**, there has been a lot of correspondence about the trialled market which has been dealt with. One resident of Sutton Road is very active against the market but will be liaised with as it progresses. The first market went reasonably well with a couple of teething issues which can and have been resolved. The project will be monitored as detailed in the previous report to Council and reported back as planned on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Emily, Craig and Wendy have all worked diligently to ensure the market is given every chance to be a success going forward which is for the benefit of all traders in the town. Feedback from fixed traders after the first market has been positive, as was the feedback from market stall holders, but it is early days.
- 1.29** **Golf course developments**, the course has held up remarkably well over the winter with far more days available for golf than most other courses in the area, not one day has the course been declared closed due to conditions in the past year. This is one reason why golfers from other courses join Seaford Head Golf Course as winter members. The other is that the standards of green keeping are so high that temporary tees and greens are only used occasionally.
- 1.30** Support is also currently being given to develop a rationalised and affordable plan for machinery replacement over the coming ten years, also to provide borehole water supply at the course and review the current course staff structure.
- 1.31** **The new barn / shed** at the golf course to securely store the machinery in has been completed and is an excellent addition to the facility making it much easier for the greenkeepers to undertake repairs and maintenance of their machinery. The mezzanine floor gives a lot more storage space also.
- 1.32** **37 Church Street**, as mentioned above the issue of how much STC owes towards the running costs of the building has not been resolved in the absence of any quantifiable apportionment of use of utilities this is a difficult matter to resolve. Councillors are reminded the Town Council has a break clause it can exercise in the lease within the next 12 months. As Councillors are aware the building is not ideal for use by STC or the TIC so investigations are continuing to see if an alternative accommodation can be sourced or if the building should be invested in further to make it fit for purpose.
- 1.33** **The Salts Cottage**, quite a lot of research has been undertaken into this property to submit legal argument as to how it can be legally transferred to STC at no charge, the correspondence and research have paid off as LDC now accepts this can be

done, however LDC has not yet agreed to do this, a report appears elsewhere on this agenda.

- 1.34 Talland Parade**, the Town Council acted to attempt to address the currently unsightly appearance of this site and did eventually manage to talk to the owners. Reassurances have been given that work will start again on site imminently, this situation will continue to be monitored.
- 1.35 Eversley Court**, Lewes District Council has been pressed to look at taking appropriate action to ensure McCarthy & Stone comply with their planning obligations at this site for affordable homes, this has however stalled of late.
- 1.36 Newlands School**, a lot of time was dedicated to research the new application and to subsequently hold a planning meeting at The View at which over 75 people attended. The application was ultimately objected to in line with the objections raised by Sport England, again many thanks to Geoff for all his diligent work on this matter.
- 1.37 Steyne Road and Brooklyn Road**, Southern Water have been contacted again to ensure they are looking to take action with this problem flooding area, we are reassured that they are looking at ways to address the issues.
- 1.38 Review of seafront parking**, following complaints from the public and calls from Councillors a follow up site meeting has been held with ESCC highways officers. Because of this new Traffic Regulation Orders will be developed and consulted on in September to manage the seafront area better. This will allow motorhomes to park in three designated areas, provide coach parking near the Martello Tower and limit parking on the un-adopted roads adjacent to the Martello fields. Details will be shared with Councillors once the draft orders have been developed by ESCC prior to the wider public consultation.
- 1.39 Martello Tower issues**, meetings and a pending meeting are to take place to look at ongoing issues with “the deck” at the Martello tower which is allowing some water ingress at present. This may require significant investment, but grants will be looked at to secure the necessary funding if this is the case.
- 1.40 Town Guide**, the Town guide has recently been distributed to every household in Town and is an excellent production, the best yet in many peoples view, largely thanks to the excellent work of Lyn Collins. We are currently working on a sponsored town map which is more suitable for tourists to pick up from the TIC, hopefully this will be complete and produced soon.
- 1.41 Councillor Leslie Worcester**, the office staff and Councillors were all recently very sad to hear of the passing of Councillor Worcester. All the staff found him to be a gentleman at all times and a pleasure to deal with, he will be sadly missed. His funeral will take place on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> April at 3.30pm at St Luke’s Church, Seaford.
- 1.42** All the necessary work has been completed to notify of the casual vacancy, LDC will advise in due course if an election has been demanded so the Town Council can act accordingly.
- 1.43** Finally, I am pleased to advise that new Councillor zip folders have been sourced and ordered for the new Councillors who do not yet have one, thank you Sharan.

## **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

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