

Broadstairs and St. Peter’s Town Council

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report March 2021

Cllr Rosalind Binks

Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Finance & General Purposes Committee reports to Full Council and has held 8 meetings in the past financial year. The following Sub-Committees report directly to the Finance & General Purposes Committee: Leisure & Tourism, Allotments & Land, Staff Management, Assets & Budget Review, Internal Audit Effectiveness Review.

The Leisure & Tourism Sub-Committee discusses the annual allocation of Town Council grants both to promote the town’s tourism and also to enhance the quality of life for residents. The Town Council helps to finance individual events held in the town as well as support civic and other organisations both large and small that make a real difference to various sectors of the community. Thanet District Council discontinued additional finance for town events several years ago, so this budget item is funded entirely from the Town Council precept.

All applications are carefully considered and the Sub-Committee may allocate smaller grants, with recommendations being made to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for grants over £2,000. It was clear early in 2020 that whilst most of the town’s major events would not go ahead, much of the fundraising that helps local organisations to survive would also be impacted. The Council awarded grants totalling £27,100, of which £17,100 supported organisations and a further £10,000 was allocated to other organisations including the Salvation Army and the joint TDC Covid Fund, providing emergency support to residents and where the Council was assured that food distribution was both correctly monitored and fair.

As part of the town promotion budget, the Council normally includes summer entertainment at the bandstand, Punch & Judy on Viking Bay beach, floral arrangements around the town and November 5th fireworks. The various events were generally not possible in the past year, but the bandstand kiosk (which is leased from Thanet District Council) was able to operate. The Town Council did not pay TDC for extended opening hours of the toilets and the beach lift as they were closed during much of the past year.

The Allotments & Land Sub-Committee oversees the Town Council’s two allotment sites, Norman Road and Prospect Road, as well as Mockett’s Wood in St. Peter’s and parkland immediately surrounding Pierremont Hall and its ancillary buildings. The Town Council also has a long lease on Culmers Amenity Land which is owned by CT10 Parochial Charities. The land at Pierremont Park and Culmers is currently maintained by Box Green Horticulture Limited.

The Town Council takes on various projects and activities. Facing the immediate challenge of a large influx of visitors in the early summer last year, the Council decided to engage security to encourage social distancing on our beaches and promenade. This initiative commenced on 1st June and continued until early September at a cost ofapproximately £20,000 and proved both effective and generally popular with residents. Thanet District Council subsequently followed our lead and engaged further security for other Thanet beaches, all successfully co-ordinated with police, ambulance, Southeastern Railway and Transport Police. It is early days but very likely that this will be repeated during the coming summer. Sadly it is also necessary for the Town Council to provide year-round security in Pierremont Park to help protect the town’s assets and a room is provided within Pierremont Hall for them to monitor our CCTV cameras.

Council maintenance in the past year included Town Trail notice boards and other street furniture as well as purchasing new decorative lighting for the promenade at Viking Bay. There is a continual problem with lighting as it has for many years been connected to the TDC-owned lamps which are now in serious need of overhaul.

The Council recognises that environmental issues are of interest and importance to our residents and has set up the Environment Working Party. This group has been actively looking at ways to improve the town’s environmental footprint. With considerable input from the Town’s volunteer Tree Warden, the Group has initiated several projects from the planting of trees to establishing swift boxes. The Town Council has also moved to a Green Energy provider for the buildings in Pierremont Park. However, the Council is also mindful that we have a legal duty to our residents to ensure Value for Money and accordingly all financial decisions are carefully considered.

On behalf of the Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee I would like to put on record our sincere thanks to the former Town Clerk, Danielle Dunn and all the Staff for their invaluable work over the past year and also welcome our new Town Clerk, Kirsty Holroyd, who has been with us since early January. All have continued to work untiringly for the residents of Broadstairs & St Peter’s, in spite of the enormous inconveniences of lockdown during the past year. They have worked both from home and socially distanced in Pierremont Hall, ensuring that the Council continues to operate as normally as possible during such unusual circumstances.