**Annual Town Assembly 15 March 2021**

**Environmental Issues and Housing Development**

I’d like to ask questions about the environmental impact of housing development in our town. It is unfortunate that Culmer’s Land should have to feature in four consecutive Annual Town Assemblies but events over the past three years have raised several important issues. This large green space in the heart of Broadstairs has psychological, historical and environment significance for many residents.

At the Town Assembly in 2018, a trustee of the CT10 Parochial Charities voiced a very strong objection to Culmer’s Land being designated a Local Green Space in the TDC Local Plan. He was extremely concerned that such ‘action could devalue the land, although there was no intention to build on it’. However, only two months later the area of Culmer’s Land next to Alexandra Road was boarded up and controversial site clearance began.

By 2020, a natural green space, providing a biodiverse habitat, had been replaced by a barren, paved landscape. It is very good to see that a hedge has recently been planted along the boundary of the housing development, apparently on the Amenity Land, as a small token of mitigation.

**Was this planting arranged and paid for by the developer as was previously part of the original outline planning permission?**

**No it was arranged and paid for by the Town Council**

**Did the CT10 Parochial Charities plant this hedge to enhance the biodiversity of the Amenity Land?**

**No, but the Town Council did.**

**Was the hedge the initiative of another organisation, paid for by private or public funding?**

**As above**

**Is there a plan to plant additional hedging along the land between the footpath and the allotment boundary fence?**

**Not to my knowledge**

The whole development process took place veiled in secrecy without any attempt to keep the residents of the town informed. In response to questions asked last year instead of a public Annual Town Assembly, the Town Council explained the relationship between itself and the CT10 Parochial charities. In accordance with the constitution of the Charities, ‘Traditionally, the names of four Trustees have been put forward by the Town Council every 4 years, but there is no obligation for these to be councillors, officers or in any way connected with the Town Council.’ This implies that there is some sort of constitutional partnership between the two organisations but the Town Council stated that, ‘There is no collaboration, close or otherwise.’ between them.

This seems to be both surprising and unfortunate because if there had been effective cooperation about this housing development, the whole process might have had a better environmental outcome.

**Could the Town Council explain what their current relationship is with the CT10 Parochial Charities with regard to environmental issues? This relates to Culmer’s Land and other land managed by the Charities, for example, Taddy’s Land.**

**The Town Council invited four individuals to be trustees. They agreed to take on this voluntary role and were subsequently appointed trustees to the charity in 2017. They are Jenny Matterface, who is now a past Town Councillor, Jeff Kirkpatrick, past Town Councillor and Mayor, Roy Dexter, a current Town Councillor and Christine Chappell, the Deputy Town Clerk. Cllr. Dexter stepped down as a Trustee in early 2020 and Cllr. Roger Binks came forward and agreed to be appointed as his replacement. It is my understanding that these appointments expire this summer.**

Fortunately, the Town Council has established a proactive Environmental Action Group. It has also appointed an excellent Tree Warden who has written a very detailed Tree Strategy. It appears that there has been effective liaison with the developer of the Westwood Lodge site, resulting in the preservation of many established trees and a plan to plant a large number of new trees in mitigation for the loss of others. There are many sites within the CT10 boundary where housing developments are likely to take place. For example, South Cliff Parade, Lanthorne Road, North Foreland Road and Reading Street.

**Is the Town Council going to establish the same type of liaison with developers of these, and any future sites, with regard to environmental issues?**

**The Town Council’s Planning Committee will continue to submit comments on local planning applications to the Local Planning Authority as is their legal right. These comments will incorporate recommendations concerning environmental issues which the committee feels appropriate.**

Many residents are hoping that housing development within the town will be managed with more awareness of environmental issues in the future.

St Peter’s Ward resident