



BROADSTAIRS & ST. PETER'S
TOWN COUNCIL

Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council
Annual Town Assembly Report 14 March 2022
Council Report by the Mayor Cllr Paul Moore

i) Councillors

Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council has 15 elected Councillors.

The political split of the Council is as follows:

Conservative: 11

Labour: 1

Green Party: 1

Thanet Independents: 1

Independent: 1

ii) Committee and sub-committee structure:

The Town Council has:

3 main committees that report to the Council: The Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Planning Committee and the Community Assets Committee.

The Town Council has 5 sub-committees, and a Town Forum which is made up of community groups and organisations.

Allotments and Land Sub-Committee

Staff Management Sub-Committee

Leisure & Tourism Sub-Committee

Neighbourhood Planning Sub-Committee

Environment Sub-committee

To date during the current civic year the Council has met 8 times with one further meeting planned in April. All Council and committee meetings are open to the public and the agendas are published on our website three working days prior to the meeting date.

iii) Staff

The Town Council has the following staffing structure

Office staff: Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Civic and Support Officer, Senior Administrative Officer, Events and Bookings Manager, Facilities Officer and Caretaker. The Council is in the

process of recruiting a second caretaker to look after the growing needs of the Council's built assets.

The Town Council is committed to staff training and sees this as an essential component in delivering the best services for the town. This year one member of staff completed her Introduction to Local Council Administration qualification and several members attended on-line seminars and conferences to ensure they are up to date with current legislation and best practice. The Council is up-to-date with statutory workplace training. The current year also saw the Council upgrade its IT provision in line with current best practice.

iv) Council Tax:

The Town Council has RESOLVED to instruct Thanet District Council to collect a precept of £693,724 (£71.82 per year for a household paying Council Tax Band D). This represents a 5% increase on the current year or £3.42 per annum on the average Band D property. However Members noted that inflation had risen significantly in the months since the budget was originally drafted and decided it would be prudent to build in a cushion to aid resilience.

v) Town Council Activities, Projects and Services

The Town Council has the following functions:

Statutory:

Convene public meetings
Town Council Website
14 Town Council Notice boards
Allotments: Norman road and Prospect Sites
Accounts and Audit

Civic and Mayoral:

Civic Events, Remembrance Service, Annual Town Assembly, Annual Council meeting and Mayor-Making.
Mayor's promotional activities e.g. community events, official visits to other towns.

Non Statutory:

The Town Council now owns two bookable event spaces in Pierremont Hall, the Council Chamber which has seen many weddings take place this year and the Mayor's Parlour which is used for smaller events. There are two further meeting rooms bookable on an hourly basis.

It is expected that the Retort House sports building in the Albion Street Car Park, also now owned by the Town Council, will be open for sports bookings this summer. The project has been delayed by a series of issues over which the Town Council has no control

The Town Council also provides organisational funding and grants for local organisations and groups, which can cover every day running costs and event funding.

vi) Policies and Neighbourhood Plan

The Town Clerk has continued to work hard over the year updating and reviewing its governance procedures and documents.

During the 2021-22 civic year the Town Council has updated and adopted new Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, and worked on its Reserves Policy and Investment Strategy.

In April we conducted a community survey which sought the views of local residents on a number of issues. One of the most popular Town Council initiatives was the introduction of beach security guards, which local people overwhelmingly supported and which continued in the summer of 2021 and is planned for 2022. The results of the survey will feed into the next draft of the Neighbourhood Plan which is open to public consultation for eight weeks from 21 March.

vii) Communications

The Town Council updates its social media daily and shares all content which could be of interest and benefit to the local community. In addition a Newsletter is produced twice a year and sent out to those on its mailing list. Please contact the Town Clerk if you wish to be added to the list or simply access the newsletters on the Council's website.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Report March 2022

The Finance & General Purposes Committee reports to Full Council and has held 6 meetings in the past financial year.

With the acquisition of assets and the possibility of further transfers from Thanet District Council in the future, the Council has strived to ensure that it will be able to meet such future demands, should they occur, with earmarked reserves.

The past two years of full or partial lockdown have of course impacted on the Council's income forecasts, particularly with regard to Retort House and Pierremont, whilst the associated personnel and management costs for the buildings have increased. Last year 87% of the budget was funded by the precept with 13% from other income. That imbalance is expected to reduce with other income rising to just over 16% this coming year.

Total personnel costs, including plans for an extra operative to work on repairs or improvements in and around the town, will be just over one third of the total budget this year. Staff costs and the costs of running the Town Clerk's office are budgeted to be just under 39% of the total budget.

Various Sub-Committees report directly to the Finance & General Purposes Committee:

The Leisure & Tourism Sub-Committee discusses all aspects of town promotion and leisure initiatives to enhance the quality of life for residents. This includes the annual allocation of Town Council grants to help finance events held in the town as well as to support 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 many 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.

Obviously many events have not taken place over the past two years and the all important fundraising was also near to impossible. Last year the Council awarded grants totalling £27,100, which included £10,000 allocated to organisations providing emergency support during the pandemic to local residents and where the Town Council was assured that food distribution was both correctly monitored and fair. This year, assuming we face a return to normal life post pandemic, the Council has allocated nearly £57,000 in grants as well as financing some of the summer entertainment at the

bandstand, Punch & Judy on Viking Bay beach, floral arrangements around the town, new Christmas lighting for St Peter's and November 5th fireworks. In all, ca £ 170,000 or just over 20% of the budget will be used for to improve the town's offering to visitors and residents this coming year.

Unfortunately I can also confirm that we will continue to finance beach and promenade security throughout the summer months, as well as year round security within Pierremont Park to protect Pierremont Hall and ancillary buildings.

The Allotments & Land Sub-Committee oversees the Town Council's two allotment sites, Norman Road and Prospect Road, Mockett's Wood in St. Peter's, parkland immediately surrounding Pierremont Hall and Culmers Amenity Land, which is leased from CT10 Parochial Charities. The land at Pierremont Park and Culmers is currently maintained by Box Green Horticulture Limited.

The Environment Committee has taken up the challenges of climate change with various projects in the budget, aimed at improving the town's environmental footprint, including increased tree coverage and reduced use of plastic.

Finally on behalf of the Members of the Finance & General Purposes Committee I would like to put on record our sincere thanks to all the Staff for their invaluable work over the past year.

Broadstairs and St Peter's Town Council Planning Committee Report 2022

The Planning Committee convenes on a monthly basis and consists of the following members: Cllr Jill Bayford (Chair), John Buckley (Vice Chair) Ruth Bailey, Rosalind Binks, Roy Dexter and Mike Garner. The Mayor, Cllr Paul Moore sits ex officio.

Broadstairs and St Peter's Town Council is a statutory consultee with the right to be consulted about planning applications in the Broadstairs and St Peter's area. However, we cannot determine an application unless the power has been delegated to us. The Town Council represents the local community and can engage in consultation with developers on behalf of the community.

The Planning Committee meets monthly to consider and make decisions on Thanet District Council's weekly planning lists, along with Kent County Council planning applications, planning appeals, amendments/variations of conditions, certificate of lawful use applications, works to trees in conservation areas, tree preservation orders, hedgerow removal applications and Highways stopping up orders. Decisions made at each meeting are uploaded onto the Thanet District Council planning portal

Planning information on all forthcoming Planning Committees can be found on the Broadstairs and St Peter's Town Council website. Thanet District Council's Planning Portal can be used to access additional information on all planning applications.

To assist the Committee when determining reserved applications, members will take into account written support and complaints, comments from the Broadstairs Society and feedback from Thanet District Council Planning Officers. Members will also listen to public, neighbours, or developer's representations at meetings. Members will also make use of a number of planning information documents, including Kent Design Guide, Thanet District Council Planning Guidance Leaflets, which cover extending your home, shop design, security, shutters, outdoor advertisements and signs and flat conversions, plus the Broadstairs & St Peter's Town Design statement, as well as the draft Broadstairs & St Peter's Neighbourhood Plan which was adopted on 9th July 2020 that will become an integral component of the Thanet District Council Local Plan.

Over the past year, twelve Town Council Planning meetings have taken place, with the meetings from January to April being held by Teams or Zoom software due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 442 planning applications including tree applications have been considered during this year.

A total of 354 planning applications have been considered, which is a 23% increase on 2021.

A large proportion of these applications relate to home improvements, which include single and two storey extensions, conservatories, loft conversions and dormer windows. The remaining applications include housing development sites, retails and commercial development, listed building consent, flat conversion and signage.

There were forty-six recommendations for refusal, which is a 7% decrease on last year. Examples of concern included over development, detrimental to the street scene, cramming, in an area of high townscape value, not in keeping with the character and pattern of surrounding development, overlooking, loss of trees, highways issues, poor elevation design, density of housing and encroaching on the green wedge.

However, a number of refusals just require a minor change to resolve concerns, for example: Design improvements, boundary clearances or change of scale, location, or materials. Applicants that cannot mutually resolve issues and object to a resolution of refusal, have the right to appeal to the Planning Inspector.

The majority of applications, through delegated powers, are resolved by the District Council's Planning Department. The remaining contentious applications are referred to the District Council's Planning Committee for consideration. If necessary, the District Councillor also has the power to 'call in' and refer a Broadstairs & St Peter's application to Thanet District Council Planning Committee.

The Town Council's Planning Committee considered eighty-eight applications for tree works last year, ranging from crown thinning and pollarding to felling. The tree applications this year were 2% higher than 2021. 17 were recommended for refusal which is a 39% decrease on the previous year.

Felling of healthy trees are always recommended for refusal, unless the tree is dying or diseased, the roots are affecting the foundations or drains, or the tree is encroaching on the highway. New developments are encouraged to plan around existing trees. Diseased trees that require felling are usually subject to the replanting of a suitable replacement.

All trees in a Conservation Area are protected and trees that have street scene amenity value have, or will incur, a Preservation Order.

Trees along the highway come under the control of Kent County Council.

The Town Council Volunteer Tree Warden Karen McKenzie, reviews applications that involve tree works, and if concerned about the proposal, will bring them to the Committee's attention for consideration at meetings through the relevant Ward Councillor in each case. Additionally, if any resident is aware of any mature tree under threat or has concerns regarding eyesore land or buildings, they can contact Thanet District Council, the Town Clerk, or the relevant Ward Councillor.

There has been one significant development that have attracted public interest in the past year:

Application OL/21/0941/JS – Land North of Reading Street - Outline planning application for residential development for up to 74 dwellings, including access.

Community Assets Committee

The Community Assets Committee was established to oversee the refurbishment of Pierremont Hall and its ancillary buildings, Retort House and any potential purchases or transfers of community assets by the Town Council. This Committee reports directly to the Council and has held 8 meetings since 1 April 2021.

In order to facilitate rapid decisions, the Committee was delegated spending limits and powers initially for 2 years but since extended as further building phases have been reached.

With nearly two and a half years of lockdown or partial lockdown, we have experienced the same challenges as other commercial enterprises, with the additional problem of water damage caused by extreme rainfall in June 2021, which effectively closed the northern wing of the Hall and also caused some damage to offices in the southern wing. Nevertheless, the damage has mostly been completed and, as the Mayor has already alluded to and due to our very hard-working and enterprising Events Manager, Leanne Hadden, Pierremont Hall and its surroundings have been the venue for several weddings, parties, murder mysteries and theatre productions as well as meetings and classes ranging from yoga to extra schooling.

We still have much to do, most importantly the Hall's basement is Phase 3 which I hope can start in the next financial year.

Retort House has I admit been a problem, but not of our making. The refurbishment was complete two years ago, however, we could not open due to delays in upgrading the power supply to the building. As many know, the initial work was stopped due to a void discovered under the car park which is owned by Thanet District Council. Despite us finding an alternative route, officers at TDC refused to allow this work to be completed over their land. After many months which I can only describe as extreme intransigence from the TDC administration at that time, permission was finally granted just before the summer and promptly refused by Kent County Council as it meant closing Albion Street during the busiest season. UKPN has also promised much but delivered little and once again deferred the work that is necessary upon finding that they had not fully mapped out the requirement. Fortunately we have managed to arrange for The Escapement to finally open their doors at Easter, but it is extremely disappointing that UKPN cannot pull out the stops for a community facility but were happy to do it for the new supermarket nearby.

The Committee agreed in principle to take over 2 clifftop shelters and the Albion Street toilets a couple of years ago. However, the Heads of Terms proposed by TDC were considered unacceptable and nothing has been forthcoming from TDC since then. I am absolutely sure that the conversation regarding toilets will be revived and accordingly there are earmarked reserves within the accounts for such an occasion., should an agreement be reached.

Informal discussions have recently taken place regarding other community assets, the Viking Bay lift being one of them. However the Town Council would need to be satisfied about the state of both the lift and more importantly its supporting structure before making any decisions on a transfer of ownership. It is important to recognise that this lift has never met the requirements of an accredited lift for the disabled. There is undoubtedly a demand and it was heavily used in the three months that it was open last summer. Whether that demand adequately justifies the almost certain financial burden on all the town's residents of future running, maintenance and eventual replacement costs is not a decision to be taken lightly. And I think it is highly unlikely to ever be a facility offered free of charge.

Finally as Chairman of the Community Assets Committee I would like to thank all the Committee

Members, Council Officers and particularly our Facilities Manager, David Bassett and local contractors for their support during the past year. There have been moments when it has seemed that anything that could go wrong, has. However when I look at Pierremont Hall, even though we are behind schedule on the refurbishment, I know that the Town has a sound capital investment for the future and both that and Retort House will provide community facilities for future generations. I hope you agree with me.

Cllr Rosalind Binks
March 2022