

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

The thirty-third Annual Town Meeting was held at the Town Hall, Petersfield on Monday 31 March 2008 at 7 pm.

PRESENT: Mr P Molloy (Town Mayor), Mr R Ayer, Mrs H Ayer, Mr V Clarke, Mr K Hick, Mr C Jenner and Mr G Watkinson

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk), Mrs S McMorrان (Deputy Town Clerk), Petersfield Herald, Mr M Cartwright (HCC Councillor), Ms S Payne (HCC Councillor), Mrs A Claxton (EHDC Councillor) and 35 members of the public

Prior to the business of the evening Mr Molloy advised that the Annual Town Meeting was a statutory requirement and was pleased to welcome so many to the meeting.

MINUTES

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Ms Mary Vincent

Mr Tom Norgate asked why the date on Ms Vincent's report differed from the date of the meeting. He was advised that this was just a typing error. He also stated that the statement in Ms Vincent's report that the development on King Georges Avenue was nearing completion was incorrect as the development was still not finished at the present time. These points were noted.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 11 April 2007 be authorised to be signed as a correct record.

TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT

The Town Mayor gave his report - a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Following which he invited the Chairmen of Committees to give their reports.

Mr G Watkinson - DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN - PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Deputy-Chairman gave the Chairman's (Ms M Vincent) report on her behalf to those present - a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Mr R Ayer - CHAIRMAN - GROUNDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman gave his report to those present - a copy of which is attached to these minutes

Mr G Watkinson - CHAIRMAN - PUBLIC HALLS COMMITTEE

The Chairman gave his report to those present - a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

Mr V Clarke - CHAIRMAN - FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

The Chairman gave his report to those present - a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

County Councillor Sam Payne also gave a report - a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

County Councillor Mike Cartwright reported that this was his first visit to the Petersfield Annual Town Meeting. He advised that he was County Councillor for two wards in Petersfield, St Mary's and Rother plus surrounding villages and Liss. He reported that he and Cllr Payne worked closely together on many issues especially highways matters. Mr Cartwright was working with Sheet Village Association regarding traffic matters around the village green, which had been flagged up at the HATs meetings as a priority.

Mr Cartwright went on to advise that he was the Chairman of the Policy and Resource Select Committee and Chairman of the County Fire Authority. He was also a member of the South Downs Executive Committee and endorsed the statement made by the Town Mayor earlier in the meeting - it was vital that the Western Weald, which included Petersfield, be included in the South Downs National Park. Finally Mr Cartwright advised that each County Councillor had an individual budget of £10,000 to spend towards community projects. He asked anyone interested to contact the Town Clerk who could then advise him and an application form could be sent.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr Martin Luke stated that parking was very difficult for a few residents in the Town. He had no on or off street parking and had to park in the public car park. The cost since the 1990's had risen from £30 to £760 per year for a season ticket. This was 25 times the cost of a parking permit for on street parking and 42 times the rate of inflation.

Cllr Payne advised that she was aware of the problems of some residents and very much regretted the decision to increase the car parking charges in Petersfield (by EHDC). She had objected to these increases at an EHDC meeting but her pleas had fallen on deaf ears.

Cllr Ayer advised everyone to read a paper he had found - Renaissance Market Town Programme, Yorkshire First, Yorkshire Regional Development Agency - which covered parking. He also reminded those present that the town access plan would be undertaken and that Petersfield Tomorrow had been asked to help with the plan.

Mr David Hague asked if there was any progress for a suitable parking space for the Age Concern mini bus outside the Winton House Centre. Mrs Ayer advised that a recent meeting had been held with the taxi drivers to try to ascertain where taxi ranks should be. Hopefully this may free up space for the mini bus.

Mr Trevor Towner asked for the Town Council's opinion on the decision to charge for car parking on Sundays (by EHDC). He stated that the lack of consultation by EHDC had been appalling. Single yellow lines were not in operation on Sundays so parking would be taking place all over the Town rather than in the car parks. Mrs Ayer advised that the parking order had been agreed by the County Council and that the possible congestion would be reviewed in a years time. She also advised that every aspect of the parking charges was looked at by Cabinet at EHDC. Car parks were still available at a lesser charge than the Central or Festival Hall car park.

Mr Tom Norgate advised that he had been invited to a meeting together with Trevor Towner and Trevor Boyden at EHDC on 5 March 2008. The decision to charge on Sundays was taken before consultation had taken place. There was a lack of consultation with the County Council on the impact charging on Sundays would have in residential streets with single yellow lines. It was not satisfactory to say that the situation would be reviewed in a years time. The Traffic Warden in the town was extremely hard working but it would be impossible for her to police all affected areas. Finally Mr Norgate stated that this had all been decided by stealth and before public consultation and he felt that District Councillors had a lot to answer for. Councillors should be aware of the feelings of electors in their 'patch'. A suspension of the parking order should be considered.

Mr Ayer advised that it was unfortunate that Mr Norgate had misled the meeting the decision was not taken before consultation took place.

Mrs Ayer advised that consultation started when the consultation order was issued. Mrs Ayer was fully aware of how difficult parking was in the centre of Petersfield. She was not the only member of Cabinet (10) and she had asked for a review in a years time. If parking was making life impossible for those living in St Peter's Ward there was no reason why she could not ask for the matter to be looked at earlier. Mrs Ayer thought that the coming Sunday would be difficult as the Farmer's Market was taking place but she asked everyone to wait and see what happened. She assured those present that there was no reason why further representation could not be given before the year had passed.

Mr Andrew Millar stated that there was real anger in Town regarding the issue of parking and that a time-line was needed. The decision had been driven by EHDC councillors who had no notion of how Petersfield operated.

Mr Jenner stated that car parking was a very emotive subject and that he would drive around until he found a space rather than pay! He thought that the two authorities (HCC and EHDC) needed to work in a joined up way. There had been a piecemeal approach to the parking issues which had pushed the problems out further in the Town. The Town, District and County councils needed to look at the Town as a whole and the Town Council should push for this approach.

Ms Payne supported what Mr Jenner had said and also stated that, in her opinion, the EHDC decision had compromised the on-street parking within Petersfield.

Mrs Ayer urged those present to attend the future Town Access meetings and help the Town, District and County Councils. The public were also welcomed at Cabinet Meetings of EHDC.

Mr Trevor Towner asked what the policy was regarding broken paving. Currently any broken paving was just replaced with black tarmac which was making the High Street look very unsightly. This was a recurring problem caused mainly by lorries parking on pavements.

Ms Payne advised that it had been suggested to EHDC that a local traffic agency be investigated which could deal with such problems at a local level. She would keep the Town Council informed of any progress regarding this matter.

Mrs Jill Towner stated that she was sorry that Mrs Ayer may be upset regarding the problems over parking but she thought this was mainly due to a lack of communication. She had, last Wednesday, received an invitation to comment on ideas for the Square but comments had to be received back at EHDC by the Monday. The time scale was just too short for meaningful comments to be made. This sort of thing upset people.

Mrs Angela Blackler congratulated the Town Council on all it was trying to do for the Youth of the Town. She asked for more consideration regarding the lighting of footways within the Town.

The Town Clerk advised that street lighting was split between EHDC and HCC. The Town Council had, in the past, contributed to street lighting provided by HCC but the policy had now changed as the Town Council would also be responsible for the on-going maintenance of such lights.

Mr John Crowhurst advised that this was the 18th Annual Town Meeting he had attended - he asked if a microphone could be provided in future. He was pleased to see so many members of the public in attendance but stated that it was the worst attendance he had seen by Councillors with no co-opted members present. There was one person who was greatly missed - John West. Mr Crowhurst and all present wished Mr West all the best for the future and a speedy recovery from his illness. Mr Crowhurst also queried where the other EHDC Councillors were but was very pleased to note that both County Councillors had attended the meeting. Mr Crowhurst went on to ask for the attendance records of Town Councillors to be available, perhaps in the Town Council newsletter which he had never received a copy of. He also asked for a breakdown of the Heath Charity income and expenditure.

Mrs Kirsty Stratton (Manager CAB) thanked the Town Council for the grant aid the CAB received which was very valuable to the voluntary sector. She asked the Town Council to remember the elderly within Petersfield who had many access and information issues and to help raise the profile of working with the elderly. Mrs Stratton also thanked Mr Jenner who had bravely tackled a young person who had

been causing havoc to the CAB building. The young person had gone through the Youth Offending Team and was now volunteering for the CAB.

Mr David Hague stated that after all he had heard this evening that communication was the key. He asked if the Town Council used e-mail and was advised that e-mail was used prolifically.

Mr Steve Riley advised that he was appalled at the short notice received from EHDC for a meeting regarding the Square and asked that, if the Town Council had received an extension could any members of the public also get an extension for comments. Mrs Ayer advised that, as far as she knew, comments could be received up until the Cabinet Meeting (24 April 2009) and would be considered by them on that date.

Mr Michael Finch asked for an explanation on the huge expense advised by the Chairman of F & GP on Health and Safety when an expenditure of only £3K was shown. Mr Clarke advised that this sum was direct Health and Safety matters and the work he mentioned was within the Halls and Grounds budgets.

Mr Andrew Millar asked that the Town Council give consideration to granting the freedom of the Town to a local unit or ship in recognition of the brave young men and women in the Armed Services. This could be done under the Town and Country Act 1972 Section 249(5). It may be something that EHDC would do rather than the Town Council.

Everyone thought this was an excellent idea and was worth investigating further and that Petersfield should set an example by taking such an action to recognise the Armed Services.

Mr Trevor Towner asked for an explanation on the problems with the Festival Hall windows. He was advised that to have windows in keeping with the building it was difficult to meet current regulations especially with windows close to fire escapes. The matter was in hand and a suitable solution should be found shortly. The Town Council were also mindful of finding the most economic solution for the rate payers of the Town.

Mr Graham Boardman stated that this was the first Annual Town Meeting he had attended. He was surprised at the lack of communication and the disagreement between the levels of local government. He was very surprised to learn that none of the business rates he paid went to the Town Council. He felt a proportion should stay within the Town. This situation should be changed. The Town Clerk advised that prior to 1986 a portion came to the Town from the business rates. Central Government changed the situation and began to take all the business rates. There had been a lot of pressure from town and parish councils to reverse this situation. The Government was not keen to change the situation but was being lobbied. Mr Cartwright informed those present that HCC did not receive the business rate either and that this level of local government was also lobbying to have the situation changed.

Mr John Crowhurst expressed the opinion that the tax base was too small for the responsibilities and aspirations of the Town Council. However with all things considered he thought the Town Council did a pretty good job.

Mr Trevor Towner asked if the County Council had an office in Brussels to help with possible European Grants and did the Town Council have access to this information. The Town Clerk informed those present that he had looked at all sorts of funding for the windows including The Lottery, Historic Buildings Trust and others, including European options (none were available). Mr Cartwright confirmed that the County Council did have an office in Brussels and that European funding was looked at.

Mr Tom Norgate took note that Mrs Ayer had urged the public to get involved. He was concerned, however, that the opportunity to comment on planning matters at the Town Council was often missed by the public as EHDC advertised the plans often after the Town Council had discussed them and made comments. He felt that EHDC must give the Town Council and the public more time for consideration of planning matters. Mr Ayer advised that the deadlines were set by Central Government and if the District Council did not meet the deadlines they were fined. EHDC were bound by the Government agenda. Mr Ayer assured Mr Norgate that regular representation was made to Central Government from all levels of local government regarding this matter.

Mr Steve Riley – asked why EHDC owned the Square and not the Town Council. The Town Clerk advised that this had been decided in 1974 (local government re-organisation) between the new town council and the new district council.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and invited all to have a glass of wine before leaving.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.11 pm.

TOWN MAYORS REPORT - 31 MARCH 2008

2007 was an election year with most of the country going to the polls in May to elect local government, and it was therefore a new council that took their seats at the beginning of this civic year. Regrettably, the election also left the council two seats short of a full complement and it was therefore necessary to go through a procedure of selection to co-opt into the two vacant positions. We were fortunate to be presented with 6 exceptional candidates from which two – Councillors Spencer Wisdom and Dave Bowers were selected as town councillors.

Planning proposals for major developments are always on the planning agenda, and the start of this civic year saw two controversial planning applications exercising the minds of both council and residents alike. The first was the re-location of J B Corries from their current industrial site in Frenchmens Road - to a greenfield site at the southern end of the Causeway - and the second was the expansion of Tescos with the affiliated development of sports pitches in TPS. I have much respect for JB Corrie, having been a part of this town's industrial base for over 60 years, but I personally was very much opposed to this application, and helped partly by a very strong residents association, this planning application was not successful.

By contrast, in June we celebrated the completion of phase 1 of the REEMA development in Grange Road. A street party marked the occasion and all residents I spoke to at the time - and in fact have spoken to since - appear very happy with the design and quality of their new homes. Those who live in the area will know that work on the development continues apace, and the new estate is now taking a very definite form and shape - and when completed, will be a massive improvement on the old 1950's estate.

There have been many other improvements in the town, most of which will, I'm sure, be mentioned by chairman of committees, but I think it probable that bus shelters will not get a mention elsewhere. Last year Council took responsibility for the bus shelters in the centre of town, and in doing so also refurbished the two in Dragon Street - and negotiated the provision of the two new shelters on the Causeway.

Also last summer I personally escorted an EHDC Officer around the town pointing out the total inadequacy of 22 of our litterbins, and formally wrote to District requesting replacement items as soon as possible. I have pressed for this to be actioned before the summer because, in my view, the present bins are also a hygiene issue, and I have been assured that modern closed litterbins have been budgeted for in the new financial year. I will continue to monitor this until all 22 of our open litterbins are replaced.

Financially, the town has again managed to balance its books very effectively – no easy task when the clear aim of all councillors, and particularly Chairmen of Committees – is to not only maintain the towns assets, but also to constantly look to improve whenever and wherever possible. We have a number of priceless, but high maintenance cost assets to preserve, such as the Town and Festival Hall, and the Heath and the Heath pond. They all require huge resources to maintain, and we are tremendously lucky to have expert and dedicated volunteer help in the shape of the Friends of Petersfield Heath and the angling club. This Council has been correctly described as 'Asset Rich but Cash Poor' – in spite of which, through Grant Aid, we still manage to support many of our organisations through difficult or start-up situations – a provision which I'm sure receives the support and backing of our taxpayers.

Sport in Petersfield continues to flourish with very active cricket, hockey, rugby and soccer teams. The youth teams are particularly successful and it is a delight to see so many youngsters enjoying – and being coached – in their chosen sport. Both the rugby and soccer juniors have enjoyed successful years and the town juniors football club again ran a hugely

successful 6-a-side tournament, with 295 teams taking part over the two days - and attracting over 5000 visitors to the town.

Last July the chairman of Town juniors was also elected chairman of the senior club, and together with a fresh management committee of 12 have begun the process of reviving the fortunes of Petersfield Town Football Club. An immediate manifestation of this is the pending match against Chelsea Old Boys on April 20th.

Plans are currently under review to build indoor tennis courts at Pennsfield, and if the scheme does actually get the go-ahead, Petersfield could well boast some of the best facilities in the South of England

But there is always room for improvement, and one of the glaring deficiencies, I believe, is the lack of a dedicated Youth Centre – a place where young people can go to enjoy a variety of activities in a safe and secure environment. All those involved with youth and community, as well as the young people themselves, would welcome such a centre. I believe the location for such a centre should be within an already established recreational area, and Love Lane would appear to meet all the criteria of space, safety and central location. A proposal paper has been circulated through the community sector and providing there is general agreement in principle, firm proposals will be drafted and funding sought for the redevelopment of the Love Lane sports facilities.

Overall, I believe this year to have been a splendid year for Petersfield. Through the volunteers of Petersfield Tomorrow, the town has taken some steady but important strides forward. They have continued to consult and investigate where improvements can be made to the town, and to identify what residents require most from their town. One of the most frequent comments to emerge from the recent Town Health Check was for better use to be made of the town square and in order to prove this a viable option, the Town Character group organised the highly successful festivities in the Square last summer and are, even now, organising, not only an even better event this summer - but also a food festival. The overall aim is to make this, and other events, an ongoing annual occasion.

The town character group are also progressing the Town Design Statement - a document which, when finished, could be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to reinforce the Local Development Framework, and thus give Council a more effective tool to manage any future development in the town.

Which brings me finally to what is probably one of the most important issues to face the town in it's entire history. As you undoubtedly know, last year the inspector ruled Petersfield and the Western Weald out of the National Park - on evidence submitted by his appointed landscape assessor, and in direct contradiction to the Designation Order issued in January 2003 and – incidentally - a subsequent report by the East Hants District Local Plan inspector. This ruling was clearly flawed, and the South Downs Campaign was set up to counter what is considered by most to be an outrageous misjudgement. From the beginning, the Town Council made firm representation to DEFRA and the Secretary of State, and a further hearing was held in Worthing in February. I attended that meeting and the evidence produced by the South Downs campaign was strong enough to force the inspector to agree that the evidence produced should be included in the forthcoming hearing in April. The importance of this hearing cannot be underestimated. If we lose this argument, we will also almost certainly lose our AONB status – and with it our protection from excessive and inappropriate development – with potentially disastrous results for the town.

On that rather serious note, I commend this report to the meeting.....Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PAUL MOLLOY. TOWN MAYOR

Annual meeting March 2008

Report from Chairman of Planning Mary Vincent

I am sorry that I cannot be with you tonight and have asked my Deputy, Cllr Watkinson to give this report on my behalf.

Unlike all the other committees of the town council, the planning committee is made up of all counsellors except the Mayor and meets twice a month, again unlike the other committees. We try to work closely with the District Counsel, but as we may see the town differently from the wider picture, sometimes we disagree.

Plans are sent to us by E.H.D.C. for discussion and comments. District Counsel meet monthly, usually on the first Thursday of the month and if an item is section 1, we may, if we wish speak either for or against the matter.

This has been a very busy year, as usual with several matters causing much comment.

Petersfield School and Tesco's is a matter that springs to mind, with much local comment and many meetings. Unfortunately, to my mind, this has been passed.

The Barham Road, King George Ave., development is now nearing completion. Much later than was previously envisaged. J.B. Corrie tried to develop the site at the top of The Causeway, but unfortunately were unsuccessful. The Drayton House development seems to have ground to a halt and the Organ factory site appears to be in the same situation.

We do try to protect our town and village from overdevelopment, so were not too happy about the possible development of thirteen houses on land to the rear of 28 London Rd. and this was also felt with a small building site at 2 and 4 Buckmore Avenue.

I could itemise several sites but I think you get the picture because although our remit is planning, personal feelings will creep in.

If a plan or project is not clear, we are fortunate that District Officers will come to our meetings to explain and clarify and we also have the opportunity to attend and speak at a site visits.

We have a public participation slot on our agendas and I am pleased that sometimes the public do take the chance to speak, though this

is usually because they are personally affected.

We also deal with the ordinary planning applications for tree felling, conservatories and the like, but we are not sure how, in the event of the National Park, the planning for this area will be altered.

Again, I thank George for giving this repost and I would like to thank those members of the Counsel who regularly attend the planning committee. I would also like to thank Ginny, who has supported, deciphered and generally held my hand through this years planning meetings.

Annual Town Meeting 2008

Report of the Chairman of the Grounds Committee

The Grounds Committee comprises myself and Cllrs. Mrs Ayer, Bowers, Jenner, Shore, and Ms Vincent. It spawns the Skate Park Working Party.

The prime function of the Committee is to consider and report to the Council on all matters relating to any grounds within the ownership of the Town Council and any associated buildings and activities as appropriate. There are some 20 diverse grounds and much of the Committees work involves keeping a watchful eye on particular issues. It is important to understand that the Town Council are Trustees of the Heath and so accountable to the Charity Commission. For this reason all matters regarding the Heath are referred to the Council for decision. The Committee's work is a bit like managing the painting of the Forth Bridge so I will concentrate on the more important issues.

Grounds Maintenance Contract.

The routine work on our grounds is specified under a Grounds Maintenance Contract, which is monitored by our Grounds Maintenance Officer who brings regular reports to the Committee. The Contract is approaching its final year. We are currently taking expert advice to produce a contract specification that will form the basis of the new Contract. This is one of the most important tasks that I have faced since becoming a Councillor.

The Avenue

The Avenue Pavilion has been plagued by vandalism and it has been a struggle to keep it in the condition expected by our residents. It is great that I am at last able to report that the Tennis Courts have very recently been resurfaced with more improvements to the surface in the offing.

Our attention has now turned to the boundary fencing which is in a poor state.

Love Lane

The football pitches used by the Town Juniors have been rested as far as possible and improvement to the pitches themselves has been a high priority for some years now. It is hoped that the coming together of the Town Juniors and the Town Football Club will be beneficial to the support that we give these grounds.

I am almost as excited about the intended improvement to the car park at Love Lane as I am about the Tennis Courts. The car park is very well used at various times of the week and is, to say the least, sub-standard at the moment. Developers Contributions from the District Council are being used to fund this and other projects and it is important that these Contributions are well used in the best interests of the community.

With the support of the Skate Park Working Party, which involves young people and the Festival of Youth, we now have an ambitious plan for the replacement skate park. We are working with the Football Club to ensure that the boundary between the skate park and the Football Ground is as well considered as possible.

Penns Farm Playing Fields

The Penns Farm Playing Fields are traditionally the home of the Rugby Club and now to an increasing extent the Town Juniors Football as well. Both uses have increased the demands on pitch maintenance, which are not always as well met as the Clubs would like. We have made short-term changes to our grounds maintenance procedures to improve the maintenance. The grounds contract specification, that I mentioned earlier, will look particularly closely at these requirements.

The Council are supportive of the District Council's initiatives to improve the provision of sporting facilities at this site.

The Heath

Most of the work done on the Heath is carried out in accordance with the Heath Management Plan. This is a project-based 5-year Plan that is used to ensure that any work is prioritised to reflect the best interests of The Heath itself. All of the stakeholders with an interest in the Heath, such as the Friends of the Heath, the Anglers and the Cricket Club, regularly consider the Management Plan in the context of improvements. I believe that lip service was paid to the previous plan and am pleased that the current plan is receiving, as far as possible, the attention it deserves. We have introduced an annual meeting with the users of our grounds in the same way that we do for the Allotment holders. The first meeting was well attended and augurs well for the future.

There is an ongoing discussion with the Cricket Club to determine how best we can support them. Early indications are that there are positive outcomes to anti-vandalism measures.

A Working Group, including the Environment Agency, has been set up to advise the Committee on the measures intended to address the problems of erosion at the Pond banks. A Pond Siltation Survey has been produced that advises the situation and measures to address the problem.

Repairs have been made to the kiosk, a quotation has been accepted for maintenance of the Millenium Path and the hours of operation of the toilets have been extended. Generous requests, from Mrs Bulmer and Mrs Welsh, to provide benches on The Heath were welcomed.

Sheet Recreation Ground

The Scouts intend a new clubhouse. We support a new siting for the replacement building, which is now a matter for the Planning Authority.

Sheet Common and Recreation Ground

The BMX facility has been made safer adjacent to the London Road and we have introduced a marked boundary within which we expect the diggers and shovellers to confine their work.

Bell Hill Recreation Ground

After a very long gestation period the long-standing project that was suggested by the Woodbury Avenue and Buckmore Road Residents' Associations to make the access to the Recreation Ground and the crossing of Bell Hill safer came to a head in almost indecent speed. The consultation during these hectic times fell short of previous high standards but this was inevitable given the short notice of the decision to start the

work. Many are waiting for the establishment of the new hedgerow with baited breaths – not least the Chairman of the Grounds Committee.

Borough Road Recreation Ground

You may have noticed that the Planning Authority refused the latest threat by development to the Recreation Ground.

Mill Lane

We are looking to transfer ownership of this very small parcel of land to one of the residents of Mill Lane.

Allotments

Both sets of Allotments are in high demand and regular meetings with the Users ensure that we are in touch with the needs and aspirations of the allotment holders. A permission was granted to keep bees.

Rotherlands Nature Reserve

The Rotherlands Conservation Group continue to perform miracles on the Nature Reserve and I hope that everyone here has enjoyed their work. There are ongoing discussions with Partner Agencies to put in place long-term support for the volunteers.

Paddock Way

The creation of a new play facility with access at Paddock Way was not without its difficulties but the early signs are that this project is much appreciated by the local residents and will be well supported. The Town Council's Anti Social Behaviour Working Party conceived this project and is ensuring that Partner Agencies are working together with local residents to support this part of our Town. A recent photograph of youngsters from Paddock Way alongside their 4 skips of rubbish is one of the highlights of my year. It is pleasing to see the impact of the drainage improvements made to most of this land. The 'pond' underneath the goalposts is one of my lowest points. I am threatening to be seen fishing at this pond wearing a gnomes hat in order to keep pressure on the Council. Town Clerk please note!

In Summary

The Committee has considered a number of general issues including: Public Footpaths (especially No, 42); Fun Fair and circus permissions; bus shelters in the Town; play ground inspection reports.

I believe that the Grounds Committee has enjoyed a successful year, under sometimes difficult and challenging circumstances, and continues to lay foundations that will prove invaluable in the future. This is in no small part due to the detailed work of our Staff. Thank you all.

Councillor Bob Ayer. 31st March 2008.

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2008

REPORT FROM CHAIRMEN OF PUBLIC HALLS – CLLR. GEORGE WATKINSON

The Public Halls committee for the current municipal year has consisted of Cllr Ken Hick as vice chairman and Cllrs. Ms Vincent, Clarke, Aiston and Wisdom . The committee has met once per month excepting August and December, the council recess breaks.

This year the committee have implemented and monitored those plans set down last year by our predecessors and where necessary amended them to meet the current situation. The biggest item still ongoing is the planned replacement of the 70-year-old windows in the Festival Hall, which allow the ingress of wind and rain. It had been hoped that this project would have been nearing completion by now however our consultant is still trying to find windows that meet both the approval of the Planning Department and the energy savings required by Building Control under Government guidelines. I remain hopeful that we will see the start of this project in the not to distant future.

Other major items undertaken have been the internal decoration of Sheet Village Hall, the rectification of a rising damp problem in the Avenue Pavilion and also complete decoration inside and outside. New chairs were also purchased for the Avenue Pavilion. New flooring has been laid in the kitchen at Sheet Village Hall, at the Avenue Pavilion and also in the kitchen and kitchen corridor and wc's at the Town/Festival Hall. The floor of the Festival Hall has also been sanded and resealed and decoration of some of the back-stage areas has been undertaken. In addition there have been numerous day-to-day maintenance tasks due to fair wear, an occasional piece of damage caused by vandalism and work necessary under government Health and Safety regulations to ensure that the council is covered by insurance.

The committee realise that we have a large number of organisations that regularly use the facilities and besides relying on them reporting things that may not be working during their periods of hire they also have many thoughts and ideas as to how the facilities could be improved. With this in mind a working party has been set up which meets regularly to discuss their proposals with officers and committee members. Providing that any proposal is for the benefit for all it is placed on a list for committee discussion, those approved have an estimated costing ready for consideration in the council annual budget debate.

The committee in all its discussions and actions have been well aware that a high percentage of the council's income is derived from the properties under their management. With this in mind we have tried very hard to ensure that all the properties are kept well maintained, attractive and offer value to hirers. We also have started to look well into the future for items that will require replacement, after all the Festival Hall is 70 years old and like many of us a regular dose of medicine may keep us looking good but there are times when parts have to be renewed.

I would like to thank my fellow committee members for their cheerful and willing efforts and help over the past year. I would also like to record a very big "thank you" to the Town Clerk and all the council staff for their help, advice and efforts in ensuring that Petersfield can be very proud of the facilities we present on behalf of the town.

M G Watkinson
Chairman Halls Committee
Petersfield Town Council.

Annual Town Meeting 2008

Report of the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Finance and General Purposes Committee comprises Cllr Mrs Ayer, Cllr Hick and Cllr Ms Vincent, the Chairman of Halls, Cllr Watkinson and the Chairman of Grounds, Cllr Ayer. There are two sub committees who report their deliberations to us, namely the Grants Panel, currently comprising Cllrs Mrs Ayer, Ms Vincent and Watkinson, and the Staff Panel comprising Cllrs Hick, Jenner and Ms Vincent with Cllr Watkinson as substitute.

The primary function of the Finance & General Purposes Committee is to formulate the Budget for the forthcoming year and to recommend the Budget and Precept to Full Council. Many of the items on the budget are recommended by the Halls and Grounds Committees after very careful scrutiny of their needs and desires, to not only maintain but also improve the facilities we, as a Council, provide to the public.

The total estimated expenditure of this Council for 2008/09 will be £736,000. We are lucky to have offices and buildings to rent out to tenants, and also facilities that will bring in income, and with bank interest as well this generates £249,000. These cover some 34% of our expenditure, which leaves the council tax to cover the remaining 66%, so our precept for the coming year will be £463,088, an increase of 9.2% on the current year.

I am indebted to our RFO (Responsible Financial Officer) for the very detailed figures on which we were able to base our discussions.

Councillors, despite all rumours to the contrary, do like to keep the precept as low as possible, but unfortunately there are factors that we simply cannot avoid, which are beyond our control, and which, have to be funded.

The main factor is Health and Safety especially on ensuring that the trees on our grounds are maintained for the safety of the public. We also have a series of maintenance contracts for various pieces of equipment, including all the tiered seating in the Festival Hall, lighting and stage lifts and the cost of these rises relentlessly each year. Energy costs and insurance also have risen at a rate much higher than inflation.

We could have funded these by not carrying out decoration or general maintenance on many of our halls and by not setting aside money to cope with vandalism and graffiti and by not maintaining the Millennium path around the Heath Pond, but the great majority of councillors decided that this was an irresponsible move and would create problems in years to come, and could well affect our potential income from hirers.

This year we have carried out our budget discussions in a different manner from previously, in that the initial discussions have been carried out by a small group consisting the Town Mayor and the Chairman of the three committees. The object of this committee was to enable councillors to discuss the budget in a more mature way, rather than sit for several hours pruning small amounts from different parts of the budget.

There was, however, a fundamental split on this year's budget, in that some councillors wished to set aside sums (called earmarked reserves) to help fund major items that will be required in the future, such as the Rose Room carpet, replacement boiler for the Festival Hall, replacement play equipment etc. However the majority of councillors thought that such expenditure could be funded from the present Capital Reserves of some £291,000, and putting funds aside at this time would cause an unacceptable increase in the precept and hence the Council Tax.

I now turn to the Capital Reserves, which as I have just stated, stand at £291,000, an increase of £55,000 on the previous year. This extra money became available, as the outcome from the previous year was much better than expected, and because we obtained a rate rebate from the District Council. This money was set aside to help fund the replacement windows for the Town Hall, which after 74 years have reached the end of their life.

The Capital Reserves appear extremely healthy, but with the windows (at £117,000) refurbishment of the Avenue Tennis Courts (at £16,000) and money set aside for the Skatepark (at £50,000), all to take place in the next financial year, we need as a Council to ensure that we maintain reserves at a satisfactory level for the future.

The Grants Panel, under the chairmanship of Cllr Watkinson, considered grants and made recommendations that were approved by Full Council, mostly without amendment. This panel do a lot of important, behind the scenes, work to assess each application and are to be congratulated for their efforts. It might not be widely known, but this council funds over £50,000 worth of grants each year to ensure that local societies and organisations have the fullest support possible.

The Staff Panel have done much useful work on a number of vital staff issues, in order to bring the work of the council, and the paying of our staff much more in line with the working in similar large organisations.

I should like to thank all the staff and the councillors for the way they have worked together to ensure that we reach sensible decisions on our finances, which in the end will ensure that Petersfield is a town of which we should all feel proud.

Vaughan Clarke
(Chairman – Finance & General Purposes Committee)

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Income/Expenditure for 2007/2008

The total expenditure for the year was £ 710K

This expenditure was funded as follows:-

Precept (Council Tax)	£ 424K
Income	£ 243K
Funded from reserves	<u>£ 43K</u>
TOTAL	£ 710K

INCOME

Income - Rent	£ 125K
Income – charges from Halls and Grounds	£ 89K
Other income	£ 14K
Bank interest	<u>£ 15K</u>
TOTAL INCOME	£ 243K

EXPENDITURE

Salaries/N.I./Pensions	£ 262K
Grounds Maintenance/Repair	£ 107K
Property Maintenance/Repair	£ 76K
Grants to other organisations	£ 50K
Litter Clearance	£ 32K
Rates	£ 31K
Insurance	£ 26K
Water/Electricity/Gas	£ 24K
Equipment Maintenance/Repair	£ 20K
Legal/Professional costs	£ 15K
General Purchases	£ 15K
Postage/Telephone/Photocopying	£ 11K
Rent/Lease of equipment	£ 8K
Training	£ 6K
Advertising	£ 6K
Audit	£ 5K
Health & Safety	£ 3K
Miscellaneous	<u>£ 13K</u>
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 710K

Sam Payne's County Councillors report
Petersfield Town Council AGM

Highways

This year marks the first anniversary of the Hampshire Action Teams (HATs). I was initially sceptical of how these would run and how effective outcomes would be but I must admit they have worked rather well. They are held across the district and discuss a variety of subjects. This allows town and parish councils to attend and to give representations. HATs also receive locally relevant presentations from officers on different aspects of county business. The meeting of Rights of Way, for example, was very popular and from the feedback from that meeting, rights of way policy is being redrawn and soon every town and parish council will receive a pack detailing exactly what powers and rights you have in regards to access.

The old Highways Prioritisation meetings have also been incorporated into the HATs and councillors have a more prominent role in prioritising. This year we have been asked to gather community evidence for a number of different programs including the County Towns Initiative Programme, the minor capital programme for schemes under £25k, The traffic management investigation program and the Village 30 Project. Not all councillors are in support of this new way of rating against each other but I can't complain because all my bids have got through! The real measure of success will be whether anything comes of prioritisation exercises.

Firstly there was the crossing for Bell Hill which initially received the highest rating in the Minor capital schemes from the HAT members. However it received funding from elsewhere soon after meaning that it could go ahead much sooner.

The Traffic management programme prioritisation was a new invention whereby the Traffic Management team give County Councillors a list of issues and ask us to feedback which of these issues we would like investigated. The key word in this scheme is 'investigation' they can't actually commit funding until they have carried out their investigation. For this programme I rated the need for an on-street parking review across all of Petersfield.

As I reported to the last TC meeting, we were hoping this year to get funding for a town wide review for on-street parking. This unfortunately did not happen and now we going to have to take a piece-by-piece study into it instead. Cllr Cartwright and I will be meeting with Traffic Management to discuss these plans further. As you are aware Petersfield will be benefiting from a town access plan next year and I hope we may be able to tie-in some of these parking issues to that plan to produce some positive outcomes.

During the last year I have been working with the Spain Area Residents Association (SARA) on issues around Sheep Street, The Spain and Hylton Road. They are a very proactive group concerned with access to the town, road safety and beautification of the area. On their behalf I submitted an application to the Country Towns Initiative fund which providing funding for historic areas to smarten them. Again this

was prioritised through the HAT and although it received ratings from the group, we are still waiting to hear if this actually gets taken onboard.

Waste

This February the county council implemented a new policy on household waste recycling. With the aim of preventing trades people illegally using it, it has also had a negative impact on some domestic users who only have a large van as their sole use of transport. Large vans will require a permit while some trailers have been banned altogether.

Post Offices

The decision by the Post Office to close thousands of its branches has hit Petersfield hard with the proposed closure of Durford Road Post Office. That office plus neighbouring ones in East Meon will have not only a harmful impact on the areas they serve but also on primary post offices such as the one in the Square. This already operates under massive demand and will need additional support if surrounding ones are closed. This week there is a motion to full council to follow the example of Essex County Council which is entering negotiations with the Post Office to explore the county council running the post offices earmarked for closure. It is hoped that if HCC over support to keep them open, they could also provide a dual role providing council services as well.

Transport

South West trains have been providing a bus between Petersfield and Waterlooville to encourage people to leave their cars at home and not bring them into town. This was very much welcomed and is a step in the right direction but unfortunately is not very well used. This isn't surprising given that a return ticket is £6.50 (£2.50 more than parking all day!). It also does not offer through-ticketing – where you purchase your train ticket at the same time, but this is something that will happen in the future.

As i reported previously, the 67 bus had its funding cut last year despite massive objection and petitions. A meeting was held with all towns and parishes along the stop to explore alternative options or funding. Eventually it was reinstated much to the delight of all the passengers who rely on this service.