

**Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council**  
**Annual Town Assembly Council Report 13 March 2023**

Council Report by the Mayor Cllr Roy Dexter

Good evening Councillors and Members of our community: Welcome to the 2023 Annual Town Assembly.

**Housekeeping:** Please turn mobiles to silent, if the alarms go off or you see or smell smoke please exit via the French doors and we will assemble adjacent to the war memorial: And those present are reminded of the following:- *The right to record...*

**Brief Overview of The Council**

**[i] Wards, Councillors, Committees and the political Split**

Broadstairs and St. Peter's Town Council has 5 wards with 15 elected Councillors.

Kingsgate (1 Councillor), Beacon Road (3 Councillors), Bradstowe (3 Councillors), St Peter's (4 Councillors) and Viking Ward also has (4 Councillors)

*The current political split is*

Conservative: 11, Green Party: 1, Thanet Independents: 1, Independent: 2

*Committee and sub-committee structure*

There are 3 main committees that report to Full Council: The Finance and General Purposes Committee, the Planning Committee and the Community Assets Committee: And 5 sub-committees, plus a Town Forum which is made up of Councillors, community groups and organisations. The sub committees include Allotments and Land, Staff Management, Leisure & Tourism, The Environment, and the Neighbourhood Plan.

To date during the current civic year the Council has met 10 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.

**[ii] The current Staffing Structure is as follows:-**

Town Clerk, Finance Officer, Civic and Support Officer, Senior Administrative Officer, Events and Bookings Manager, Facilities Manager, Operations Manager and Caretaker. And the Town Council is committed to staff training and sees this as an essential component in delivering the best services for the town.

### **[iii] Council Tax**

At the Town Council meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> February the Council RESOLVED to instruct Thanet District Council to collect a precept of £739,195 which equates to (£75.41 per year for a household paying Council Tax Band D). This represents a 5% increase on the current year or £3.59 per annum on the average Band D property.

### **[iv] Town Council's Statutory and non statutory Activities, Projects and Services Includes**

Convening public meetings, Maintaining and up-dating the Town Council's Website, social Media sites, and 14 notice boards; Provides Allotments: *Norman road and Prospect Sites* and finalising our Accounts and Audits and Amends regular up-dates over 20 documents and policies including the Neighbourhood Plan, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. (All can be viewed or downloaded from the Council's web-site).

The Town Council now has 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 and activities. The Retort House in the Albion Street Car Park, which is also owned by the Town Council, is now open for sport and leisure bookings.

The Town Council also provides funding and grants for local civic and leisure organisations, which can cover every day running costs and/or support for event funding.

### **[v] Civic and Mayoral Services includes**

Civic Events for example The Remembrance Service, Annual Town Assembly, Annual Council meeting and Mayor-Making, and the Annual Civic Church Service.

Mayor's promotional activities include community events, visiting schools, opening new business, visiting Care and Nursing Homes, Raising funds for local charities and official visits to other towns throughout Kent.

And plans are currently being developed by the Town Council and our community partners for the King Charles III Coronation Celebrations.

### **[vi] Communications**

Finally, this is an election year, voting is scheduled to take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> May (please don't forget that this year you will need photo identification at the polling stations and the pre-election period [known as Purdah] will start on the 27<sup>th</sup> March.

## Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Finance & General Purposes Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Town Council's finances are managed responsibly and in full accordance with current financial and governance requirements. The Committee reports and makes recommendations to Full Council and has held 7 meetings in the past financial year.

Despite the somewhat challenging environment, the Town Council has built up prudent reserves for the final phase of refurbishments at Pierremont Hall and other expected outgoings for this coming year. Whilst nothing is under consideration, the Council is currently in a position to consider potential acquisition of assets from Thanet District Council, should they arise.

With regards to Pierremont Hall and Retort House, event income from Pierremont has shown a healthy increase, whilst the sports hall at Retort House was not open for business during this financial year. At the same time, due largely to heightened regulatory requirements for fire prevention, unplanned but necessary works were carried out at both Retort House and Pierremont Hall during this past year. The Council has maintained reserves for such occurrences and expects this negative gap to narrow considerably over the next 12 months.

The Council employs 8 Officers including the Town Clerk, of which 3 are full-time. This includes 2 Officers in Facilities who work on repairs or improvements in and around the town as well as within Council properties. Staff costs are estimated to make up 36% of the current year's precept.

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

**The Leisure & Tourism Sub-Committee** considers all aspects of town promotion and leisure initiatives to improve the economy as well as to enhance the quality of life for residents. The Sub-Committee may allocate smaller grants up to £2,000, with recommendations being made to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for larger sums.

The Council has spent ca £80,000 in the past year on the town's amenities such as open spaces and the allotments, beach security, decorative lighting, general repairs including works to the bandstand, and also part-funding the opening of Dickens House. A further £46,000 has gone to initiatives such as summer entertainment at the bandstand, November 5<sup>th</sup> fireworks and the Broadstairs in Bloom programme. Grants totalling £60,000 were also allocated to local organisations for events and general support.

**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 various projects aimed at improving the town's environmental footprint. In the last year, the committee oversaw Broadstairs in Bloom grants which were given to 5 schools or other organisations. Over 1500 seed packets were donated to all local junior schools and some community groups, as well as larger bags of wild flower seed to those with larger projects. 116 pollinator-friendly hanging baskets were made available at a discount for businesses around the town. The Town Council's various planters were repaired and replanted.

Hedgehog and bird boxes produced by the Town Shed were supplied to 4 schools and a further 12 bird boxes and 8 hedgehog boxes were donated to residents. More will be made available in the coming year.

The committee is currently working with Dane Court to install 4 swift boxes in the school grounds and there will shortly be a campaign to promote some swift boxes for CT10 residents who live within a mile radius of Culmers Amenity Land.

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 Officers for their invaluable work over the past year.

Cllr. Rosalind Binks

March 2023

## **Broadstairs and St Peter's Town Council Planning Committee Report 2023**

The Planning Committee convenes on a monthly basis and consists of the following members: Cllrs Jill Bayford (Chair), John Buckley (Vice Chair) Ruth Bailey, Rosalind Binks, Roy Dexter (Town Mayor/Chair of Council), Mike Garner and Paul Moore

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 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020 that has integral component of the Thanet District Council Local Plan.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition of the Plan is currently out to Consultation with Thanet District Council. The consultation period closes on 23<sup>th</sup> March 2023. It is hoped that this edition will be 'made' by Spring 2023. This will then take the place of the initial plan, with the intention that it is reviewed every 5 years.

Over the past year, 12 Town Council Planning meetings have taken place, all held in person at Pierremont Hall.

A total of 306 applications including tree applications have been considered during this year January to December 2022.

A total of 234 planning applications have been considered, which is a 34% decrease 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 34 recommendations for refusal, which is 15% of the applications. 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 72 applications for tree works last year, ranging from crown thinning and pollarding to felling. The tree applications this year were 18% less than 2021. 35 applications were recommended for refusal.

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.

A significant application which was reviewed in 2022 was:

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

This has been refused by Thanet District Council, however the applicant has taken this to appeal with the Planning Inspectorate. A decision has not yet been made.

## Community Assets Committee

The Community Assets Committee oversees the management of Pierremont Hall, its ancillary buildings and Retort House, as well as making recommendations to the Town Council regarding potential acquisitions of community assets. This Committee reports directly to the Council and has held 7 meetings since 1 April 2022.

A variety of events have been held in and around the Hall during the past year: from weddings to christenings, yoga to business meetings and an outdoor summer theatre. The feedback has been very positive and the events team is mindful that, whilst these activities provide both financial and community benefits, they must not impact on other commercial activities within the buildings.

The Committee has faced several challenges over the past year. With regard to Pierremont Hall, the portico has been upgraded with wrought iron railings and gates, and sash windows at the front of the Hall have also been refurbished. Drainage repairs and other minor works have been carried out in and around the buildings, including the external painting of The Cottage. A robust annual maintenance programme has been established for properties under the Council's ownership.

The CCTV system has also been substantially upgraded. Sadly this is necessary because vandalism in Pierremont Park continues to be an issue. Whilst Kent Police have accepted and now make regular use of a room in the Hall, it was deemed necessary to upgrade the Council's private security presence to protect both staff, the properties and the events programme. There is also a constant battle to prevent misuse of the parking spaces which are not a public car park.

Phase 3 – refurbishment of the basement level of Pierremont Hall - was set in motion during last year. There has been a delay due to the surveyor being unable to complete the tender documents but it is hoped that this project will progress during the 2023-24 financial year. Currently the basement can only be used for storage and is most definitely not habitable.

The property management company Henderson Setterfield has been engaged to manage the day-to-day administration of Council buildings. The hand-over process took considerable time and included a backlog of issues with regard to service charges. These issues have been exacerbated by the subsequent increase in energy prices since last March. Both the management company and the Council appreciate the considerable impact this cost increase has had on our commercial tenants and discussions are ongoing to come to an agreement that is both fair and reasonable for all parties.

Retort House is finally opening as a sports and leisure facility. The commercial tenant, The Escapement opened some months ago. We look forward to welcoming old and new organisations and individuals back to Retort for a variety of sports and other events.

The Committee considered and decided not to recommend the option to take ownership of the lift at Viking Bay from Thanet District Council. Whilst this is undoubtedly a considerable asset for residents and visitors to Viking Bay, it is not DDA compliant and the future maintenance / replacement costs were deemed to present a potentially unacceptable financial risk to the Council. The Council has subsequently opted to work together with TDC to make the beach more easily accessible from Harbour Street this summer.

There has been no development with regard to purchase or acquisition of other assets in the past year. Further discussions will only take place when there is a TDC asset disposal decision.

In summary, the Council continues to suffer the trials and tribulations of being a property owner in difficult times. However the investments in Pierremont Hall and Retort House are a sound capital investment for the town's future generations and a good base for providing community facilities.

Finally as Chairman of the Community Assets Committee, I would like to thank all the Committee Members, Council Officers and local businesses for their commitment and support during the past year.

Cllr Rosalind Binks

March 2023