

HYTHE TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT – 2009/10

This report will be placed in full on the Town Council’s website – which is to be found at www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk

Council Meetings

There have been 8 Council meetings during the course of this last year. Its principal Committees – Finance and General Purposes and Plans and Works have met 11 and 17 times respectively. My particular thanks go to the Chairman of both these Committees – Councillor John Schoner and Councillor Reg Belcourt respectively for all their hard work and support.

Charity Trustees

The Town Council is the Corporate Trustee for a number of Charities. There have been 4 meetings of the full Charity Trustees. The Town Council is responsible for the operation of four charities – Horn Street, Palmarsh, Eaton Lands and Davis Oaklands. It also provides the administrative support to the Wakefield Bequest, of which 3 serving Councillors are currently Trustees. The Town Council has just successfully completed borrowing arrangements from the Permanent Endowment of the Davis Oaklands Trust. It has also made arrangements for the continued sustainability of the Trust via providing it with income from the Library rent.

Annual returns are undertaken for all the above Charities to the Charity Commission.

Town Council’s Websites

The Town Council operates two websites:

The Portal website is www.hythe-kent.com which gives general information about the Town and the community as a whole. The Town Council also has its own business website. www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk The websites are updated weekly and provide public access to Agendas, Minutes and other Council documents as well as facilities and hire arrangements. There is also a public notice board page. There have been over 163,850 “hits” to the general Hythe website over the course of the last 12 months and over 95,000 “hits” to the local government web site, the most popular pages for which have been the planning applications page, the notice board and the list of councillors.

Thanks go to the webmaster – Mr Adrian Wilson for his work on both sites.

Oaklands – Local History Room / Museum

Mrs Janet Adamson continues in her role as the Hon Curator of the Museum and she usually frequents Oaklands on a fortnightly basis, fielding many and varied enquiries of an historical nature. Janet is extremely conscientious in her role and thanks are due to her for her continued assistance.

Oaklands – Bandstand Concerts

The Town Council continues to run its ever popular band programme with 19 performances during the course of the last summer providing an array of music. A similar programme is planned for the forthcoming season. The programme is planned to provide for a wide variety for musical tastes.

Town Hall

The Town Hall has held 24 events and 18 guided walks during the course of the year and it has been used by 10 organisations.

The Undercroft has been utilised on 29 occasions by charities and it is a focal point within the Town. Its use is free to local organisations.

The Civic Society hosts weekly tours of the Town Hall as part of their organised walks which take in the many facets of the Town's history – including Oaklands and its Museum.

Town Council Surgeries

These are held on an appointment basis on a monthly rota.

Eaton Lands

Early this year the Town Council was successful in its further bid to the Breathing Places Big Lottery Fund, receiving an additional £6,108 for further enhancements at Eaton Lands. This work will involve the production of a leaflet on Eaton Lands which will be delivered to all households in Hythe and also for surface improvements to the bridleway to the rear of Tanners Hill Gardens. During the course of the last spring and summer, work was undertaken on finishing the last phase of the first Breathing Place project - with signage, information panels, pathway improvements, and the installation of seats. The trees and bulbs which have been planted continue to flourish. Thanks are due to all those involved in the project.

The northern meadow area continues to be maintained, with the grass amenity area to the south regularly cut 12 times per year and the wildflower element to the north managed so as to try and ensure its sustainability. Paths are regularly cut through the meadow so that people can enjoy the area. Public Footpath HB 25 which runs through the meadow has been cut back and the woodland area's paths and steps have been refurbished.

Eaton Lands Allotment Sites

There is a significant area of Eaton Lands which is given over to three large allotment areas which are fully occupied with 95 plots and there is a waiting list of 44 "would-be" tenants. The Town Council rents these areas from the Charity. The allotments have been steadily improving over the years. With the long waiting lists there is now an even greater need to ensure that all the plots are properly cultivated.

The new Eaton Lands Meadow allotment site has been developed over the course of the last year, with 20 new plots coming on tap. The site also has a water supply which has been installed. The site has been fenced and allotment holders have been made aware that this site has to be maintained to a high standard in view of its proximity to the meadow area.

Longbridge Allotment Site

I am pleased to report that this statutory allotment site of 12 plots is fully let with a waiting list of 26, having been formerly semi-derelict. It has now been transformed.

Twiss Road Allotments

The Twiss Road site is fully occupied with 27 plots and a waiting list of 53. Mains water is being laid to the Twiss Road allotment site following the completion of the new football pitch.

There is currently an overall allotment waiting list of 82.

Recent allotment inspections have revealed that the allotment sites are all in reasonably good shape and thanks are due to the Allotments Clerk, Mrs Jeni Lawford, for her regular inspections, ensuring that plots are in good order.

Hythe Green

This informal open space area is the host to many activities including x 14 Boot Fairs inclusive of the Mayor's Boot Fair. Local charities and organisations benefit from these events and it provides them the opportunity to boost their funds.

The Green is also used by the large biennial events – the Festival and the Fete as well as circuses and fun fairs. It provides free car parking provision in the form of the Portland Road Car Park, as well as a play area and informal open space.

This year is the turn of the Hythe Festival with events planned for the Green on both weekends of the Festival which cover the first fortnight in July.

Property Matters

The Town Council has embarked on a four year programme of upgrading its property, with the latest improvements being undertaken at the Town Hall. The building has had external paint treatment, as well as repairs to the Parlour area which suffered an outbreak of dry rot.

Hythe Sports Pavilion

The new building is now nearing completion and it is expected to be finished by mid- May. The Chairman of F&GP will be reporting separately on the financial profile of the building programme in the Town Council's financial report.

This exciting project for the Town provides four changing rooms, officials' changing areas, a lift and disabled shower facilities and a first floor suite with a balcony and a fully-fitted kitchen and store areas. Externally, there will be a car park for 32 vehicles and a kiosk to serve the tennis and bowls areas which lie adjacent.

The new football pitch is being created on land to the west of the Twiss Road allotment site and this will be completed in time for the commencement of the 2010/2011 football season.

Civic Activities

I have attended over 100 events so far during the course of the year. The highlights have been the Hythe Venetian Fete; Christmas visits to the old people's homes, judging an Easter Bonnet Parade, where the elderly residents took great pride and joy in making their marvellous displays. The fruition of our long awaited sports Pavilion to be completed in May. I have represented Hythe in all corners of Kent and have very much enjoyed learning of the rich histories of our Kentish Towns.

The Town Council created its first Honorary Freeman last month – the Right Honourable Michael Howard QC MP – in recognition of his 27 years of service as the Town’s MP. He was presented with a scroll to mark the event, which was attended by representatives from organisations within the Town. It had been a great honour and privilege to me and gave me great pleasure to do so.

CCTV

The Town Council operates the 11 cameras within the Hythe town centre system paying for both the maintenance and transmission costs and maintaining a capital CCTV sinking fund. From 1st April 2010 these cameras will not be monitored by Shepway District Council on a 24hr/ 7 day basis but only at peak times – for approximately 30 hours per week. The Town Council has strenuously objected to SDC regarding this cut in service and it will continue to do so and it is currently seeking legal advice on the position.

Other Local Organisations

Many thanks to the organisations that work effectively within the Town especially through the SEEDA Steering Group and Partnership which have overseen the Pavilion development. I would also like to thank in particular the Hythe Civic Society for its work throughout the Town, particularly in respect of the Eaton Lands projects, the Town Square and Hythe in Bloom.

Planning Matters

There have been several significant planning applications which have affected the Town during the course of the last year including the development of the Hythe Imperial lands and the development of a new Sainsbury’s supermarket. In total, 166 planning applications have been discussed by the Town Council’s Plans and Works Committee.

Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Town Council also has appointees to other bodies and I am very grateful to those Members who have served this year on the following bodies:

Age Concern
Hythe Chamber of Commerce / Tourism Forum
Hythe Twinning Association
Kent Association of Local Councils
Shepway Tourist Action Group
Hospital of St Bartholomew and St John
Hythe Institute Fund
Hythe Sick Fund
Anne Peirson Trust
Newington Unknown Donor’s Charity
Wakefield Bequest

Conclusion

Finally I would like to thank all the staff and councillors for their support during the past Civic Year.