

## **Notes for Annual Report – 2007/8**

This report will be placed in full on the Town Council's website.  
[www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk)

The Civic Year started off with Local Elections in May 2007 and with 11 new Councillors being elected on to the Town Council.

### **Council Meetings**

There have been 9 Council meetings during the course of this last year. Its principal Committees – Finance and General Purposes and Plans and Works have met 11 and 18 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 and also to Councillor Richard Carroll for deputising for Councillor Schoner for the February and March F&GP Committee meetings.

### **Charity Trustees**

The Town Council is the Corporate Trustee for a number of Charities. There have been 6 meetings of the full Charity Trustees together with 3 of the Charities Committee. The Town Council is responsible for the operation of four charities – Horn Street, Palmars, Eaton Lands and Davis Oaklands. It also provides the administrative support to the Wakefield Bequest, of which two serving Councillors are currently Trustees.

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

One of the key issues which the Trust for the Davis Oaklands has had to deal is the issue of the Permanent Endowment. After lengthy negotiations the Charity Commission has agreed to the loan of some of the endowment to the Town Council if necessary, so as to ensure that a replacement Sport Pavilion on South Road can be achieved.

### **Town Council's Websites**

The Town Council operates two websites :

The Portal website is [www.hythe-kent.info](http://www.hythe-kent.info) 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](http://www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk) The website is updated weekly and provides public access to Agendas, Minutes and other Council documents as well as facilities and hire arrangements. This website currently is receiving the equivalent of 1,000 hits per month.

Thanks in particular go to the two webmasters – Mr John Gabris and Mr Adrian Wilson respectively for their 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.

### **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 Hythe Town Concert Band (of which I am President) also played for the Remembrance Day and Civic Sunday events, as well as for the Lord Warden at his Walmer event in July.

### **Town Hall**

The Town Hall has held 37 events during the course of the year and has been used by 11 organisations. A new digitalised CCTV camera system now operates and both it and the accompanying lighting system appears to be helping security.

The Undercroft has been utilised on 28 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.

Grateful thanks to the Civic Society for its many endeavours.

### **Town Council Surgeries**

12 Surgeries have been held over the course of the last year. They are usually held on the first Saturday of each month and are regularly attended by local residents and they are usually attended by two Town Councillors. Details are available on the Town Council's website.

### **Eaton Lands**

This vast tract of land forms a Charity which is administered by the Town Council acting as Charity Trustee. The Town Council has applied to the BIG Lottery Fund for assistance towards the further development of Eaton Lands by way of bulb and tree planting, nesting boxes, information panels and improved access. A decision on this application is expected in June of this year.

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 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 recently refurbished. Further step improvements are planned shortly.

### **Eaton Lands Allotment Sites**

There is a significant area of Eaton Lands which is given over to two large allotment areas which are fully occupied with 67 plots and there is a waiting list of 33 “would-be” tenants. The Town Council rents these areas from the Charity. The allotments have been steadily improving over the years and thanks go to the Plans and Works Clerk and the Town Sergeant for their regular inspections. Now with the long waiting lists there is an even greater need to ensure that all the plots are properly cultivated.

### **Longbridge Allotment Site**

I am pleased to report that this statutory allotment site is in the process of its being fully let. I am also pleased to report that the cultivation of these allotments has over this past year greatly improved this site.

### **Twiss Road Allotments**

The Twiss Road site is fully occupied with 23 plots and a waiting list of 49.

The allotment sites have all been recently re-measured so as to ensure that tenants are paying the accurate rent and also to release, wherever possible, more land for waiting tenants. There is currently an overall waiting list of 68.

### **Hythe Green**

This informal open space area is the host to many activities including 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.

It is also used by the large biennial events – the Festival and the Fete as well as circuses, fun fairs etc. 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.

The Green is also the venue for the now traditional annual fireworks event. Hundreds of residents attended the event last year when it was held on 5<sup>th</sup> November. Another event for this forthcoming November is currently being organised and sponsorship is being sought.

### **Property Matters**

The Town Council is embarking on a four year scheme to undertake property improvements to all of its building. This will be commencing in this forthcoming year for the external decoration of both Sanford House and the Hythe Library. A new tennis and bowls hut is being put in place on South Road Recreation Ground during the Spring. The Assets Working Group is also to undertake a review of all the Council’s assets.

### **Civic Activities**

I have attended 120 events so far during the course of the year. The highlight was the Venetian Fête, the timing of which luckily coincided with a favourable weather window on an otherwise stormy day and the event was a spectacular success.

The Civic Working Group which has met this year has revised the civic arrangements for both Mayor Making and Civic Sunday. There is to be a return to a Civic Parade on Civic Sunday. The Group has also prepared the ground work for the Speakership for this forthcoming Civic Year. The Speakership rotates around the five Head Cinque Ports and the two Ancient Towns and it is Hythe's turn in 2008/9 and the Speaker's Day is due to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Civic events details are available on the Council's website.

### **CCTV**

The Town Council operates an 11 camera system within the Town and these have all been upgraded to the digitalised system and the Shepway Control Room is currently being relocated to present a better environment for the entire operation. The new Control Room will continue to be monitored on a 24/7 basis.

### **SEEDA – Replacement Sports Pavilion**

The SEEDA Steering Group and Partnership has concentrated its efforts over the past year on the bid for a replacement Sports Pavilion. Regrettably the District Council did not support the Town Council's application for financial assistance towards a new Pavilion and so efforts are currently being made to fund alternative sources of funding.

### **South Road and the Town Green Inquiry**

This area contains the chief recreational facilities of tennis, bowls, cricket, football, allotments and the Skatepark. Other private clubs operate in this area with the benefit of leases from the Town Council.

The Town Council vigorously defended an application to create a Town Green on South Road Recreation Ground at a non-statutory public local inquiry held in Hythe Town Hall in October 2007. The Inspector, Charles George QC, submitted his report to Kent County Council at the beginning of March and at the KCC Regulation Panel meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> April it was determined that [the application for Village Green status be refused](#).

[The Town Council can now proceed with its plans to enhance the Recreation Ground and, with its partners on the SEEDA Steering Group & Partnership, plan for a replacement Sports Pavilion.](#)

### **Committees**

The staff at Oaklands also have to deal with the administration of the Town Council's 18 Committees, enquiries from the public with special emphasis on dealing with planning applications and the Plans and Works Committee and Council has dealt with 247 to date. The major applications considered have included – Lydd Airport, Nickolls Quarry and the redevelopment of Whitegates. The Plans and Works Committee has under its auspices the Boot Fairs Sub-Committee which meets usually once a year to allocate 14 Boot Fairs on the Green and it also has under its wing a newly formed High Street Business Working Group which is seeking to help bolster the business interest in the Hythe shopping area. A Public

Meeting is to be held at Hythe Town Hall to examine options for a way forward for improving trading possibilities in the High Street.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has dealt with 82 items over the course of the last year.

Both Committees have placed pressure on both the District and County Councils to undertake their responsibilities effectively. The other Committees which include the Standing Orders Committee, CCTV, the Charities Committee which have met as and when required.

### **Arts Culture & Leisure Fund and Other Grants and Events**

The Town Council grant aided the following organisations over the course of the last year, including :

St Leonards' Church, Hythe Twinning Association, Shepway Gospel Choir, Hythe Art Society and Hythe & Saltwood Sailing Club.

The Town Council is to provide a grant of £3,000 in total to the Hythe Festival Company towards the youth activity events on Hythe Green. £2,000 of this sum is to come from the Youth Fund and a further £1,000 from the Council's revenue budget.

### **Other Local Organisations**

Many thanks to the many organisations that work effectively within the Town especially through the SEEDA Steering Group and Partnership.

### **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 Parish 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

### **Conclusion**

Finally I would like to thank the Town Clerk and her staff and all the Councillors for their support and hard work which they have undertaken during the past Civic Year.