

HYTHE TOWN COUNCIL



ANNUAL REPORT – 2010/11

This report will be placed in full on the Town Council's website – which is to be found at www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk Details of all the Council's operations can also be found in the Year Book – which is available to view and down load from the website.

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 local government business website - www.hythetowncouncil.gov.uk The Town Council's website is increasing in popularity with approaching 100,000 hits during the course of the past year. A large number of "hits" come from overseas (currently 46%) with the top countries being USA and China. The websites are updated weekly and even more regularly when required and provide public access to Agendas, Minutes and other Council documents, as well as facilities and hire arrangements.

Thanks go to the webmaster – the Town Council's Finance Clerk - Mr Adrian Wilson for his work on both sites, into which he has put a considerable amount of time and effort.

Meetings

There have been 11 Council meetings during the course of this last year. Its principal Committees – Finance and General Purposes and Plans and Works have met 10 and 17 times respectively. Thanks are due to the respective Chairmen of both these Committees – Councillor John Schoner and Councillor Reg Belcourt. Other Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council and its Committees include the following which have all met during the course of the last year:

- CCTV Committee
- Standing Orders Committee
- Internal Audit and Assets Sub-Committee
- Sports Pavilion User Group
- Allotments Working Group
- S106 Working Group
- Interreg Working Group

Some of the above Sub-Committees and Groups have included not only Town Councillors but also representatives from outside bodies. The Town Council has long subscribed to partnership working and it is very grateful for the external input and assistance which it receives in the conducting of its business. The S106 Working Group will be dealing with grants for events in and around Hythe High Street over the course of the next few years.

Charity Trustees

The Town Council is the Corporate Trustee for a number of Charities. There have been 4 meetings of the full Charity Trustees. These meetings are held separately to Council meetings. All Councillors are 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 4 serving Councillors are currently Trustees. The Town Council has recently completed its negotiations of the rent review for Hythe Library for the next five years, the rent on which it now passes over to the Davis Oaklands Charity so as to enable the Oaklands building and Oaklands grounds to become self-funding

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

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. She also ensures that archived material is catalogued. Janet provides a valued and much sought after service and grateful thanks are due to her.

Oaklands – Bandstand Concerts



The Town Council continues to run its popular band programme with 19 performances during the course of the last summer providing a large 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 - from the Big Band sound to solo performers. Details of the band concerts are available on the two websites.

Town Hall



The Town Hall has held 14 events and 24 guided walks during the course of the year and it has been used by 9 organisations. It was a central point for the Hythe Festival in the summer of 2010 for which free use was granted for all events by the Town Council.

The Town Hall's Undercroft has been utilised on 31 occasions by charities and it is a focal point within the Town. Its use is free to local organisations and it is recognised as an effective public focal point and service.

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 available to be held on an appointment basis on a monthly rota.

Eaton Lands

The Town Council has now successfully completed the second phase of its Big Lottery Fund Breathing Places. This work has involved the production of a leaflet on Eaton Lands and also for surface improvements to the bridleway to the rear of Tanners Hill Gardens. The following provides a link to the leaflet on the Hythe Community Website – www.hythe-kent.com



The Town Council continues to liaise closely with the Hythe Civic Society regarding the environs of Eaton Lands.

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.

Town Council Allotment Sites



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.

Allotments Working Group

The Town Council's **Allotments Working Group** works in close collaboration with the tenants and their representatives. The Town Council has recently undertaken a consultation exercise with all interested parties in regard to the allotment sites' being leased to the local allotment society. This could lead to the tenants' being able to apply for external grants for improvements.

Eaton Lands Allotments

There is a large area of Eaton Lands which is given over to three distinct allotment areas which are fully occupied with 97 plots and there is a waiting list of 48 “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 is now in full operation.

Longbridge

This statutory allotment site of 12 plots is fully let with a waiting list of 26, having been formerly semi-derelict. A new entrance gate and fencing has been erected during the course of the last year.

Twiss Road

The Twiss Road site is fully occupied with 29 plots and a waiting list of 56. Mains water and a new tank have been installed at the site following the completion of the new football pitch. Hedge planting has commenced between the pitch and the allotments and this is the first step of the enclosure of the whole site by means of planting and fencing. The Town Council is pleased to be associated with the Transition Town Scheme of which this planting forms part.

There is currently an overall allotment waiting list of 86.

Hythe Green

This informal open space area – which is maintained by the Town Council - 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. Details of the forthcoming Summer Boot Fairs are on the Hythe community website.

There are also several circuses and funfairs which are stage regularly on the Green. There have been 4 during the course of the last year.

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 which is inspected on a weekly basis for defects.

Thanks are due to the membership of The Green Preservation Society which undertakes regular litter picking on the Green.

Property Matters

The Town Council has embarked on a further four year programme of upgrading its properties. The properties for which it is responsible are Oaklands, including the Museum and Hythe Library, Oaklands Grounds and Bandstand, the Town Hall, Sanford House, Sports Pavilion, the Hythe War Memorial and the Shepway Cross - together with its landholdings at the Green, Palmarsh, Horn Street and South Road Recreation Grounds and Eaton Lands. It also is responsible for the Hythe Skatepark, the Grove and it leases land to the Hythe Cricket and Squash Club and the Hythe Lawn Tennis Club.

It has recently undertaken a property survey on all of its properties. Oaklands will be the next property to have a facelift.

The Town Council is currently having a Tree Audit undertaken on all of its land so as to maintain and improve its tree stocks.

New fencing is planned for the Green and at South Road Recreation Ground.

Hythe Sports Pavilion



The new building was officially opened by the Mayor on the 7th August 2010. Since then it has been well used by cricketers, footballers and other organisations. 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 is a car park for 32 vehicles and a kiosk to serve the tennis and bowls areas which lie adjacent.

The new football pitch has been created on land to the west of the Twiss Road allotment site and this will be brought into use for the next football season.

Hythe Skatepark

This much used resource is intended to be enhanced with some additional funds of £10,000 having been put aside by the Town Council over this year and next. The impetus for this project has come from the users themselves who have devised their own scheme with additional ramps.

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. The Town Council has recently successfully negotiated the transfer of the CCTV system from the Shepway Control Room to Ashford Borough Council's Control Room where it will be monitored on a 24 hour, 7 day per week basis.

Planning Matters

There have been several significant planning applications which have affected the Town during the course of the last year notably at Fisherman's Beach and ongoing conditions issues for the 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 the Town Council is 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

From May this year the Town Council will also be involved in the Kent County Council's Neighbourhood Forum for Hythe.

Thanks are due to all the above local organisation and to the others that work so hard on the Town's behalf.

Staffing

The former Town Sergeant, Mr Graham Johnson, retired after 10 years of service. He has now become the Sports Pavilion caretaker. Thanks are due to him for his devoted service. He has been replaced by Mr Terry Reene who has been in post since October 2010. Other than that all other staff remain in post and are to be thanked for their hard work during the course of the past year.