

## **Town Clerk Report 03.05.22**

### **War Memorial Recreation Ground Update**

I have commenced with sourcing quotations for the play area items that were raised on the play area inspections as we have now entered our new budget year. I have identified a funding opportunity to improve accessibility on the entire site and will report further at a future Council meeting.

### **COMF Funding**

The Contain Outbreak Management Funding activities have now all been completed and all expenditure of £3,500 accounted for and shared with TDC for their monitoring reports.

### **Training Update**

I am pleased to confirm that I have completed and passed the FILCA qualification (Financial Introduction to Local Council Administration) provided by SLCC.

### **Defibrillator Training**

The first defib training session offered by KFRS Westgate station and Thanet Community First Responders working in collaboration was an enormous success, all twelve places were filled and the feedback has been positive. We will be working now on another date for the next training session.

### **Westgate in Bloom**

There has been some work completed on the flower beds on Sea Road to prepare ready for spring and further seeding of the areas used for wildflowers last year. The judge has now been in contact and is arranging the date for his visit in June or July. A temporary tree nursery has been formed next to the pavilion at the Recreation Ground to ensure the new saplings are nurtured until a more permanent site can be agreed with either TDC or KCC for them.

### **Newsletter**

The next quarterly magazine should by now have been delivered to households, the online link for the issue of the newsletter has already been shared with Members and residents.

### **Community Clinic**

It was a pleasure to meet KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services – Mike Hill OBE – he attended our Community Clinic on 16<sup>th</sup> March and championed the Community Warden service when it first formed as well as promoting the Community Connector service that has now moved to provide positive wellbeing for over fifty-fives instead of stipulating for the over sixty-fives. The pilot has been in Westgate area predominantly and now includes Birchington as well.

### **Climate Change Conference**

I attended the Virtual Climate Change Summit and the speakers were inspirational; there will be examples shared in a report for Members soon as to how as a Local Council we can work to influence and educate the community to foster more eco-friendly practices and work towards reducing our carbon footprint as a corporate body.

### **Year End and AGAR**

The year-end process has commenced and the internal audit took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> April with David Buckett; PKF Littlejohn LLP have provided the relevant forms for the AGAR process. The AGAR will be prepared for the June Full Council meeting for Members to consider and approve.

### **Events**

14<sup>th</sup> April – Skate Park Jam at Lymington Recreation Ground was a resounding success and we hope that Members will support this being repeated next year.

2<sup>nd</sup> June to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022 – Platinum Jubilee Weekend celebration are being finalised and we hope that the community will join us for the Beacon Lighting event on Thursday at St Mildreds Bay and for the Family Picnic on the Green on Saturday at the Community Centre.

### **Community Centre and the Library**

Following the resolution of the Council and at the request of WOSCCA the Town Clerk has approached TDC Estates Team to explore the options for the Community Centre when the long-term lease is due to expire in 2024. The Estates Team have confirmed that no conversation can be undertaken until the middle of 2023 when there is a year left on the current lease. The Town Clerk has a diary reminder and of course with the elections due next year the situation may alter so there will be a review with the new Town Council.

The Town Council has formally registered an interest again for the Library and when there are progress updates these will be reported at Full Council meetings by the Town Clerk.

### **Boating Pool**

Due to the collaboration of TDC, Westgate Lovelies – Mike Wiseman and the Town Council the boating pool works have now been completed and it is hoped that this will be well used in the coming months by the local community and visitors alike.

### **Annual Town Meeting**

I was disappointed to miss the ATM due to contracting Covid 19 and the Full Council meeting for April. I have received reports and it is clear that the events leading up to the ATM on social media were an orchestrated attempt to pursue an item for a St Georges Flag which was reported on Facebook as being “blocked”! This was misleading and certainly not correct, a process for inclusion of an item on the Agenda for Full Council was communicated on three separate occasions by email and also verbally to Members on numerous occasions. In fact, the most recent emails also included County Councillors and Ward Councillors. I was therefore surprised to hear that at the ATM only the Chair of the Council and the Vice-Chair were vocal to communicate the correct process. All Councillors who attended that meeting and did not explain the events that led to the ATM were complicit and condoned the misrepresentation of the situation.

In the interests of transparency I am sharing the facts as communicated by the Town Clerk to Members in relation to the Agenda item for the St Georges flag.

- The Standing Orders are reviewed at Westgate on Sea Town Council on an annual basis which is best practice. The next review will take place in July 2022, any feedback will be welcomed at that meeting. The Town Council uses the Model Standing Orders provided by National Association of Local Councils which are adapted for this Town Council.

- The Town Council has numerous other documents that are as important as the Standing Orders and provide the governance for the corporate body, the Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegations, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct and various policies.
- In addition to all this it is necessary to have procedures and processes to ensure that the Council operates to best practice and efficiently and cost effectively for residents, officers and Members.
- To be clear, the neighbouring local Councils will have their own SOs, policies and processes and none of that is relevant to this Town Council and how we operate, I do regularly check with my fellow Clerks and we share best practice in a professional manner.
- The Agenda items are not always for a proposal, they are at times for information purposes only and therefore there is no "proposal or motion" and therefore no resulting decision or resolution.
- A motion is clearly defined in the Standing Orders 9 and 10; there are those that require written notice and others that can be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer.
- The process for adding an item to the Agenda is important which relates to the St Georges Cross flag item. If Members do not have sufficient information, details, background, expenditure if applicable then how are they to make an informed decision at a meeting.
- As the RFO and a resident myself I am determined that every penny spent by this authority is done with due diligence and transparency.
- I introduced the process for a report which is best practice and provides a clear paper audit trail for decisions and the information/research undertaken as well as expenditure if applicable; this could prove invaluable if the Council were ever challenged in relation to a decision. This process is there to also protect individuals as well as the Town Council.
- This Town Council is the only local Council in Thanet who has voluntarily sought peer recognition for our progress through the National Association of Local Councils Award Scheme; we have a Foundation Certificate to prove we have met the necessary criteria.
- I am happy to arrange an appointment with me as the Proper Officer for any resident or Councillor who wants to discuss any of these points in finer detail from June onwards.