

Town Clerk report to ER & TD Committee meeting 28 June 2016

[Agenda item 5 – Writing Competition](#)

Details of the competition were emailed to all schools in the 1066 area on 21 March 2016, and the information was added to the Town Council website, Twitter feed and noticeboards at the same time.

Press releases about the competition were submitted on 15 March and 30 May, and flyers were produced and available at the Annual Assembly meeting on 26 May.

In light of the approaching end of school year, Friday 22 July for most ESCC schools, while the private schools are all earlier (for example: Claremont 1 July, Battle Abbey 8 July, Vinehall 20 July), and after consultation with Cllr Favell, a follow up email was sent to all schools (and a written letter to the 12 schools who had initially displayed an interest in entering the competition) on 9 June 2016. Information about the competition is also included in the Town magazine (if agreed) to be circulated early July.

To date, there has been 1 completed entry form returned to the office for the adult competition, and no entries for the children's competition.

- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to agree any further action to be taken to promote the competition and increase entry numbers**

[Agenda item 6 – 950th Anniversary events and Roundabout statue](#)

For information – the current 950th Anniversary event list is attached separately. It had been agreed previously that the 1066 mosaic be added to the list once the details of its display in November and December are finalised. Cllr Furness will provide a verbal update on the roundabout statue.

[Agenda item 7 – Noticeboard in Netherfield](#)

Members will be aware that the Town Council has five noticeboards in the parish: Almonry Gardens, Market Square, Coronation Gardens, Telham Lane and Netherfield Post Office.

Following the recent development work at Netherfield Post Office to convert part of the building into a tea room, the noticeboard which was previously located on the external wall has been removed to make way for patio doors.

Upon speaking to the owner, after initially denying any knowledge of the noticeboard, she admitted it was removed and destroyed during the building work.

Given the sporadic internet availability in Netherfield, the noticeboard was an important means of communication for residents in the village, which has now been lost.

As I see it, the options available to us are:

1. Do nothing, and rely on residents receiving information about the Council via internet access and local newspapers.

2. Replace the board with a new one at an alternate site (attached to our bus shelter?) at our own cost.
3. Replace the board with a new one at an alternate site (attached to our bus shelter?) and seek to recover some or all the cost from the owners of the Post Office.

A new double sided glazed board (similar to the previous one) costs in the range of £500 - £1,000 depending on the exact type.

❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide which option to follow and delegate action to the Town Clerk to carry out.**

[Agenda item 8 – Newsletter/Magazine](#)

I was asked by the Council Chairman to look at revamping the newsletter and have attached separately a draft for consideration.

A newsletter has not been produced for some time, and there has been little response to generic requests to Members to submit information for the last couple of attempts, with only one Councillor providing any relevant material.

This version has been largely written through asking specific Members to contribute a piece, reusing press releases and original pieces written by me.

I have tried to make it into more of a magazine style publication, in an attempt to make it more appealing to people to read, covering a wider range of subjects than just Council business, such as including a community focus section where local groups are invited to submit a short piece for inclusion.

My aim is to make this into a regular publication, either bi-monthly or quarterly, with this edition being available in July. Re-establishing a timescale for publication will help residents interest grow as they anticipate future editions. A larger publication also allows regular features, space for competitions, and any other ideas that develop over time.

The new format is much clearer for download than the previous version, as it will be available on the website for people to either view and/or print off to keep. We can also produce a number of hard copies for distribution, either by printing ourselves in the office (low cost, but low quality) or via printers.

Detailed below are 3 quotes for printing of the newsletter. These quotes were based on a 12 page or 16 page magazine printed with a 130gsm gloss finish. Fastprint were recommended to me by Battle Photographic Society. Custard Design are based in Eastbourne and are the company Willingdon & Jevington PC use for their newsletter printing. Hastings Print were randomly selected as another local option.

Company	Price for 500 copies (12 page)	Price for 1,000 copies (12 page)	Price for 500 copies (16 page)	Price for 1,000 copies (16 page)
Fastprint	£535	£640	£650	£755
Custard Design	£395	£469	£470	£560
Hastings Print	£585	£670	£685	£770

The annual budget for the newsletter is £1,000. Clearly, to pay for copies we will either need to increase the budget or look at other sources of funding or part-funding the production costs.

If we were to consider allowing local companies to advertise, we could sell advertising spaces to recoup income to cover some of the printing cost. Six 90mm x 60mm adverts fit to one page in an A4 publication.

I have approached businesses in the High Street, on a no commitment basis, to gauge the level of interest in buying advertising space in a town magazine, either in a single edition (£30) or for a year's subscription (£25 per edition). To date, 6 businesses have agreed to an annual subscription and 1 has agreed to a single edition. The draft magazine has space for three pages of adverts, but could be amended subject to the level of interest, and the space filled with additional articles.

If we assume that the cheapest printing option (Custard Designs) is chosen, likely costs could be:

No of pages	Pages of adverts	No of copies	Print cost	Advertising income	Net monthly cost to Council
12	1	500	£395	£150	£245
12	1	1,000	£469	£150	£319
12	2	500	£395	£300	£95
12	2	1,000	£469	£300	£169
16	1	500	£470	£150	£320
16	1	1,000	£560	£150	£410
16	2	500	£470	£300	£170
16	2	1,000	£560	£300	£260
16	3	500	£470	£450	£20
16	3	1,000	£560	£450	£110

If interest in advertising increases substantially, we could always increase the number of pages for future editions (must be in multiples of four for magazine printing).

There are a number of options to consider as to how to progress:

- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to agree the format and frequency of the publication**
- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to agree a title for the publication (previously called Townlife)**
- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide whether advertising will be allowed to subsidise the cost of printing, or to produce the newsletter in electronic format only.**
- ❖ **Decision Required: If having printed copies, Members need to agree the number of copies and the key distribution points in the town.**

Agenda item 9 – Social media

The Council's website and Twitter feed are now well established and provide useful sources of information. At previous committee meetings, a decision on establishing a Council Facebook page has been deferred.

Members will be aware that the Council recently agreed to advertise for an apprentice, and if we are able to appoint a suitable person, it is hoped that they will be someone knowledgeable with social media who will be able to set up a page, under supervision from the senior office staff.

Alternately, we could arrange for social media training for one of the existing office staff.

There are two ways of setting the Town Council up on Facebook – either a page or a group. The main differences are summarised below:

A **page** is meant to be more of a broadcasting platform one-to-many, whereas **groups** are meant more for equal collaboration and discussion amongst a group of people who are related in some way and/or share some sort of similar interest.

For a business wanting to provide updates, special offers, competitions etc. to followers (current or potential), a **page** is the preferred option. You want to increase your followers as much as possible and don't necessarily need them to be engaging with each other (just you).

For a society/association/group of individuals linked in some way wanting to create a platform that facilitates a non-hierarchical discussion environment amongst a finite (manageable) number of people, then creating a **group** is a better option.

Before making a decision, a number of important points to consider:

- Facebook **pages** (unless admin-only) are public, can be found through search, and anyone can join. You can, however, limit them to being visible in certain countries (and to some extent certain ages) only.
- Facebook **groups** can be public, closed (anyone can find Group, only members see posts) or secret (nobody can find the Group unless added by a member).
- There are two ways to join **groups** – a Facebook friend adds you *or* you 'ask to join' and an admin of the Group accepts your request.
- **Groups** don't allow much branding at all. You get only your profile picture (a small square image), and nothing else.
- **Groups** don't allow other tabs/applications. This means you couldn't run a competition, or have a contact page, welcome page or anything like that.
- **Group** posts don't go to your newsfeed. Instead, you get a 'notification' that someone has posted in the group. This can be both good and bad – it's good because people definitely won't miss it, no matter how long after you post the content they log onto Facebook. However, sometimes when there is too much posting going on that it gets annoying, a lot of people choose to change their notification settings so that they don't receive these anymore. As the posts aren't fed to your Facebook newsfeed, you effectively forget about the group forever because there is nothing prompting you to visit.
- **Groups** allow 'shared documents' as well as group chat.
- Followers of a **page** cannot see everyone else who is a follower. Members of a **group** can see other members of that group.
- Both **pages** and **groups** can create events, post images, allow commenting/liking, restrict posts to only admins, and create polls.

- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide whether or not to set up a Council Facebook page or group, and to agree to delegate the setting up of the page or group (if agreed) to the Town Clerk, including arranging the necessary training.**

I have drafted a social media policy, based on the NALC model policy guidelines. As the Town Council continues to develop its social media outlets, it becomes increasingly important to put in place reasonable policies to protect both individuals and the Town Council as a whole, and this policy supplements the existing Internet Usage and Email Policy adopted in July 2015.

- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to recommend to Full Council (as it affects all Members) to adopt the draft policy (with any agreed amendments) for adoption.**

[Agenda item 10 – Christmas lights and High Street banners/flags](#)

At the Full Council meeting in March, the following resolution was passed:

Members agreed the recommendation for the Town Council to work with the Chamber of Commerce this year regarding the Christmas lights, and take over responsibility in future years.

This decision has been relayed to the Chamber of Commerce, and the Town Clerk has spoken directly with Don Gray, who is the main person responsible for the festive lighting. Mr Gray has indicated his willingness to work with the Town Council grounds staff on this year's lights, before handing over responsibility for Christmas 2017.

The Chamber of Commerce have been asked to provide a breakdown of associated costs involved with the provision, installation, maintenance and storage of the lights, and to give an estimate of the time involved to allow staffing plans to be made.

It has been discussed briefly at previous meetings, whether banners and/or flags could be hung from the brackets attached to buildings along the High Street to advertise various events in the Town. Again, I have asked the Chamber of Commerce to provide me with the consents obtained from the businesses where the brackets are attached, so that we have a complete list to contact if Members decide to pursue this idea.

The response received from the Chamber of Commerce regarding the lights is as below:

I agree that it will be best to liaise with Don regarding the maintenance of the system and the working days of the installation. Don is away for the next ten days after which we are planning a meeting to look at the necessities for this year assuming the Committee will still organise the Lights-On event and late night shopping?

To cover some of the points raised: -

The expenditure varies somewhat each year but tends to be in the region of £6,000, we receive £1,500 from Rother and the rest is raised through advertising revenue (the leaflet) and donations/contributions.

The equipment is stored beneath Harmers Building yard, there is no reason to not use the storage any longer but there may be a small nominal rent attached.

Last year the team spent in the region of 300 hours installing and maintaining the lights, Don can give you a better idea of how this is broken down. There have been few cases of vandalism and the LED lighting does not require many re-bulbing sessions, this is usually done before switch on and then again before late night shopping. The basic system is over ten years old but transformers, wiring and caps have been recently replaced, again Don is the person to ask in more detail.

The electricity bill last year came in at £119.62.

The brackets for the fleur des lis and trees were installed many years ago and are used only for Christmas except the brackets around the Abbey Green which are used for banners during the Mediaeval Fayre. There are no written consent forms, you would have to obtain these if the Council is looking for alternative use.

It should be noted that 300 man hours work for our grounds staff, equates to a cost of approximately £2,700 and would impact heavily on their workload.

At the last Clerk Networking Day, I spoke with one of the exhibitors (Blachere Illuminations) who run festive lighting in a number of towns across the South East, to assess whether employing them to manage the lights would be a more cost effective option. Without seeing the existing set-up, it is difficult for them to provide a quotation, but I am arranging for them to visit in December to see the lights in situ, and provide us with a quote for future years to consider.

With regard to the flagpoles and banners, I have managed to obtain a copy of the quote (January 2014) given to Rye for theirs to be put in place, and this is as below:

To supply only 32 No. double sided PVC flags to fit existing poles, **Cost: £20.65 (each) = £660.80 (for the 32 No.)** (Printed from print ready artwork to be supplied by others, prices exclude fitting flags to poles).

To supply 32 No. white powder coated aluminium poles with plastic end cap to one end, size: 1220mm long x 45mm diameter, **Cost: £29.50 (each) = £944.00 (for the 32 No.)**

This gives an idea of the potential cost, but it will need to be determined if these will attach properly to the existing brackets. As Members will have noted in the Chamber of Commerce response, there is no indication of the number of brackets in position, and they have never obtained consent from the building owners for them to be there. This will need investigation if they are to be used for other purposes, particularly as most, if not all, of the buildings they are attached to are of listed status.

- ❖ **Decision Required: Members are recommended to delegate to the Town Clerk arrangements for the grounds staff working with Don Gray to arrange this year's Christmas lights.**
- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide whether to purchase flagpoles/banners for display down the High Street (subject to the necessary permission being given) and how these will be funded**
- ❖ **For future consideration: Members will be asked to assess the financial impact of the Town Council taking direct responsibility for the Christmas lights compared to arranging a contractor to carry out the work (quotation to obtained during December). Members will also need to consider arrangements for the Lights-On and Late Night Shopping Event, and what level of involvement the Chamber of Commerce will have in these events in future years once they are not involved in the Christmas lights.**

Agenda item 12 – Financial matters

3 Year Budget Plan

To complete the business plan and support the aims previously submitted by the committee, a 3 year budget plan for the agreed long term actions needs to be completed by the committee.

While the normal budget lines can be estimated through local knowledge and likely increases in inflationary costs, thought needs to be given to specific projects which will incur large expenditure, and decisions made as to how to fund those.

For reference, included in the business plan longer term future plans of the committee are:

- Look at the sports and leisure offer within the town to compliment the culture and heritage offer.
 - Promote Battle as a high profile cultural centre to compliment the historical offer.
 - Develop the image of Battle and promote the town as a business design hub / arts and culture centre with great food opportunities.
 - Further develop the website to promote Battle.
 - Promote Battle in other key countries to bring visitors.
- ❖ **Decision Required: Members need to decide if specific 3 year budget plans are needed for any of the longer term future plans outlined above**