



DOVER & DEAL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

REPORT FROM CLLR MARTYN PENNINGTON SANDWICH TOWN COUNCIL

Sandwich Town Council is controlled by a loosely-knit group known as Sandwich Matters. At the annual meeting in May, when councils review their procedures and work-patterns, I was re-elected to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and moved from the Planning Committee to the Heritage and Townscape Committee. In addition, I am a member of the Committee overseeing the Monks Wall Nature Reserve. I also stood for the position of Deputy Mayor but came second (out of four) after SM closed ranks behind their candidate, Cllr Colin Wiles.

The Council has adopted a Business Plan which fixes the main priorities for the Council's agenda. Although welcoming this exercise in principle, I voted against its adoption because I felt it was too inward-looking and administrative; in particular it took no account of the pressing need to do more for the town's young people.

In the Finance Committee we have covered a wide range of issues, not least the management of the Council's assets. The future of Fishergate, which has been sadly neglected over many years, has been of particular interest to me. The legal status of many of the assets has been clarified – some of them actually are the property of the Toll Bridge Fund which was set up in the 1970s. The Committee has also examined ways of running the Guildhall more efficiently, which is a key issue for our finances. I am a member of a small group set up to consider running the Council's finances, the Toll Bridge Fund and the Georgina Fox legacy on a simpler and more cost-effective basis. The Council has also adopted more up-to-date software for managing its finances which has brought significant improvements.

An important but fruitless area of activity has been the discussion of the reorganisation of local government. We compiled and sent to DDC a comprehensive list of their assets in Sandwich we would be interested in taking over but DDC have not responded; it seems no-one understands how this reorganisation is supposed to work and what it can achieve.

In the Heritage and Townscape Committee I have three main areas of interest. The first is to draft a climate change policy for the Council, where we are looking at a simplified version of the policy adopted in Deal. The second is to consider improvements in the town for those with disabilities, and the third is a recent initiative to develop a better relationship with businesses in the town, since the town's Chamber of Commerce no longer functions.

The second part of the year has been marked by the departure of three key members of staff – the Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and the RFO. Fortunately the Town Clerk has been replaced and we had a smooth transition; the other two posts are currently open.

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