



SEATON TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009

Town Mayor: Councillor Mrs Sandra Semple

Deputy Town Mayor: Councillor Jim Knight

Town Clerk: Mr David Mears

Welcome to Seaton Town Council's annual report 2009. Our report covers the events of the previous 12 months. The past 12 months have seen various changes, a new Town Clerk has been appointed, the Council have also given a commitment to achieve Quality Status. Please see page 4 for more information. Towards the end of the financial year saw

both Sainsbury and Tesco's submit planning applications to build supermarkets on adjoining sites something quite unusual! There was also a planning application submitted to build nearly 150 affordable homes on ground at Harepath Hill. To-date East Devon District Council have yet to make decisions on these applications.

Seaton in Bloom

Seaton Town Council with the help of all the sponsors, local charities, local helpers and the EDDC gardening team for Seaton was awarded the 'Silver Gilt' for Britain in Bloom 2008.

Despite the weather last summer this was an excellent achievement and plans are a foot for this years better than ever display. Seaton Town Council would like to thank all those who helped

last year and we hope to work well as a team again this year.

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Mayors Annual Report



First, may I give a warm welcome to our new Town Clerk – David Mears. David has been with us since November 2008, taking the place of our temporary Town Clerk, Philip Higginson who was with us from February 2008 to January 2009. David is working hard to ensure that Seaton Town Council attains “Quality Status” which will be important if we are to manage many of our own affairs in future. We also said goodbye to Councillor Larry Garner, who gave many years faithful service to the town council, and we welcome Mark Fisher after the recent by-election in March 2009.

I found myself in something of a dilemma when thinking about what I should say at this year’s town meeting. Should I “talk up” the town – all its advantages, its strengths, its plus points, or should I talk about all the doom and gloom surrounding us – the recession, depression – call it what you will, our problems. I am going to talk about neither of them.

What I am going to say is that something has to happen in this town and it has to happen SOON. Too much time has been spent talking, reinventing the wheel and stating and re-stating the obvious. The time for talking is now gone and we need ACTION and we need it NOW.

I, and other councillors, and the town clerk, go to meeting after meeting after meeting where everyone talks and no-one actually does anything. I get paper after document after report in my pigeon hole, each of which asks us to tick more and more boxes, make promises that are not kept, talk about strategies that don’t actually work or are never put into operation and money that is said to be there but, when you try to access it, has strangely disappeared.

So, who should be doing the acting?

Well, we, the town council should be doing some of the acting but bear in mind that we have an annual budget of around £150,000 per year. We need to get on with finding co-funding for an Economic Development Officer for the town, we need to continue getting back assets and facilities from East Devon District Council and Devon County Council and finding ways of making these assets work for us. We need to give full backing to any organisation that attempts to bring jobs or skills to the town. We need to be united and strong so that politics plays no part in town life – leave that to the politicians at EDDC and DCC – some of whom seem to be making a spectacular hash of it.

East Devon District Council has a budget for this year of £6.663 million per year. EDDC needs to spend less time telling us how much money they have saved and spending some of the money we have all given them in business rates and community charges – their budget is around. The councillors need to delegate fewer of their powers to their officers and listen more to their constituents. They need to stop favouring the favourites and start putting their money where it is needed most – and we all know where that is! They need to work out once and for all – do they decide what regeneration is for Seaton and focus on quality of life for all of us or do they blindly follow the mantra of “supermarket led” regeneration and leave it to a national supermarket chain, whose only objective is to make money for its shareholders, to decide what is best for our town?



Devon County Council has a budget of around £800 million. Devon County Council, for example, is responsible for youth matters in Devon. Well, does youth matter in Seaton to Devon County Council? It appears not – they can't spare the money. Our youth and community centre has been closed in Seaton for nearly three years and what has DCC done – sent a bus to the Underfleet car park which can deal with a maximum of 20-30 young people when our young councillor Sophie regularly gets 100 – 200 young people at her "Grove Zero" nights each week. Oh, and gets a grant in 2008 for £10,000 for Fun in the Sun. Lovely event – but, unfortunately, only looking after our young people for 2 days. DCC is responsible for our non-pedestrianised shopping centre (can't

spare the money, can't even put a chain across the street for 6 hours a day because "people live there" when they also "live there" in Sherbourne (where they do it every day without any obvious problem), our old-fashioned and down-at-heel seafront (can't spare the money). And no – a few thousand here or there from the county councillor's community chest for a small organisation here or a bus shelter there just isn't good enough. However, thank our lucky stars they have put £500,000 from the sale of Exeter Airport towards the Visitor Centre – though they didn't ask us if we would like to spend the money on anything else in Seaton, such as a youth centre or a community centre and it does seem to be an either/or situation.

The South West Regional Development Agency has a budget of around £155 million – though this seems to vary as they have found "black holes" in the agency's finances. What are they supposed to do? Good question. We thought they had put £1.2 million into the Seaton Visitor Centre. But what they gave with one hand they snatched away with the other. What else have they done for us. Supported the business development unit – no. Supported an Economic Development Officer – no. Supported anything – well, when you find what they have supported in Seaton come and tell your town council – we would love to know.

We need funding for a business development unit. We ask EDDC – no, it isn't a priority. We ask DCC – no it isn't a priority. We ask SWRDA – no it isn't a priority. Yet we are designated one of the 13 most deprived towns in Devon. What does that give us – absolutely nothing at all.

So, people of Seaton, yes, we could almost certainly do more for you if we had the help that we need from others. But as long as we have to deal with these organisations and we continue to be marginalised, you will forgive me for thinking that we have spent the last two years banging our heads against a brick wall. Some people say we are ignored because of politics, some say that it is historical – Seaton has always been ignored, but those who ignore us have some very difficult moral questions to ask of themselves whatever the reason.

Fortunately, many of you have already told me that you know EXACTLY what Seaton needs and what we should be doing, including building a marina with our bare hands and no money –and in two years time you will have the chance to vote and stand for council so you can give it a go yourselves!

Until then, this town council tries and tries to get Seaton the investment it deserves. We won't give up, we won't shut up and we won't leave any stone unturned. But we need others with more money and more staff to work with us and unless and until this "can't do" attitude - rampant in Devon local and regional government - is changed I see a continuing bleak outlook.

We were very pleased when our youngest Councillor - Sophie O'Connell - received a prestigious award from Devon Association of Parish Councillors. She was given the award for Devon Young Councillor of the Year by Sir John Cave, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the county at a special ceremony at County Hall. She also received a hamper of Devon goodies which she says she much appreciated!

The forecast Accounts for the year ending March 2009 are as follows but it should be noted that these figures have not been audited and are only 'forecasts' and may probably change when the Audited Accounts are presented to Council in the summer of 2009



Council Officers

Mr David Mears - Town Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Tel: 01297 21388
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Tel: 01297 21388
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Mrs Karen Chipperfield - Tourist Information Manager
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QUALITY COUNCIL STATUS - Seaton Town Council is currently compiling a portfolio to achieve this coveted status. In order for the Council to be successful in its application the Council will have to undergo a considerable amount of change. There is a need to change the presentation of agendas and minutes, and a change of procedures and policies are needed. I am grateful to all Councillors who are embracing and understanding the need for change. When accredited the people of Seaton may be satisfied that all policies and procedures operated by this Council conform to a benchmark criteria laid down by central.

Councillors

The current Councillors for Seaton Town Council are:-

Cllr P Burrows - 01297 23814 - committees: Planning, Finance and General Purposes

Cllr Mrs P Collins - 01297 22650 - committees: Planning, Finance and General Purposes and Amenities

Cllr M Fisher - 01297 22804 - Not yet appointed to committees

Cllr M Greenyer - 01297 625439 - committees: Amenities and Planning

Cllr G Jones - 01297 22467 - committees: Finance and General Purposes, Planning

Cllr J Knight - 01297 22059 - Deputy Mayor sits on all committees

Cllr J F Meakin - 01297 22513 - committees: Planning and Finance and General Purposes

Cllr Miss S O'Connell - 01297 21008 - committees: Finance and General Purposes

Cllr B Palacio - 01297 20771 - committees: Allotments and Planning

Cllr Mrs J Roebuck - 01297 21473 - committees: Planning

Cllr Mrs E S Semple - 01297 20398 - Mayor sits on all committees

Cllr Mrs C Wise - 01297 24466 - committees: Planning and Finance and General Purposes