



# Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council

## NEWSLETTER

### FOREWORD FROM THE MAYOR



Picture: Margaret Hayles

Welcome to the first Bexhill Town Council Newsletter. This publication will be produced regularly across the year keeping you all informed as to the workings and achievements of your new council.

Those of you that are new to Bexhill may not realise the great amount of hard work and campaigning that went into persuading the then powers at the District Council to allow Bexhill people to have their own Town Council. Unfortunately, it took a change of leadership within the district council to bring about our formation.

In May 2021, seventeen Independent and one Liberal Democrat were elected to the Town Council. However we were elected to a name only and we have had to start from

scratch building our very own authority, committee by committee.

We have been so lucky in being able to attract to Bexhill a very competent professional town clerk in Julie Miller, who these past nine months, has guided us through the mysteries of local government.

We have met as a full council every month and developed a structure that includes several committees: Finance and General Purposes; Climate Nature and Environment; Community; Planning and Asset Transfer. It is this last committee that will assess the services and assets that the district provides for Bexhill and it will recommend to full council which of these assets and services should be transferred over to the Town Council.

Across this newsletter you will see snippets of other tasks we have achieved to date. Don't forget this August will be the second time we will celebrate everything Bexhill during Bexhill Day. We hope to support all of you in your plans to enjoy our town. If we can help in any way, please contact us (see page 4).

*Paul Plim*

### COMMUNICATING WITH RESIDENTS

We now have our own website and social media pages as well as regular input in the local press, radio and BBC SE politics TV show. Councillors arrange face to face 'meet and greets' in their wards,

sometimes jointly with District and County Councillors. Every household in Bexhill has been encouraged to complete our 'Big Survey' which will inform our priorities for the next five years. Funds have been

agreed for five new noticeboards in various areas in Bexhill for this year with five more planned for next year. Regular newsletters will be made available for residents (this being the first!).

#### Contents:

##### Page 1

- The Mayor
- Communicating with residents.

##### Page 2

- Civic Responsibilities
- The First Ten Months
- The Big Survey

##### Page 3

- Chairman of Finance
- Council tax updates

##### Page 4

- Reporting problems
- How to contact us

#### Where are we?

Whilst we continue to negotiate new premises we have arranged temporary accommodation at both the Town Hall and The Pelham, on Holliers Hill.



## CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES

We have arranged the council into four committees and smaller 'working groups' to tackle local issues. The full council meets monthly, and the committees meet at least every two months.

Standing Orders (our rules of engagement) are in place with a growing number of agreed policies. We have recruited a part-time assistant clerk and are looking into an apprenticeship

scheme. We fly the Bexhill flag at the town hall during full meetings, the mace has been cleaned and we are making sure the ceremonial robes and regalia are kept in good condition as these assets belong to the town. There will be an exhibition of the civic regalia at Bexhill Museum this summer. We are in the process of securing the Coat of Arms for use by the Town Council to cement our civic pride. There will be an annual ceremony each April to

award the Freedom of Bexhill to those who are considered to have made a significant contribution to our town. We will also make civic awards to those that have made a positive impact on the well-being of Bexhill during the municipal year. Applications have been invited for the appointment of a Town Crier, so look out for the auditions which will be taking place soon. If you would like the Mayor to visit your event or organisation please contact us.



## THE FIRST TEN MONTHS

Apart from our statutory duty of taking ownership of the seven allotment sites in Bexhill, we have also contributed to several high profile occasions including fundraising at the Poppy Car, Remembrance Day parades, Bexhill Day, the Christmas Lights, and Christmas Window Competition. We have declared a climate

emergency and are looking at ways to reduce emissions. A grants policy is now in place, and local groups can apply for funds to support projects which they hope will benefit the town. £5000 has been ringfenced to enhance the Christmas Lights in Little Common, Sidley and the town

centre. We have been working on plans for the COVID recovery of Bexhill with activities such as a health and well-being event and also tackling loneliness. We have offered our assistance to the Carnival Committee and look forward to the return of the event after COVID. We also arranged for the 9th

Bexhill Cubs to visit the council chamber and hold their own council debate on funding space exploration!



## “THE BIG SURVEY”

Whilst we are thankful to the electorate for our mandate to decide on local matters, we thought it important to test local opinion before forming our five-year strategy. Over 2000 residents filled out our survey asking for views on the projects we are considering. Here are the headlines:

**Environment:** Residents said their top priorities for improving the environment were to smarten up the town (31% asked for this) and to address fly tipping (30%).

**Highways and transport:** Tackling potholes (61%) and reducing vehicle speed (15%) were the two main concerns with the town's roads and transport.

**Music and culture:** Residents asked the council to prioritise improving access to live music (28%) and increasing local heritage and history trails (22%).

**Young people:** Replacing the water fountain feature (35%) was the most popular request around young people, followed by expanding local activities for teenagers (23%).

**Health and well-being:** Addressing loneliness was the prime concern for the town's health and well-being (33% of residents wanted this), followed by improving access to mental health support (22%).

**Business and tourism:** Improving public toilets was the primary concern amongst residents (36%). Next up was improving disability access around the town (16%).

**We thank everyone for their contribution. You can read the full results on our website.**

## TOWN COUNCIL FINANCES

*Update from Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee*

With advent of the new Town Council comes the opportunity to do things differently. Nevertheless, I want to assure you that at the root of the Council's desire to improve things for the residents of Bexhill on Sea is the need to ensure that every penny of ratepayers' money will be used wisely.

Like residents, councillors have ambitions for our lovely town. We all want to make improvements, and, as promised, in these early days the results of The Big Survey will guide our priorities. Many changes for the better have costs. Our challenge is to do as much as we can without significantly raising the Council Tax. We realise that these are tough times for family budgets. That is why for the forthcoming financial year, April 2022 - March 2023, we have increased the Town Council Tax by just 64 pence per year for a Band D property. So there are no extravagant projects, instead, a concentration on the preferences expressed and sought by residents. Progress on these measures will, of course, be reported once the new financial year gets underway.

Where and whenever possible we will tap into the talent, expertise, and commitment of residents. There are already many examples of voluntary groups serving our community in excellent ways. There is scope for this to be extended and developed through access to a fund of £30,000 which is being made available to residents who, as an example, perhaps need some initial financial support to get an idea off the ground, or to further develop an initiative that will benefit the town and its residents. Your ward Town Councillors will do all that they can to help you make an application to help turn your idea into a reality.

The responsibility is on us to show that we can deliver improvements for the good of us all. Together we have enough about us to build a town of which we are all proud.

*Bryan Clasby*

### COUNCIL TAX 2022-23

The total amount raised through the precept for 2022-23 will be £390,920, compared to £371,765 last year.

The percentage increase is calculated against a Band D annual charge. This is shown on your council tax bill and for this year will be 2.84%.

**Average Band D home contributes**

**£23.23 per year /  
45p per week**

### WHERE DOES YOUR MONEY GO?

Community Events	£64,500
Environmental Projects	£40,000
Election Costs	£32,500
Administration Costs	£163,550
Allotments	£3,000
Reserves	£55,000
Premises Costs	£34,000

Projects for the year ahead include:

- Health and well-being event
- Climate Action Plan engagement
- 'Happy To Chat' café tables
- Dementia Friendly initiatives
- New 'Welcome To Bexhill' signs
- Improving accessibility around Bexhill
- Awards for local heroes

#### How does Bexhill compare?

**Last year's charges for our neighbouring councils**

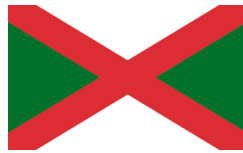
<b>Battle</b>	<b>£138.79</b>
<b>Camber</b>	<b>£101.86</b>
<b>Rye</b>	<b>£125.58</b>
<b>Ticehurst</b>	<b>£89.86</b>

#### What are "Special Expenses"?

This is the term used for the Council Tax money raised by Rother District Council for services dedicated to Bexhill. Each Band D home in Bexhill paid **£38.17** to this fund last year, which equates to a total of £628,100. The fund is used to pay for the upkeep of parks and open spaces, the maintenance of bus shelters, Christmas lighting, Bexhill Museum and the Bexhill Forum. Discussions are underway as to if and how the Town Council can manage this responsibility to add value for our residents.



To report:  
missed bin collections; fly-tipping;  
graffiti; issues with housing; illegal  
camping; jet skiing; food hygiene  
Rother District Council  
01424 787000



To report:  
issues with roads/pathways/verges;  
water or sewerage; noise;  
pollution; children at risk  
East Sussex County Council  
0345 608 0190

## YOUR COUNCILLORS

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