

# Looe Town Council Annual Report 2009-2010.

Hello and welcome one and all to the Town Council annual meeting for 2009-10.

Before I go in to details about the activity of the Council over the last 12 months I would like to take this opportunity to give you some important facts about this council and how it works.

The current Council has 15 elected members, including the Mayor, of which the majority were elected in 2007, each full Council would normally come up for re- election every four years, however due to electoral reform in Cornwall in 2009 as a result of the Unitary Authority status coming into being in Cornwall the current Town Council will now not be up for block re-election until 2013.

In the meantime if any Councillor resigns during the period up to 2013 then a replacement will be elected either via a public voting by-election or if that is not requested then the election would be completed using the co-option process, this all depends on the wishes of residents.

The resident by-election route is always the Council's preferred method as this is very transparent as it is the residents who decide who to elect rather than the co-option route where it is the elected members who decide. The one drawback with the by- election process is that it is very expensive and each public election will cost the Council Tax payers of Looe £4-6K.

Anyone who is thinking of standing for council should be aware that all Town Councillors are Volunteers and they do not receive any allowances for their time, save for out of pocket expenses when travelling away from the Town on Council Business.

To give you all a flavour of how hard Council Members and the Clerk work on behalf of our Town, the Clerk has recorded at least 80 official meetings in the reporting year, this figure excludes un-recorded meetings, meaning that a hard working pro- active Councillor can attend up to a 120 Meetings in a year and as a pro-active Mayor, coupled with Official engagements could result in you being active on Council Business for around 180 or more occasions in any Council year.

These volunteer positions are not to be taken lightly; no one should put themselves forward for election unless they are prepared to commit to be active and are prepared to work hard on behalf of the Town and its residents

Under the new electoral reforms for Cornwall, from 2013 Looe Town Council will be divided for electoral purposes and will be split in to two wards, East Looe, which will elect 9 Councillors and West Looe, which will elect 6 Councillors.

Your Town Council is very important to the Community of Looe as it is the only elected public body in the Town which has a duty to protect the interests of all residents from the problems that arise in a distant Town which is largely governed from Truro by Cornwall Council Officers and Members who have little concern about the on-going well being of this small distant seaside Town.

In saying the latter of Course I must also say and make it very clear, that we are extremely lucky to have two exceptional Cornwall Councillors in Edwina Hannaford and Armand Toms who both have Looe flowing through their veins. They continue to work tirelessly on behalf of this Town, in the minority being only two out of the 123 Councillors that have been democratically elected by residents of Cornwall to govern the county.

The Town Council have eight employees, including the Town Clerk, Assistant Clerk, TIC Manager and a Car Park Warden/Handy person. The Town does not own any assets, save for the Fisherman & Mariners Garden, we also have a short-term lease on the Patients Car Park and a longer lease on the unused West Looe Cemetery Toilets. The latter we are trying to return to Cornwall Council as it is a drain on Council resources and being closed to the public, serves no useful purpose to the residents of this Town.

The Town Council is entirely funded from the annual precept, plus a very small income from the Patients Car Park and TIC sales. We have no other sources of income.

Looe Town Council is an accredited "Quality Town Council" and was one of the first Town Councils in this area to achieve this status in 2007. As an example of how forward thinking this council is, it is worth pointing out that Liskeard Town Council have only just recently achieved this accolade, which is so important as it means that the Town Council has passed certain test on its operational efficiency, effectiveness and transparency. The "Quality Town Council" status is also very important for an active council as this charter mark ensures that this council is placed much higher on the list of Councils to be consulted by Cornwall Council and other legislative bodies.

Good governance is not the sole preserve of the Town Council it comes about when all members of our community come together, support initiatives and get involved to ensure that Looe is the best place to live work and visit and in this respect your Town Council have been working very pro-actively in promoting Town Unity by involving and supporting all organisations in this wonderful Town.

The Town Council has 12 working committees, including sub-committees and is also represented, by members on 14 outside bodies. We would like to take this opportunity to give you a good understanding about some the work undertaken by this council in the last 12 months:-

## 1. Finance & Works – Chairman Cllr. Chris Rose.

Over the last 12 months this committee has had to transform the finances of the Council from the difficult period that existed at the end of the previous financial year when we had deficit of £14K, with no cash reserves, this meant that this deficit had to be carried forward to the current fiscal period because we had literally run out of money as a result of under estimating the precept needed in previous council years, thereby eroding all the Councils cash reserves as expenditure continued to be in excess of income received.

We are now pleased to report, that through careful, prudent budgeting and expenditure control, the positive position at the end of the 2009/10 fiscal year, is that once again, this council now has a small cash surplus to carryover to our reserves, including the ring fenced £25K, for the engagement of either a Town specific PCSO or Civil Enforcement Officer.

This committee has also produced a "Community Chest" grant application procedure, thus allowing various organisation operating in the Town to apply for funding to support project that benefit the community within Looe.

This committee is also deals with:--

The contracts and conditions of Employment for Council employees.

Council Insurances & licences.

Employees pension scheme.

Legal scrutiny of leases and other agreements entered in to by the Council.

Jointly with Cornwall, Looe & Lansallos Council the funding of the new late night bus service for Looe and Polperro during the summer holiday period starting at the end of this month.

Supporting Looe Development Trust financially, to enable them to re-open The Enterprise Centre thereby helping to create better opportunities for re-training for the unemployed.

Supporting Looe in Bloom with increased funding.

Merging the Council Newsletter in to The Looe Community News.

Giving financial support to the recent West Looe May Fair, which was very successful under the leadership of Cornwall and Town Cllr Edwina Hannaford and we hope this will now continue year on year in perpetuity.

## 2. Planning – Chairman Cllr Kim Smith.

This committee, by its very nature, meets far more often than the other committees, during the last year it has considered and commented on over 140 planning applications. In addition to planning meeting members of this committee also attend site meetings, Cornwall Council planning training meetings and Cornwall Council area planning committee meetings, when we have called in a planning application that requires an explanation to members present about our concerns arising from when Looe Town Council considered a specific planning application, which we considered was not in the best interest of the Town or its residents.

This committee is also responsible for attending pre-planning meetings with all parties involved in major development projects that may take place or are being proposed for the Town, for example the current Barratt Homes proposal is very much on the current agenda, our aim in these discussions, will be to support our Cornwall Councillor Armand Toms who is trying to convince the developer and Cornwall Council that the Town needs to achieve some planning gain from this development.

Some of the other planning issues we are also addressing with the developer and Cornwall Council is guarantees in ensuring that affordable homes go to local families in need who have roots in Looe, vehicle access to the development from St Martin's Road, the provision of improved NHS, Health and Dental Care services for the Town, improvements to the Towns already overloaded sewage system and the provision of light industrial work units within the development, to increase work opportunities for local residents.

Very importantly this committee is also responsible for ensuring that the Towns conservation areas are fully protected against any unwanted development that could be harmful to these areas' including trees, flora, fauna and other important considerations applicable to areas of outstanding landscape value and county importance.

The planning committee has a zero tolerance on any unauthorised development and consistently monitors for any signs of such activity around the Town and surrounding area. The planning committee will not hesitate in seeking planning enforcement where appropriate.

### 3. The Environment & Public Protection Committee – Chairman Cllr Martin Gregory.

This committee is responsible for all matters relating to the environment and public protection and works very closely with all the Towns agencies including the Police, Fire service and County Highways.

Some examples of the achievements of this committee over the last year is as follows:-

The Patients Car Park, securing its short term future for the Town including the upgrading of the site, providing parking enforcement and providing a small income for the Town from out of hour's parking space rental.

CCTV, Installation of the current system and overseeing its upgrade in the coming year. A merging of the service in to one location to include the Harbour Commissions Camera's and those of Cornwall Council, that they plan to install in the Millpool Car park.

Supporting the Skateboard Park application and working in conjunction with Looe Development Trust to ensure that this much needed facility actually happens.

The negotiations for the taking over the lease of the Bowling Club and putting green from Cornwall Council and in so doing securing the future for this important asset for the Town.

Completing a short term service level agreement with Cornwall Council, to take over the line Management of the public toilets and street cleaning in Looe for a one year trial basis.

Facilitating an agreement with Cornwall Council to assist both ELTT and Looe Harbour Commissioners with the emptying of rubbish bins and the provision of free rubbish sacks.

Traffic consultations with both residents and business to try and agree a common plan for a traffic regulation order that will address all traffic issues in Looe within one Traffic regulation order.

Lobbying Cornwall Council to take seriously the issue of parking enforcement in Looe which is currently running out of control since the responsibility was passed from the Police to Cornwall Council in May 2008.

The updating of the Towns war memorial to include the name of L/Cpl Paul Upton who was killed on active service in Afghanistan in Feb 2009.

To organise all Town festival functions that come under the remit of the Town Council for example the annual Christmas lantern procession.

In conjunction with Cornwall/Lansallos/Looe Town Councils, the production of a leaflet to promote the clean neighbourhood act and highlight all our responsibilities for the disposal of litter and household and business waste. This leaflet will be distributed to holiday lets, businesses and householders.

### The Procedures Committee – Chairman Cllr Jimmy Dingle.

This committee is responsible for making recommendations on council policy and civic occasions and also has a responsibility to ensure that the Council standing orders are kept up to date and are adhered to at all times.

The re-accreditation process for the "Quality Town Council" status charter mark also falls within the remit of this committee via a subcommittee under the leadership of Cllr Brian Galipeau. The subcommittee goal is to ensure that this Council meets all the necessary measurement criteria and the renewing of our "Quality Town Council" status, thus ensuring that this council continues to be a transparent well run, effective and efficient council.

The Procedure Committee is also responsible for overseeing any disciplinary issues that may arise with Council employees or Councillors and is also empowered to deal with any complaints about individual Councillors, including advice to the public on how to progress such matters using the guidelines set down by "The Standards Board of England" code of conduct for Councillors.

This committee is also responsible for lobbying Cornwall Council on important Town issues for example the proposed Polean Industrial Development.

To promote and consult with the public on the Town Council project list, in order to gain residents ownership to the Council work programme.

### The Town Tourism Committee – Chairman Cllr Jimmy Dingle

This committee is responsible for all matters relating to the promotion of Tourism and in the promotion of Looe as a Holiday destination.

All matters relating to the Tourist Information Centre is handled through this committee, including liaison with outside organisation such as SECTA and The Chamber of Commerce & Trade.

Some recent activities of the committee include the following;-

The New "Looe Area accommodation Guide 2009".

Putting in place a promotional advertising agreement for the next two years, so that Looe can be visually promoted as a day trip destination within the "Drake Circus' shopping complex Plymouth.

### In Conclusion.

We do hope this has giving you a good understanding of just how hard working this council is and will continue to be. Hopefully, you now also have a good appreciation of what we are trying to do in order that we can improve the facilities in the Town and the Town generally, for our visitors and all of us who live or work here in the local community.

This report will be available on the Council website, hard copies will also be made available, if required and these can be requested through the clerk at the council offices, together with a copy of the final accounts for the period 2009/10.



Cllr Michael Joy

Mayor of Looe (2009-10).