

# **TOWN COUNCIL OF FRINTON AND WALTON**

## **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09**

### **COUNCILLOR MR TERRY ALLEN**

#### **Introduction**

What a difference a year makes. Looking through last year's report I am struck by what an optimistic time it was then. That was before the Recession. In spite of the present gloom the Town Council has still achieved much this year that is worthwhile and can, I believe, look forward with confidence to the year ahead.

#### **The Precept**

The Precept is the amount of money that the Town Council, each year, asks the District Council to collect for it from the Council Tax Payers throughout the Town. This is almost all of our income that sees us through the year. Unlike every other public authority on the Council Tax bill, the Town Council receives no Government grant or portion of the Business Rate. This year, as usual, Frinton and Walton Town Council declared its Precept earlier than most local authorities. I believe that the nature of our Precept influenced others. Even as early as the end of October it was clear that with the near-collapse of our banking system the forthcoming year would be a hard one for many of the Town's residents. Some would lose their jobs. Others would see their savings and pensions devalued. Every Member of the Town Council felt that at this time the best service we could perform for residents would be to make a significant reduction in the amount we required from them in Council Tax. In the event the Town Council reduced its Precept requirement from £431,563 this year to £382,957 for the forthcoming year. That is a reduction of between 11% and 12% or about £6.00 for the average property. Little enough, perhaps, but the Town Council hopes that it also became a benchmark for the other authorities. We can still do all that we set out to do. But it may take slightly longer.

#### **Youth Venture Centre**

The Town Council commissioned a feasibility study of a youth facility or youth venture centre in Kirby le Soken. Plans have been prepared, approaching a standard required for a planning application, and informal consultations have taken place throughout the Town. Although some have been quick to jump to the wrong conclusion, this is not a youth centre in the usual sense. It will be a "home" for established youth groups, some of them uniformed. It will also be a ready base for embryonic youth groups. Final approval of the Town Council is awaited at the time of writing. Then we attempt to bring the idea into being.



Artists impression of Youth Venture Centre

## **Crime and Disorder**

I wonder how we managed without Police Community Support Officers and our Crime and Disorder Working Party? Before PCSOs I used to dread the trail of destruction that school holidays left. In less than five years things have improved immeasurably. It did not happen immediately, it was a slow process, but behaviour now is much better than it was. Generally, crime and anti-social behaviour is going down in the Town's area and detection rates are going up. Last summer there was a considerable amount of anti-social behaviour near the railway station in Frinton. A Mosquito sonic device was installed and the County Council has agreed to impose a traffic order banning parking from a small area nearby. Improvements are now noticeable here, too. The Working Party has also been concerned about road safety in Rochford Way, Frinton. Two well-received and well-attended public meetings have been organised by the Town Council and it is hoped that with the co-operation of all of the authorities involved the crossing here, both for pedestrians and vehicles, will become less hazardous. The Town Council is grateful to Sgt John Scott for regularly attending our three-week cycle of Working Party meetings. We have made real progress.

## **Walton Market**

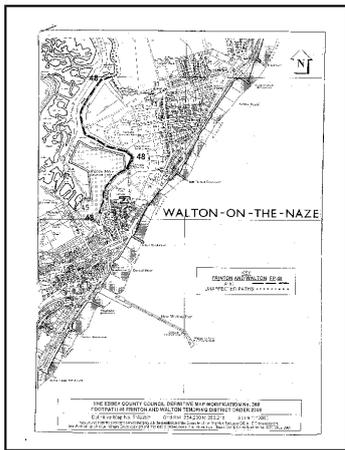


The Town Council has been running Walton Market for over a year now. Income has been better than expected. However, our under-lease expires at the end of September and then the cost of a new lease, and therefore the future of the Market, is entirely in the hands of the District Council.

## **The Gates, Frinton**

As anyone who has passed the Gates can see, the Essex County Council has substantially completed its part of the roadworks necessary for the installation of automatic barriers at Frinton railway station. Whatever the next step might be, the Town Council has not been privy to any consultation. Earlier, the Town Council was so appalled by the County Council's handling of the highways aspects that it unanimously passed a Vote of No Confidence in the County Council. This was not done lightly and may well have been a unique act for the Town Council. The Gates, as a consultation exercise, must surely have been a fascinating spectacle for the cynics amongst us. The Town Council commissioned a professional report from one of the country's best traffic management and safety agencies. But all of our views were swept aside in the slipstream as Network Rail and the County Council hurtled towards their pre-scheduled decisions. Nevertheless, we must hope that their decisions work.

## **New Public Footpath at Walton**



Acting on public demand, the Town Council made application to the County Council to formalise a much used and much valued footpath leading from Naze Park Road along the Mere. At the time of writing the exact point of egress is in dispute but at whichever point it joins the highway it will provide a welcome recreational route. The Town Council is grateful to Walton residents for providing evidence of use over many years.

## **Vehicle Activated Signs**

The County Council has been generous to the Town in the provision of Vehicle Activated Signs. Last autumn the Town Council applied for three more – in Freituna Road, Frinton-on-Sea, Elm Tree Avenue, Frinton-on-Sea and on the main road between Frinton and Walton. All three, valued at £6500 each, have been agreed by the County Council. The Town Council is grateful to the County Council for their help and advice.

## **Beach Huts**

The Town Council has acquired two new beach huts in Frinton. They will be available for rent to local people from this spring. The cost of hiring beach huts in the Town's area has become so expensive lately that some local families have been priced-out. The Town Council hopes that this will redress the balance.

## **“Frinton in Bloom” – Gold Bid**



New Frinton In Bloom Planter

Frinton in Bloom made an extra push for success in Britain in Bloom and Anglia in Bloom competitions this year. They went for Gold – and the Town Council supported them with an £8000 grant. Their list of successes is a long one – winner of best small town in the Anglia region (overall silver-gilt), special Gold Award for work at Frinton railway station, winner of the best sustainable drought garden, winner of Royal Horticultural Society Best Community Group category and Britain in Bloom silver medal.

Much of the work, of course, lasts beyond this year and provides a lasting improvement to the Town's appearance. The Town Council is proud to be associated with Frinton in Bloom's success. Well Done!

## **Planning Applications**

This year the Town Council has considered and made recommendations on 229 planning applications and Tree Preservation Orders. Of this number only 17% have been at variance with the decisions of the District Council. With the downturn in prosperity the number of planning applications coming before the Town Council has markedly reduced since my last report.

## **Columbine Centre**

During the course of the year new legislation required that the Town Council obtain a Display Energy Certificate for the Columbine Centre. This informs the public how efficient in energy conservation are public buildings. The Columbine Centre scored very well, being in the second best category for energy efficiency.

## **Financial Management**

This year the Town Council had a different auditor and approval of the accounts took a little longer. An Interim Financial Statement is attached to my Report. The final version will be available in June. Fortunately, the Town Council has built up its reserves over the last few years. If our “rainy day” money is unexpectedly needed it is comforting to know that we have it there rather than having to increase the precept. The Town Council’s investments are with the Co-operative Bank and Abbey. The security of investments is regularly re-assessed. We can, however, expect to receive far less interest from investments than we have been used to.

## **Seafront Shelters**

Only the seafront shelter opposite the Cedars in Frinton-on-Sea awaits restoration. Expenditure over the last year has been entirely devoted to repairing vandal damage and removing graffiti. This has amounted to over £2200 on seafront shelters alone. If we had no vandalism we could easily – *easily* - have reduced our precept by another one percent.

## **Bus Shelters**



The replacement bus shelter near the railway bridge in Kirby Cross was installed nearly a year ago. The Town Council tries to keep on top of bus shelter maintenance. All three of the shelters in Great Holland will have been restored by the end of the financial year. The little wooden shelter in Rochford Way has also been restored although graffiti-artists have been quick to attack it again. Similarly, the bus shelters in Naze Park Road and Hanover Court have again needed expensive graffiti removal.

## **Public Seats**

The survey of public seats was completed at the beginning of the year. Now that we have identified ownership and condition of all of our seats maintenance work is proceeding in a planned way.

## **Allotments**



Demand is still strong for plots on all three of the Town Council’s allotment sites. Enthusiasm amongst allotment holders is high with most plots being well cultivated. Apart from the vegetables and fruit produced it is clear that allotment holders have an enjoyable time in the open air with exercise and good company.

## **Telephone Kiosk**



The Town Council received notice that BT proposed to remove the telephone kiosk in Gun Gardens in Frinton. The Town Council resisted this move, not only because of the loss of an obvious facility but because the absence of a telephone box near to the beach would jeopardise Frinton qualifying for the “beach awards” at which it has become so successful. The Town Council objected and even intimated to BT that it would be prepared to contribute towards the cost of maintaining the kiosk. The next thing we knew, BT had developed its Sponsor a Kiosk scheme and the Town Council was invited to take up sponsorship at £500pa to retain the kiosk. This was done and a very welcome contribution of £250 was received from the District Council. Not only did the Town retain its working telephone box, it also retained the “coin operated” feature. The K6 kiosk was fully restored and the king’s crowns have been picked out in gold paint. A rare distinction not bestowed on every town! The retention of an old telephone kiosk, in working order, is perhaps a small thing but it is many small things like this achieved by the Town Council that help to make the Town the place in which we all enjoy living.

## **Conclusion**

This has been my second year as Town Mayor. The Town has seen a number of challenges during that time. We have had our successes and on other occasions we have not been as successful on behalf of our residents as we would have wished. In all of the important issues I have been grateful for the support that I have received from all councillors, regardless of political persuasion (or, indeed, no political persuasion at all). I am also grateful for the assistance of the staff at the Council House and the Columbine Centre. Once again, the help that I have had from the Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr Robert Bucke, has been over and above the call of duty and I am especially appreciative of his support. Thankfully, in these troubled times, we have a good team, a sound budget and a varied work programme – we are able to face the forthcoming year with confidence.

Councillor Mr E. T. Allen  
Town Mayor  
29th March 2009