



## **TOWN COUNCIL OF FRINTON AND WALTON**

### **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

#### **COUNCILLOR ROBERT J. BUCKE**

### **Introduction**

This is my report of my second year in the Office of Town Mayor. Altogether a fantastic experience, and an honour and privilege to serve and represent residents of this wonderful area.

The country's economy continues to dominate the actions and plans of all local authorities. The Town Council is no exception. In addition to the nation's deficit which must be dealt with one way or another, inflation is also now a consideration. Most people will find that their incomes are not increasing, yet the cost of living is rising. The Town Council has accordingly again made no increase in its Precept for the forthcoming year. The Town Council has pegged its Precept at £382,957 – for the third year running.

In order to achieve this some relatively painless cuts have been made. Also, when planned projects have been completed new ones have not, generally, replaced them. It seems to me that in the foreseeable future it may be difficult for any local authority to fund new revenue schemes. It is just as well therefore that over the years the Town Council has rebuilt its reserves. These will be there for the new Town Council, to be elected in May, to use if it wishes on capital projects.

### **Naze Crag Walk**



Crag Walk Works

I reported last year that the Town Council had made a grant of £10,000 to the Essex Wildlife Trust for preparatory work necessary for the Crag Walk project. In the event not all of the £10,000 was needed. The Town Council was pleased to contribute £4,502 (roughly the balance) towards the design and production of five interpretive panels to be installed at the Naze. Work is now almost complete.

### **Crime and Disorder**

The Crime and Disorder Working Party was relieved and pleased to learn at a recent meeting that joint funded Police Community Support Officers were not to be part of the forthcoming year's Police cuts. Ours were the first joint funded PCSOs in the county (if not the country) and they were and still are regarded as a flagship force. Beyond question they are effective – just cast your mind back to days prior to their appointment and reflect on the higher levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour that existed back then. But I feel that the Town Council must be vigilant during the forthcoming year and be prepared to fight to retain the PCSOs if their presence in Frinton and Walton is threatened by cuts to Police expenditure.

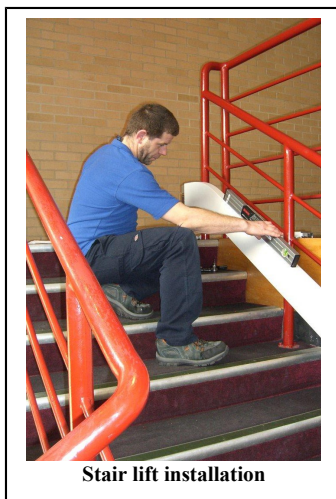
Some Councillors have recently received Community Speedwatch training. Local police and PCSOs will train members of the public in the use of the “speed gun”. This will provide a warning for motorists who exceed the speed limit.

The Working Party has asked the County Highways Department to look at the possibility of imposing 20 mph speed limits on streets near schools. No doubt this will be considered when time permits. In the meantime, the Town Council has made grants available to schools for the production of “20 is plenty” signs on school premises. This has been trialled successfully in Alresford and no doubt can be equally successful here.

### **Planning Applications**

This year the Town Council has considered and made recommendations on 235 planning applications and Tree Preservation Orders. Of this number only 27% have been at variance with the decisions of the District Council. During the year the Town Council has noted with concern the relaxation of some of the protection previously afforded trees in the Town’s area. The number of planning applications coming before the Town Council is still markedly reduced, but a major application is due to be received and considered for a national brand supermarket in Walton. The existing TDC Local Plan and the developing Local Development Framework will be fundamental to the Council’s decision making, in conjunction with the Walton Regeneration Framework. In that context, we welcome the recent acquisition of Walton Mere by the Titchmarsh Marina family, and look forward to the progression of that major project for Walton.

### **Columbine Centre**



It is pleasing to report that bookings of the Columbine Centre remain strong even in these difficult times. The new vending machine is operating well and produces an income even when the coffee shop is closed. During the course of the year the Town Council extended its licence to provide for wrestling and boxing to take place. Two wrestling bouts have taken place already and have been very popular. New picnic tables, chairs and sunshades have been bought for the patio in front of the Centre. A new storage portakabin has been purchased and installed at the back of the Centre. A stairlift has also been provided to the upper floor. It is hoped that this will make the first floor room more attractive to hirers.

The Town Council continues to enjoy a good working relationship with Walton & District Indoor Bowls Club.

## **Festive Lights**



wn Council displayed festive lights in Connaught Avenue, High Street. Regrettably, the new lighting columns were not Avenue but it is hoped that they will be there for next council is grateful to the following District Councillors who from their Tendring District Council grants fund towards the

Mrs I Johnson  
Mrs C A Turner MBE

M A Cossens  
Mrs J King  
N W Turner

Mrs A Hockridge  
D J Lines  
G Watling

I hope that the lights made Christmas shopping a happy event for residents and visitors. It should be even better next year.

## **Highways & Footpaths**

We are delighted to see the final phase of Essex County highways works under way in Connaught Avenue, following which we expect to have a very much improved and updated street scene. In Kirby le Soken, the seawall footpath (no.36) from Quay Lane to Island Lane is to be retained for at least the time being, following an appeal and public inquiry, although the Environment Agency are again seeking to move the footpath to another position across open farmland.

## **Walton Market**

The Market continues to be popular, especially during better weather. A small reduction in the cost of electricity was made during the year and efforts continue to be made to reduce costs and increase income.

## **Beach Huts**

The Town Council's two beach huts in Frinton have been so popular that the Town Council has had to limit pre-booking. The Town Council has asked the District Council to make more plots available. A decision is still awaited.

## **Town Council Property**



The bus shelters, seafront shelters, notice boards and public seats are all in good condition. Never been better. They are frequently inspected, not just by officers but by Members also, and any repair, of damage or graffiti is quickly dealt with. We are fortunate in the Town to have skilled tradesmen prepared to do this sort of work and to respond quickly – thanks go to them for their valued services.

## **War Memorial**



The Town Council was asked to have the Frinton war memorial cleaned. The memorial stone is incorporated in the wall of the Memorial Club in Ashlyns Road. The Town Council readily agreed – as it always has done when asked to carry out work to any of the Town’s war memorials. As in the past, the best specialist contractors were engaged and the photograph shows work taking place.

A grant was also made to Kirby in Bloom to enable the gravel memorial surround to be improved.

## **Allotments**



Demand for allotments on all three of the Town Councils sites continues to exceed supply. One extra plot has been reclaimed from boundary waste this year at Witton Wood Road and already has a new tenant. Members of the Recreation and Amenities Committee inspect the allotments every year and a high standard of maintenance is established.

## **Conclusion**

The second of my two years as Town Mayor draws to a close. Looking back and surveying these two years I believe that the Town Council has, at once, provided a good service to local people and has also been sensitive to the need to keep costs down. I hope that what the Town Council has done has met with the approval of local people.

In December we mourned the sad loss of former Town Councillor Lydia Rex, who served this Council for a relatively short time, but in doing so, gave her all.

I have enjoyed so many wonderful experiences and visits, often with my wife and Consort, Margaret, remembering particularly the 110<sup>th</sup> birthday of Kirby le Soken resident Ethel Wood, who we first met some 45 years ago. I have visited community and youth groups regularly over a 4-year period, enabling me to select carefully the recipients of Mayor’s charity donations, in particular the RNLI and Read House. On behalf of the Town Council, I thank them all, especially youth leaders and voluntary workers for all their work in our community, always helping someone else, whoever they may be. My Civic Service this year was held in All Saints, Great Holland on the 12<sup>th</sup> September, when we acknowledged and celebrated that joy of voluntary service.

I have enjoyed, too, talking to German student visitors to this town, a regular event over many recent years. My meetings ‘working together’ with local residents associations have been most helpful in ensuring that we share knowledge, experience and ideas for our developing communities.

The Localism Bill was put before Parliament in December and may well be law by this time next year. If so, it looks like it may provide some opportunities for town and parish councils, and your Town Council is exploring the possibility of bidding to acquire and/or operate Frinton & Walton Swimming Pool. There will, though, be limitations and challenges to consider. We shall see.

During this second year I am again 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 very grateful to the staff at the Council House, the Columbine Centre and the market for their support and commitment to the Council's work and services. I make special mention of our former Town Clerk, Mr. Bob Richmond, who served the Town Council in such an exemplary way over an 8-year period prior to his retirement in March this year. His knowledge of Local Authority law, custom and practice has been vital and attributable to so many successes in this area, and we all wish him joy and happiness in his retirement. In succeeding Bob as Town Clerk, Debi Milnes is already using her experience with us and her personal skills to good effect, and we are confident of continuing the high level of respect and reputation for this Council. I am especially mindful and grateful for the help and support I have had from the Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr Denzil Watson, who this last year in particular has had many other pressing calls on his time. My final acknowledgement and thanks go to my wife Margaret who has encouraged and helped me through an even busier year.

Councillor Mr R. J. Bucke  
Town Mayor  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2011