

RYE TOWN COUNCIL
as at 20 November 2017 **PR04 Item 37(a)**

WORK PROGRAMME

| Task/Project | Outline | Target (orig) | Status | Notes |
|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|--|
| Access (TH) | Ascertaining feasibility of solid handrail to Chamber staircase. | June 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Awaiting response from Conservation Officer. | Needs to be chased |
| Acoustics | Improving speech audibility in Chamber | April 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Completion now scheduled for 21.11.17 | System was installed but speakers not adequate |
| Assets revaluations | | Autumn 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Residential and commercial property valuations obtained. Other valuations outstanding. | Estimates required. Not a current priority |
| Budgets 2018-19 & precept | Drafting TH & HC Budgets (incl revised HC budget 207-18) | Autumn 2017 | COMPLETED Council to be asked to 'sign off' budgets 4.12.17 | Legally the precept has to be set by 1.3.18 |
| CCTV | Exploring system to deter inconsiderate on street parking | Summer 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Awaiting further information from the Lead Sussex Police Officer for Public Space CCTV | |
| Cupola | Restoration | Autumn 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Two specification of works quotes received | Needs to be completed by 2018 |
| Discounted accommodation | Purchase one dwelling to let at discounted rent and issuing tenancy | September 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Property occupied for 12 months temporarily pending adoption of compliant eligibility criteria | |
| Ferry Road Nursery | Purchase of freehold | 31 May 2017 (RDC request) | BEHIND SCHEDULE Now likely to be Dec 2017- Jan 2018 | Delay at RDC's end |
| Heritage Centre – Telephones & IT | Identifying a cheaper telephone provider and updating IT hardware & software | Autumn 2017 | ON SCHEDULE | |
| Heritage Centre (structure) | Investigating alternative governance structures | September 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE | See agenda item 36.2d |

PR04

37 (a)

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| HC Options WG | Explore future options for building | September 2018 | AMENDED SCHEDULE 9.4.17: Council decision to postpone further work undertaken by the WG until April 2018 | |
| Internal financial checks | Members undertaking 'spot checks' | Summer 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE | |
| Landgate Tower | Restoration | TBD | RDC has arranged a Stakeholders' Update 27.11.17 | See agenda item 41 |
| Neighbourhood Plan | Attending SG meetings and monitoring progress | Estimated c4-year period (summer 2013-autumn 2017) | BEHIND SCHEDULE Pre-Reg 14 consultation scheduled for early in the New Year. V10 of the RNP will be presented to Council 4.12.17 | Delegated authority to enter into commitments on behalf of the Steering Group. |
| Priority Setting | Drawing up a matrix of the objectives identified at the Visioning | TBD | BEHIND SCHEDULE | |
| Pump Street Pump | Restoring the pump housing | 2017 | COMPLETED | Joint project with RCS |
| Terms and conditions of employment (TH) | Updating job descriptions following staffing review | April 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE | |
| TH office reorganisation and redecorating | Improve efficiency and appearance | Summer 2017 | COMPLETED | |
| TH rear windows | Repainting & replacement frames | May 2018 | PARTLY COMPLETED Some painting undertaken | |
| Web site (TH) | Replacement | February 2017 | BEHIND SCHEDULE Some content written; .gov domain management problem rectified. | Current TH web site back on line. Revised target: Aut 17 |
| Wish Ward – land adjacent | Transfer from RDC | Spring 2017 | COMPLETED | |

PRO4 37(b)

Update for Policy Committee – Monday 27th November 2017

Jessica Neame, General Assistant.

Rye Town Hall

- Wedding bookings are slightly up on 2016/17, and cancellations are significantly reduced. This is alongside the implementation of a non-refundable deposit, meaning that the financial implications of any cancellations are greatly reduced.

We were able to go ahead with the filming of the Town Crier in late September. We now have a short promotional film with some delightful footage of Paul Goring giving a wedding 'cry', after which there are shots of the inside of the Main Chamber and Mayor's Parlour. This gives prospective couples a real idea of what to expect from the Town Crier and a feel for the venue. I anticipate being able to include this in the weddings page of the new website, and being able to offer a link to this within the weddings information package that is emailed to enquiring couples. This film will also be used in social media marketing, as well as at any future wedding fairs.

We have secured one firm booking as a result of our attendance at the Hastings Museum Wedding Fair at the beginning of September, meaning that all costs of the event have been covered.

The implementation of a new wedding booking checklist is ongoing. This will ensure that all relevant information is gathered as early as possible to help the operational management of bookings, further enabling us to be more flexible on taking multiple bookings for a single date. This will also contain a prompt to ask how couples heard about us - a valuable tool in tracking the success of our marketing endeavours.

- The website remains a priority, but progress is somewhat slow due to my inexperience of Wordpress. I am continuing to write and format content but may require further training before we are able to 'go live'.
- I continue to manage the Mayoral Diary and Correspondence. This month I have sent invitations to the Mayor's Christmas Party. In order to reduce time and costs, I created a database of email addresses for local organisations, and formatted an invitation suitable for email. I was able to email at least 85% of invitations, greatly reducing time and postage costs. An 'e-christmas card' has been discussed as a way to further reduce costs.

Rye Heritage Centre

- I undertook a secondment to the Heritage Centre, from the Town Hall during September and October, whilst covering holiday periods at the Town Hall and managing the Mayoral Diary during this time.

- During my secondment we prioritised a number of tasks that required urgent attention. In light of the Open Evening planned in early October, I gathered a database of local accommodation providers and arranged a contacts list for emailing invitations easily. This groundwork means we now have a list set up allowing us to communicate efficiently with all our local accommodation providers regularly in the future, thereby increasing awareness of the Centre's offering to this valuable group.

In preparation for the Open Evening I assisted Louisa with a remerchandise of the retail space at the Centre over two days. This gave us a valuable opportunity to consider options for new local suppliers, and highlight those local ranges that we have already taken. We identified a gap in our offering of jams, chutneys and local food stuffs that has seen figures in this area decline. I managed to secure an order from wholesaler 'Love for Local' including Sussex chutneys, conserves, and artisan chocolates, as well as Kent Crisps and a range of luxury biscuits. This has seen figures for this department increase, and show a steady upward trend. I have also obtained information from a number of other local food producers including Hastings Ketchup, Strange Fruits Conserves at Hurst Green and Mini Mouthfuls – a fudge producer based in Hastings. I continue to search for local producers, with a view to enhancing our range of local stock going into the next season.

All Heritage Centre staff were pleased to see some Councillors attend this Open Evening, along with a good number of local accommodation providers. We had some excellent feedback, and plans are in place to repeat the event in the Spring.

- I have completed the upgrade to Quickbooks Online. This was not entirely straightforward but, now implemented, it has streamlined some of the bookkeeping functions. This should mean that the financial administration of the centre becomes less onerous, freeing up time in future for me to offer further administration and marketing support to Louisa.
- The move to Unity Trust Bank from Natwest continues, as our new account is now open. I am working on the processes required for paying in of cash, the use of online banking and the move of direct debits and payments to the new account. I hope to undertake this gradually over the winter period to avoid problems, and ensure that we have completed the move by next season. I am working on a procedure for the use of online payments as it will be a significant change from our current cheque-based system. My aim is to keep it as simple as possible, whilst ensuring that we adhere to our financial regulations. If we can create a process that works easily for signatories as well as administrators, then the savings will be great.

In order to emphasise the importance of the move to online banking - I recently calculated that for every cheque currently written to suppliers, the cost borne by the centre is up to as much as £1.25 each. This includes the bank charge of 35p, 2nd class stamp at 56p, costs of admin time involved in writing cheques, obtaining signatures and then sending. By transferring to online banking with Unity Trust, the payment fee for an online bank transfer is just 15p!

- I was asked to undertake a marketing mail-out targeting our foreign student groups. Louisa has created a new procedure for group bookings, involving taking a deposit in order to reduce the rates, and cover our costs in the event, of inevitable cancellations. I produced an

information pack detailing this change in procedure, and arranged a contact list of all previous group clients. I also researched local language schools covering Hastings, Eastbourne and Canterbury and included these in the mail out. Now we have an established contact list and information, I aim to send regular updates to these clients to increase awareness of Rye Heritage Centre as a destination for student groups. I will also be undertaking a similar task to target local schools in the near future.

- The cost of telephone and broadband supply at the Centre is considerable. Having researched this area recently for the Town Hall, I undertook the same comparisons for the Heritage Centre. We have now engaged the services of DWD telecoms (who provided the new system for the Town Hall) and will shortly have a new system installed which will increase functionality significantly, as well as greatly reducing our costs in this area.
- The current electricity contract for the Centre expires in early December, and so I am researching the best deal available to us. This should ensure a small saving.
- The credit / debit card processing facility at the Heritage Centre is another significant overhead. I am also researching a better deal for this as I am confident that this is another area in which costs can be significantly reduced.
- Over the winter I am undertaking a review of the cash handling procedures, including the end-of-day cashing up process. It is hoped that by altering this, and reprogramming the till that we can be more efficient with our cash handling. I will also liaise with Louisa to discuss the type of information we require from the till in order to monitor our Key Performance Indicators more closely.