



# Leigh-on-Sea Town Council

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Chairman: Cllr Carole Mulroney  
Vice Chairman: Cllr Caroline Parker  
Town Clerk: Paul Beckerson

**Q**  
QUALITY  
TOWN  
COUNCIL

## Minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> April 2013, 7.00 pm at Leigh Community Centre, Elm Road

**Present:** Councillors: Carole Mulroney (Chairman), Caroline Parker (Vice Chairman), Mark Bromfield, Margaret Cotgrove, Syrie Cox, Geoff Crawford, Donald Fraser, Richard Herbert, Jerry Holden, Pat Holden, Paul Lawrence, Cliff Passmore, Patsy Ryan, David Stanley and John Wren

Borough Councillors: James Courtney, Alan Crystall, Barry Godwin, Nigel Holdcroft and Lesley Salter.

David Amess M.P., Southend Borough Council Chief Executive Rob Tinlin.

Plus 52 members of the public

### ***The meeting opened at 7.00pm***

#### **1. Chairman's Opening Remarks**

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the Annual Town Meeting, commenting that it was the best attendance at an ATM ever. She then introduced all the Councillors present on the stage.

#### **2. Apologies**

Councillor: Alex Coulson

#### **3. Minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting** were agreed and signed

#### **4. Annual Accounts of the Council year ending March 2012**

The meeting noted the accounts. (Appendix 3 to the Agenda)

#### **5. Details of the balances and expenditure up to date year 2012/13**

The balances were noted and there were no questions. (Appendix 4 to the Agenda)

#### **6. Observations on the Town Council Budget 2013/14**

There were no observations. (Appendix 5 to the Agenda)

#### **7. Annual Reports from Committee Chairmen** (Appendix 1)

Cllr Donald Fraser (Finance and General Purposes Committee)

Cllr Donald Fraser (Community Transport Sub-Committee)

Cllr Paul Lawrence (Allotments Committee)

Cllr Pat Holden (Planning Committee)

Cllr Caroline Parker (Transport and Highways Committee)

Cllr Richard Herbert (Leigh Community Centre Committee)

Cllr Carole Mulroney (Leisure, Foreshore and Environment Committee)

#### **8. Observations from the MP for Southend West David Amess**

David Amess MP thanked both the past Chairman (Pat Holden) and the Chairman (Carole Mulroney) for their work in the last 2 years and praised the Town Council (LTC) for the many activities and events in which it was engaged, and expressed the opinion that LTC was particularly vocal in representing the residents' views on detrimental planning applications. He asked LTC to support Southend's bid to become the City of culture in 2017.

***David Amess MP left the meeting for a prior engagement.***

9. **Annual Report of the Town Council.**

The Chairman of the Council reported on the Council's work during the preceding year. (Attached as Appendix 2)

10. **Good for Leigh Awards**

Presentations were made to Waitrose for their assistance at various events and donating goods for events, Madelaine Murphy for her contribution to art in the town especially the Art Wall that has been created in the Leigh Community Centre (LCC), Tony Prior for his many years of involvement in the town particularly the Folk Festival and Leigh Lions and lastly to David and Heather Green (absent this evening) who had given help to the LCC in practical term and donating equipment.

11. **Observations from Guests**

**Cllr Nigel Holdcroft, Leader Southend Borough Council (SBC)** thanked the Town Council for the work it undertakes on behalf of the residents of Leigh. LTC was an additional pair of eyes which helped the work of SBC from both a planning and environmental perspective. LTC was the only organisation in the SBC that had a democratic mandate. He stated that SBC and LTC didn't always agree but that was democracy.

12. **Resolutions of which written notice has been received**

There were none.

13. **Questions and comments from residents and electors of Leigh-on-Sea**

13.1 **Parking**

The difficulty of parking was raised and if it were possible to have marked bays.

From **Cllr Nigel Holdcroft**

Parking in Leigh had always been difficult; which was one of the reasons for suggesting providing additional parking on the Elm Road site. Due to budget cuts it would not be possible to put in additional markings.

13.2 **Mr Smart**

The electronic bus indicators had not been working for at least 4 months, why was this?

From **Rob Tinlin**

The signs were now obsolete technology and a contract to replace them was currently being let by Essex CC.

13.3 **Lighting on Church Hill**

The fact that the lighting was obscured by foliage was an on-going problem. There were some precarious garden walls along the hill.

From **Rob Tinlin**

Both the foliage and walls were not the responsibility of SBC but they would contact the owners in an effort to address the situation

13.4 **Mr Les Sawyer**

Wanted to know if the street furniture could be subject to a uniform design

From **Rob Tinlin**

There was currently a consultation on street furniture.

13.5 **Sharon Cattermole**

There was some signage and diversions around Prittle Brook, which she felt were in the wrong place. The road had to be entered before the sign was visible not allowing the driver any choice but to proceed.

From **Rob Tinlin**

This signage was to give people warning before the works started and not intended to direct once the works were commenced.

13.6 **Maintenance of Grass Verges**

No parking signs had been removed from grass verges why?

From **Rob Tinlin**

These were a remnant from the Essex Act which was unenforceable. Oak Bollards have been installed at residents' request as these were enforceable. If grass verges

were being parked on SBC Councillors should be informed who will then make recommendations to the SBC.

13.7 **Precept Increase**

Three residents complained about the rise in the precept and that they were paying more than the £5 mentioned.

From **Cllr Richard Herbert & the Chairman**

All figures that had been advertised were based on what a Band D Tax Payer would pay. A brief explanation was given as to how the rise was made up and why it had been necessary. Taking over the LCC, recovering spending from reserves in 2012/13, a new capital fund of £50,000 and a general rise due to inflation.

13.8 **Bus Shelter in Highlands Boulevard**

There was still signage and a Bus Shelter in Highlands Boulevard despite the fact that there were no buses.

From **Rob Tinlin**

The Bus Shelter belonged to LTC and was their responsibility.

14. **Conclusion**

The Chairman thanked those attending and ***closed the meeting at 8.55pm***

**Annual Town Meeting 2013  
Finance & General Purposes Committee Report**

This committee met 11 times during the year. A major function is to keep a close watch on all income and expenditure of the Council. Due to the taking over of Leigh Community Centre in August, our financial responsibilities have greatly increased. Although other committees have their own budgets, F&GPC is required to oversee the whole financial aspect of the Council.

During the autumn F&GPC is heavily involved in formulating the budget for the next financial year, resulting in the precept (the amount collected by the Borough Council), which defines the amount to be paid by residents of the Town Council area.

Band 'D' taxpayers will pay £38.97 for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, an increase of 30p per week.

Apart from finance, F&GPC covers a wide range of activities and matters not dealt with by other committees. There are two Sub-Committees which have separate meetings but report to F&GPC. These are the Licensing Sub-Committee, which met 5 times and the Personnel Sub-Committee (dealing with our responsibilities for all matters concerning our staff) met 8 times.

There are several Working Parties which meet to consider various matters in detail before reporting to F&GPC. The most important is the Governance & Audit Working Party which ensures compliance with Statutory Legislation, together with the requirements of the Internal Auditor and the External Auditor. Consequently, we have received a good Auditor's Report.

CLLR DONALD FRASER

**Annual Town Meeting 2013**

**Community Transport Report**

This award-winning project, which is available to those residents of the Town Council area who are over 60 (and to disabled persons of any age) continues to flourish.

During the year to March 2013 there were 10 minibus outings. Local venues visited for a variety of performances were the Cliffs Pavilion, Palace Theatre, Plaza Centre, Highlands Methodist Church and Leigh Community Centre.

During the summer, visits were made to Wat Tyler Country Park and Tropical Wings Butterfly Park.

Currently we have 157 members.

CLLR DONALD FRASER

**Allotments Report**

Good news again this year, - we have an estimated 440 plot holders on Leigh Town Council's three Allotment sites, which are, Leigh, Manchester Drive and Marshall Close.

In March we signed an Allotment service agreement with the Societies for them to take over the majority of the management for their sites, which is more cost effective to the Council, frees up our staff time and, with their more hands on approach, will benefit the plot holders; this came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

Due to vandalism for many years, in 2011 the Council in conjunction with the Societies started the first phase to erect new fencing to secure the northern boundary, which has had excellent results, this year the second phase will be finished any day soon.

I feel that the Allotments are going from strength to strength with the close networking between LTC and the Committees that support us; we have good tracks to get goods to and from plots, lots of work has been done brightening up the sites and entrances, and more families are taking on plots.

And that's not all, Coffee shops (yes two) a Children's play area, a small library, and all with no extra cost to the tax payer.

I would like to say a big thank you to the Societies and the plot holders for their hard work this year, not only do they help with the day to day running of the Allotments but they also raise funds through B-B-Q'S, open days and many other similar events.

Last but not least, we have our very own Orchard run by David Hammond with help from volunteers. We now have nearly all the Essex varieties of apple that there are, well done David!

I am proud to have been the Chairman this last two years and cannot wait to see what will happen in coming year.

Thank you

Cllr Paul Lawrence

### **Planning Report**

It was through planning applications, in which I had a personal interest, that I started learning more about the planning process and decided that I could maybe use that information for the benefit of Leigh, where I was born and have lived most of my life – and that is how I ended up on Leigh Town Council.

The Planning Committee has 2 meetings a month, in order to meet the Borough's application deadlines.

Whilst we on the Committee all know Leigh, and usually know the application sites from the front, unlike Southend Officers, we are usually unable to go on site. However we are now lucky in that, via the internet, we can see all the aerial and street views of the Town and many hours are spent before the meetings studying these, and the applications, to ensure that we fully understand what is being proposed and the implications it may have.

We have considered about 250 applications in the last year, a few of which caused a lot of public interest and attendance at the meeting. We try to give our residents and visitors the opportunity to express their views, whilst avoiding repetition of the same points or deviation from the planning issues. (Sounds like a popular radio programme!) We always welcome residents taking an interest in planning applications and hope you will let friends and neighbours know that Leigh Town Council discusses and comments on all applications in our parish. These plans are also available to view in our office or on our public computer, and our staff or councillors will try to help with any queries you may have. Although we are not professionally trained, the Borough kindly invites us to their planning training sessions, and we have absorbed quite a bit of understanding of the system over the years. We also like to think that, with our combined personal knowledge of Leigh, we can sometimes point out implications of applications that officers from other areas may not be aware of. And because of that I also believe that the Southend Borough takes what we have to say very seriously.

The Government is drawing up proposals to allow extended permitted development rights, for a trial period, in order, it says, to kick start the building industry. Unfortunately, the downside of this could be that councils and residents will no longer have a say in some relatively large extensions etc which may well have a negative impact on the quality of life for the neighbours. It should also mean that councils will have fewer applications to consider.

We have 4 conservation areas in Leigh where we try to ensure that new proposals will protect, and hopefully enhance, the character of the area. This is also in line with Southend's planning strategy. In Undercliff Gardens which is a special area, although not a designated Conservation area, and in the old Town, we are always fighting to prevent the creeping infill of spaces in order to preserve the open ambience and the public views of the estuary and marshes; these are things that we are privileged to have in Leigh, and it is essential that we do not lose them.

We are receiving an increasing number of applications for the felling or heavy pruning of trees with preservation orders, often to allow for more cars or building. We would ask the Borough to 'refuse' these as far as they can, and to avoid allowing development too close to 'preserved' trees, where that could later justify the felling of the trees; a previously wonderful local tree-filled garden has been destroyed

over the last few years as trees have been sacrificed for the building of exceptionally large houses. We need trees around us for our psychological well-being, to support bio-diversity, and to enhance the quality of the air we breathe.

Something we are aware of with extensions and rooms in the roof, is that these additions may mean greater potential for overlooking of the neighbours, particularly when they are in their gardens; this impact is something that we point out, as nobody really wants to be watched while they are working or relaxing in their garden. Also, deep or high extensions can be very obtrusive to neighbours and, depending on the orientation, they can cut out a considerable amount of daylight, sunlight and warmth to the adjacent properties; if you're thinking of applying for an extension, please think about that and how it might affect your neighbours.

Many residents are putting in run-ups so they may park in their front gardens, but they don't always need planning permission. Whilst this may take cars off the road, it often means that on-street parking is lost to everyone else, even though the first car may be absent all day or not leave the property for days on end. It also often means the loss of traditional front walls and planting from the front garden, both of which would have given character and a softening effect to the property. These run-ups, and inconsiderate parking, both lead to loss of on-street parking, increase in parking stress – and increase in people stress!

We hope we will soon be starting on our local Neighbourhood Plan when we will carefully look at and assess all areas and set our priorities for local development in Leigh, in close consultation with the Borough. We can't stop development, but we can formulate guidance for what we would like, where, so long as it complies with Southend's Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. We will be consulting with our residents about this and would encourage everyone to think about it and put their views forward.

The draft Elm Road Planning Brief Consultation is running at the moment, until 13<sup>th</sup> May, both here, at the Community Centre, and on the Southend website. It is very important that we get this site right and we urge you to respond to the consultation.

Finally I would like to say how good it is that the Grand Hotel, one of the most important buildings in Leigh, will at last be refurbished, smartening up the east end of the Broadway. Let's hope this work is completed as soon as possible.

Cllr Pat Holden

### **Report for Transport & Highways**

Over recent years much has been accomplished in terms of transport and highways. Working alongside Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, we act as a conduit for issues which you raise. This past year has not been quite so productive. However, we do still receive lots of 'feedback' from the public one way or another and so always have objectives in hand.

The most important work undertaken in 2012-13 was the complete refurbishment of all the Town Council's bus shelters, panels replaced etc. plus a new bus shelter in Leigh Road and another in Grand Drive, after many requests from members of the public.

In an additional effort to keep Leigh clean and tidy a new bin was installed on Belton Hills and another at the top of Eastwood Road and one outside the Community Centre. Along the London Road, outside the cemetery, a new dog bin was also installed.

During the year many calls are received at our offices regarding issues which concern members of the public i.e. cars, overhanging driveways, better street lighting, speeding in certain side roads, resurfacing, road works, to name but a few plus that old chestnut parking! Not forgetting double yellow lines – either we have too many or not enough.

The Olympics was a huge event last year and Leigh was in the thick of it. We were pleased to be involved with the use of our station and we managed with others to persuade C2C to spruce up the station with flower baskets inside on all platforms and some flower baskets outside. We are just awaiting a new seat outside the station now.

One of my aims in the coming year is to see some uniformity in relation to bollards. There are at least 12 different varieties and colours within one square mile alone in Leigh. I don't think an aspiring city of culture should display a selection of industrial, town and country bollards along its highways and byways in the centre of town, and especially in Leigh with its historical context.

This concludes my report for the year. I would just like to express my thanks to my Committee and our staff as well as all the staff in the Highways Department at Southend-on-Sea Borough Council for their assistance throughout the year.

Thank you

Cllr Caroline Parker

### **Report of Community Centre Committee**

In the summer of 2011 the leadership of SBC announced their "vision" for the Community Centre, a multi storey car park. We at LTC had a different vision. We saw the Community Centre as a vital part of our culture, heritage and community. We had previously carried out a survey and knew that thousands of our residents visit community facilities every week, we consulted you and 90% wanted to keep the centre and 85% said that they were prepared to pay extra to keep it!

At the Council meetings where we decided to try to take on this project not a single councillor spoke against it and everyone voted for it. We were taking a huge risk but thought it was worth it. We put everything we could into this project and Councillors worked tirelessly and for no financial reward to get everything ready to open the doors. Leigh Town Councillors claim no expenses or allowances.

By August 2012 we had been granted a 5 year lease, a very short lease, and moved in opening our doors to the public on the 1<sup>st</sup> September full of hope and excitement for this new major project but also trepidation that it might not work out as we hoped, there were so many unknowns.

So how has it worked out so far?

In our first six months we have had 40,000 visits. We celebrated our 2,000th booking at the beginning of March. We have introduced art and culture, working with Metal Culture and local artists (Metal's Cafe Valise is a huge success). We have had concerts, film with |White Bus Cinema, mother and toddler groups, University of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Age, fitness and yoga, training courses and language classes and art classes. We painted a black board on the wall to list the days' events, already it is too small there is so much going on.

In the coming year we will be catering for weddings and functions, there will be regular craft and antiques fairs, more performances and concerts and the range of activities will continue to expand. We expect at least 100,000 visits in the next 12 months.

Money is still very tight and we still have to fight for the long term future, plans for a car park have not disappeared, so we still have to fight for a long term lease. We have already proven that the residents of Leigh value and use their community centre. We can show that it is financially viable within the level of support the community of Leigh is prepared to devote to it, so come on Southend, grant us a long term lease and let us continue to give to Leigh what Leigh truly deserves and needs.

### **Community Centre**

#### **Vision for the Future**

The Community Centre has got off to a successful start. 40,000 visits in the first six months! We have some problems, not the least of which is the very short term of our lease which prevents us from being able to access the various grants and funds which would be available to a community project such as this. We have, of course, ambitious plans but we have to work with the resources and funds available to us. We do not have the millions that SBC can devote to culture centres at the end of the pier or museums for Saxon Kings but what we do have is a fantastic community spirit here in Leigh and the sheer number of people using the centre and their positive comments clearly confirm our survey, the vast majority of the residents of Leigh value and cherish their community centre and support us in what we are trying to do.

In the short term we are looking to spruce up the outside of the building which has had very little spent on it in recent years and is looking rather tired.

Inside our “Friends”, the volunteer group working with us, will be redecorating and refurbishing the rooms. This main hall will become “The Leigh Recital Hall” and be equipped with sound and lighting equipment and a better stage to make it more suited to performance of all kinds. We are currently raising money for curtains (all donations gratefully received).

Upstairs we shall be concentrating on our two larger rooms, 7 & 4 to make them more suitable for smaller events, performance etc. and in particular for functions such as family birthdays and especially weddings. We are licensed to conduct weddings here and have put together a complete package so that couples can marry and celebrate their weddings here in the heart of their community.

All this we hope to achieve in the next 12 months.

Long term we are fighting to persuade SBC to grant us a long lease so that we can renovate and improve this building and bring it up to a modern standard for the future. It is a very old building, the heating system is creaking, the layout is far from perfect but it is full of character and history and we love it.

Our “vision” for the future is so much more than a car park surrounded by flats.

We want to see the Community Centre go forward into the future as the thriving centre which it clearly is. We would like to see civic services such as the Police, Library, Youth Services preserved here in Leigh, perhaps in a refurbished and extended building here on this site. We would like to see this civic building be the heart of the Community of Leigh, the first port of call for help and advice and access to community services, the social and cultural hub of our community.

Please help us to keep this heart beating and support us in our quest for a long term future for the community centre.

Cllr Richard Herbert

### **Leisure Foreshore and Environment Report**

As always LFE has had a very busy year.

Perhaps the highlight of our event calendar in 2012 was the Jubileigh celebration in the Library Gardens. It truly was a magical night and so many people turned out. Our thanks to Leigh Lions who partnered us on the project.

All of our events have been tremendous successes and it is thanks to a dedicated bunch of councillors who work with the events officer to bring these to the people. And the people play their part by turning up to support us. We are very grateful for that support and are trying every year to involve more people and organisations in our events so that there is something for everyone.

We already get a lot of help from outside organisations like the Venture Scouts and local churches but there is always scope for more involvement.

The Committee also runs the Old Town Community Group which is a mixture of businesses, residents and other organisations all with a strong presence in the Old Town who come together on a regular basis. It is a chance for those at the coal face to make sure their concerns for the Old Town and heard.

This year has seen a breakthrough in the Strand Wharf project in that the long and laborious issues relating to highways over the wharf have been resolved. We had hoped to be getting on with the project itself by now but in these times of austerity we have taken the prudent view that we should review the project to make sure it is still value for money and fit for purpose. It is a long term aspiration of the Council to refurbish the Wharf and I am hopeful that it will proceed in the near future.

Donald Fraser has presented a short report on the programme of the Community Transport Sub-Committee who have once again done sterling work over the year for our elderly and disabled



residents. Much thanks has to go to our Senior Administrator Vivien Choppen who searches out the events and organises all the transport.

On the environmental side we have become increasingly concerned about a few properties in the town which have seen better days but with the will on the part of the owners could be brought back into good repair and enhance their surroundings. The Borough Council does have some powers to make this happen so we will continue to push for these to be used in appropriate situations.

The skate park continues to be a great success with our younger residents and this year we carried out a programme of maintenance and repairs to ensure its continued suitability and use.

As part of our litter pick campaign we started up a small group who on a regular basis do a tidy up of Leigh Road Cemetery and our Leigh in Front competition found a worthy winner again this year.

So from the Committee I would like to extend my thanks to our staff, particularly Vanda the events officer, fellow councillors and other organisations and people who have helped us in the last year and to say I look forward to working with the you in the coming year.

### **LFE Vision**

The LFE committee has a very strong vision of what it wants to achieve for Leigh in the future.

This year we took a momentous decision not to hold the Fishing Festival in 2013. Of course there was some criticism that was inevitable. But our view and that of others was that we cannot just keep regurgitating the same thing year on year. We have to be more inclusive, we have to work with other people and we have to ring the changes and improve and enhance everything we do. This is what I believe we are doing by taking time out to come back in 2014 with a Maritime Festival which does all of those things and opens up Leigh and our part of the estuary to more people, more organisations and shows Leigh off to its best.

Last year was a great year for the country and 2013 will be too with the celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Coronation. And Leigh will celebrate again at an event where we will be working with the Lions as we did last year to bring the celebrations to as many people as possible. The event is set for 14 July which those of you who know your French history will know is Bastille Day, the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille which was a symbol of the uprising of the people. Now I'm not advocating revolution but I am advocating that you all rise up and come to the best party in Town.

But events aside our new Streets Ahead coupled with our Leigh in Front competitions and our Good for Leigh Awards are showing our appreciation for the work and effort put in to caring and looking after the environment of Leigh.

This town and the estuary are so important for all of us and the vision of LFE for the coming year is enhancement, improvement and caring for the town we live and work in.

Cllr Carole Mulroney

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL 2012/13**

### Chairman's report

First of all I would like to thank all the councillors and staff who have supported me during my year as chairman. It has been a challenging year and people have worked very hard to get to this point tonight. I would also like to particularly thank Major John Carmichael who has acted as the Council's chaplain this year. He has been a great support for the right word at the right time and I am deeply grateful to him.

There are many other people who have worked with me or against me over the year, too numerous to mention so I won't try but suffice to say you all have my thanks.

All of the Committee Chairmen have told you about the work of their committees over the last year and what their thoughts are for the future. Now it's my turn as Chairman to give you my take on the year and my hopes and aspirations for the future – if you like - my Vision for Leigh.

Well my vision for Leigh focuses on one word – Community. My ancestors have been part of this community for over 300 years and I am very proud of Leigh and my heritage. I treasure what to me it stands for, friendliness, high standards and caring about the place you live in - our community.

The diversity in this town is amazing, from our churches, who work so closely together to our many many groups and Societies who welcome people to their doors to learn, play, talk and come together as a community.

Our businesses, be they shops, restaurants or offices who offer an individuality which is becoming a rarity these days. These are what make a community. The fact you know your postman and you'll support him when services are threatened, you care about where your kids go on a Friday night and will come together as a community to provide a facility for them. You offer help and support to those who need it.

Community is working together for the greater good.

Leigh offers this to all generations and I want the Town Council to be at the forefront ready, willing and able, without any political bias, to speak up for its residents, listen to their concerns and where we can do something about them. We can't please everyone but both councillors and staff will do their best.

I was determined when I became chairman to improve the profile and the voice of Leigh, not Leigh Town Council, but Leigh. I wanted to make sure we as a \Council did more things that people could relate to and make everyone feel they had a stake in Leigh's future

We started small but we are thinking big. For many years there has been the cry of 'what does Leigh Town Council do for us'. Well now you know.

Taking on this Community Centre has been an absolutely massive task. We are not business people heck – what did I know, I'm just an Essex girl.

Well one thing I do know is that it was wholly the right thing to do.

When the Town Council decided to go for it the pass was sold. We couldn't be half hearted about it, we couldn't tinker with it, we couldn't walk away if things went wrong, we had to make it work. Otherwise you could truthfully have said 'what does Leigh Town Council do for us'.

Actually the Town Council did quite a few things before the Community Centre came on the scene and still does – They all help in some small measure to make Leigh a better place. We are a sounding board and a point of contact for residents and businesses and that contact as a Council has gone up 3 fold since we moved into this building. We are accessible, if people want to speak to a councillor invariably there is one here and our staff understand what community means and treat everyone with respect and a ready ear.

We took a brave decision in coming here.

Consultation is never easy - someone always complains they didn't know about it even when you give the best publicity you can. We did our best within our means to consult the town before we went ahead with the project; we even asked if you were prepared to pay more for it. – How brave was that? You gave us your answer then and you continue to give it to us every day the doors of this building are open.

When we were considering the budget this year and were looking at what we used to do, what we had achieved this year and what we wanted for the future. We didn't want to have done nothing more than the same thing every year with no vision, no aspirations and no hope of anything better.

It's a hard decision in any year to raise the precept but even harder in times such as these. 68% sounds awful until you step back from it and remember if you start from the ground every increase is going to be huge. After all 1+1 is a 100% increase. And 68% what does it really mean – 30p a week extra, 75p in total a week and £39 a year. It is for you to decide whether that is money well spent. I think it is.

I believe we gave you what you wanted - this Community Centre and all we ask is that you continue to give us what we need – your support.

We may not always get it right but we'll have a damn good go at it and we will always put in 110%.

That is a promise I make on behalf of this Council.

And what of the future, our future – working as a community. The coming year is going to be another one where hard work and diligence is going to be needed both on the Town Council and in the Town. We understand the dilemma the Borough Council is in but that doesn't mean we should just roll over. The fight is on to save our beloved library for the town it has served since 1928. Let me state here – Leigh Town Council supports the retention of all of the libraries but we have to look after our own. This is a great example of people coming together, young and old, using social media like twitter and 'facebook' or people just talking to each other because they care and want to keep something they cherish not just for themselves but for future generations.



This cartoon appeared in the Southend and Westcliff Graphic on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1909 the doctor is telling Old Man Leigh 'What you want to make you better are new public offices, a bank, tennis courts, boating club, harriers club, and a free library' Well we got the new public offices in 1911 only to lose them in 1913, banks well like it or not we have them, Harriers - there are plenty of them, and we have a boating club. The tennis club sadly has gone and how sad is it 104 years on that we are obliged to fight to keep our library. It is ever as much a necessity for the healthy pulse of Leigh as it was in 1909.

Next year this building is 100 years old and that anniversary coincides with a much larger commemoration of the start of the First World War – Leigh Town Council will be commemorating both of these events as a community and in remembrance. 100 years ago this building was seen as enhancing the status of the town – 100 years later it is doing it again.

On display tonight are the proposals for the Elm Road site. You have a chance to comment on these over the next few weeks. Don't put it off – now is the hour. The future of this area is vital for Leigh to progress as a town. But progress does not mean we have to start from ground level. We need to cherish and enhance those areas we care about and which form part of the Town that my ancestors grew up in and our children today take as part of their life and will pass on to their children. That is sustainability in action.

So there is much to look forward to and much hard work to be done. Leigh is bigger than the Town Council but the Town Council gives Leigh a voice and working as a community we can all make sure that voice is heard. And the challenge I pass on to whoever is chairman in the coming year is 'don't drop the baton'.

Thank you for your support.

Cllr Carole Mulronev – Chairman 2012/13