

MAYOR'S REPORT – COUNCILLOR CHRIS FERGUSON

“Since 17 May 2006, I have had the honour of serving and representing the people of Liskeard as Mayor and Chairman of the Town Council. This is my report to those citizens.

Councillors and Staff

There have been few changes in Council staff and no new Councillors, although four Councillors are standing down at this election. When necessary and as requested staff have attended courses relevant to their employment. Procedures have been altered where necessary to reflect current legislation and best practice. We aim to continue training for both staff and Councillors in the future to enhance knowledge and skills. This is particularly pertinent to members of the new Planning Committee, which although a great success places a demand for specialist knowledge on those Councillors.

The Property Committee

This has been Councillor John Goldsworthy's last year as a Councillor and Chairman of this committee; he steps down at this election after 42 years. We are immensely grateful to John and will miss his knowledge, wisdom and experience. Our buildings remain in good condition due to the care of our staff and diligence of the Property Committee, routine planned maintenance ever continues, whilst we are in the process of replacing some windows in the Long Room. The Council have recently engaged in a long-term lease of the Guild Hall with Robert Winter Associates, which should be profitable to both parties. Bookings for the Public Hall complex have increased and considerably offset the cost of running such a large building. The Arcade shops remain fully let, with one change of lease in the past year.

Local Amenities Committee

For the past year this committee has been chaired by Councillor Sandra Preston our previous Mayor who succeeds Councillor Anne Purdon. Vandalism throughout the town but especially in Rapson's Field and Thorn Park continue to cause problems, however, we are working with the Police and Youth Outreach team to improve the situation. We have come to the conclusion that the equipment in Thorn Park is reaching the end of its useful life, and have applied for grant funding to ensure that we have new equipment that meets the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. The Amenities Committee are also responsible for street furniture which includes Bus Shelters and seats, as well as the Allotments in Pengover Road. Six monthly meetings between the Plottolders and the Amenities Committee ensure that Councillors are made aware of outstanding and possible issues. There is an expanding waiting list for allotment plots, as a result of which Councillors are seeking suitable areas of land for new allotments.

Town Information Centre and Liskeard and District Museum

The TIC continues to be staffed by two part-time paid employees. The staff ensure that they are kept up to date with what is happening in the area and hold tickets for the Eden Project, the Theatre Royal and other local events tickets including the Royal Cornwall Show.

The Museum is run wholly by hard working volunteers led by Heather Medlen our Honorary Curator and under the supervision of the Museum Committee, chaired by Councillor Roger Holmes.

There is a great deal of expertise among the volunteers who put on a different exhibition every

month as well as working with school parties. The Museum and Council belong to several local and national organisations to ensure that the highest standards are met.

As Mayor I have represented Liskeard at events as diverse as the reformation of our Scout Troop and the annual London Cornish Association Dinner, a 100th birthday celebration and a day out on HMS Cornwall. I have also been active in instigating regular meetings of the five Caradon Mayors which has had the beneficial effect of ensuring that we know each others' positions and where necessary speak with the same voice. My Deputy Mayor – Councillor Anne Purden has been a hard working and capable deputy, standing in at events I could not attend as well as carrying out a vast range of other work for the town.

The Council

One of the great strengths of Liskeard Town Council is its preparedness and ability to work with other organisations such as the County and District Councils, the Chamber of Commerce and in particular the Town Forum. Thanks to Forum Chairman – Nick Mallard and others, it is a great asset to the town. In a joint venture, we have fifty or so people working together to produce a plan that will ensure that the town will continue to survive and flourish in the year 2025 despite almost doubling in size.

All of us have worked with the Town Clerk to ensure that Liskeard qualifies for Quality Council status and I am confident that this will be achieved in the next few months.

The Town Council rarely takes a political stance; the implications and enactment of the Local Government White Paper have however forced it to do so. Irrespective of political allegiance, Councillors believe that changes are needed in Local Government, but we do not believe that a Unitary Authority is the best way of achieving this.

The Council remains attentive to the wishes and needs of local people, representing those wishes and needs where and when appropriate.

Conclusion

The past year has been one of change with new demands placed on Parish and Town Councils by higher tiers of government. I am confident that the policies and practices laid down by this Council will be beneficial to its successor in the years ahead.

It is unfortunate that volunteers appear to be rare; we feel this especially on the Town Council both with fewer people wanting to become Councillors and also with our dwindling number of Museum Volunteers. Despite this, both the Museum and the Council as a whole appears to work well, receiving favourable comments from other organizations.

Liskeard Town Council is I believe good value for money, we have worked hard to achieve more for less, whilst what we seek to achieve is always of good quality”.