

**WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - SEPT 2013**  
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**or 445540)**

**General issues**

You may remember that a couple of months back I informed you of the proposals to introduce a scheme that could provide you with cheaper energy bills, that time has now arrived for those of you who wish to avail themselves of its potential benefits. We have now launched our [Switched-On Hastings scheme](#). The aim is to secure cheaper energy bills for local residents. Anyone that pays their own household electricity or gas bills including those on pre-payment meters can register their interest in the scheme. By providing the largest possible number of registered residents we will aim to get the best collective deal out of an auction with the energy companies.

The lowest tariff wins the auction and this is then offered to those who have registered. Once the auction has taken place on 16 October, personal letters and emails will be sent to each registered resident explaining what the lowest offer is. There is no obligation to accept the offer but hopefully there will be some significant reductions on offer.

You will need a copy of your latest energy bill to hand so you can enter details online of your current tariff and energy usage. If you are on a prepayment meter, you will need to provide an estimate of how much you spend. This information will help determine how much you could save if you switched to the winning tariff. Whilst registration is easiest online via the council's website, local residents who don't have internet access can sign up at the Community Contact Centre, at Hastings Town Hall, Monday to Friday from 4.30pm to 6.00pm.

Hastings Borough Council has defended the town after a BBC reporter suggested that there is nothing to do in Hastings.

BBC reporter, Tom Esslemont commented in his report for national BBC news bulletins on bank holiday Monday that "apart from taking in the sea air there is not much else to do" in Hastings. We as a council were dismayed to hear the reporters' comments and we have issued an invitation to Mr Esslemont to come down to Hastings and see just exactly what there is on offer. It was an astounding comment to make that "there is nothing much to do in Hastings" when over three million tourists visit us each year.

We were unsure if Mr Esslemont has really ever spent any time in Hastings other than to make his report. We invited him to visit on 14 or 15 September to enjoy our Seafood and Wine festival, a mouth-watering weekend of delicious seafood, award winning local wines and music. If that doesn't whet his appetite he could always come any Saturday evening and enjoy the free entertainment at the Stade Open Space or indeed to any one of our other festivals; Hastings Bonfire Night, the internationally renowned Jack in The Green festival – in fact, he could come any time and enjoy what this incredibly diverse, creative town has to offer on a weekly basis. We have had a lot of people report back to us, residents and visitors alike to express their disappointment about the negative, throw away comments Mr Esslemont has made. We have had messages from people who have been here on holiday commenting on this report and explaining how upset they are as they have had a tremendous time here in Hastings.

Work has begun on an £8million project to provide a modern library and registration service for the people of Hastings. Planning permission and listed building consent have been granted, giving East Sussex County Council the green light to develop the existing facility in the Brassey Institute and expand into the building next door, 12 Claremont. Contractors started work on September 2nd carrying out initial inspections, internal work and surveys. The new library will offer a better opportunity for learning and skills, a great space to display and promote stock and increased access to information and computers. "This scheme further demonstrates the council's commitment to improving the service and is another example of the county council's multi-million pound investment in libraries. The development will allow the children's library to move into the main building which will provide better access to facilities for families, including space for popular rhyme-times and other events.

The Registration Service will be moved from its current location in Bohemia Road into the new building. This development, based in the town, will be easily accessible by public transport and will contribute to the regeneration of Hastings by encouraging people to visit the area and use the wide range of services on offer. There are several phases to the project and work on the new library is expected to be completed by spring 2015.

For more information about the new library visit  
[www.eastsussex.gov.uk/hastingslibrary](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/hastingslibrary)

Hopefully a new proposal by ESCC will bring some common sense into that often frustrating scenario of road works. The disruption to everyday life that seems never ending, and the suffering from the curse of duplication as one utility company after another appear to dig up the same length of road should become a thing of the past. The Government has now approved a joint proposal by East Sussex County Council and Surrey County Council for utility companies to apply for permits before work begins. Previously companies only had to inform the councils that road works would take place. The initiative, called the South East Permit Scheme, will start this winter, it will mean that rather than simply informing us of road works, companies will now have to request permission to work in a road, for a specific period and purpose. Should two different companies want to work on the same road they would be asked to carry out their work at the same time, resulting in the road being closed once only. Hopefully this will bring some form of co-ordination to a situation that has over the years, deteriorated into an apparent free for all, total disruption to the ordinary motorist, and a significant financial loss to many businesses.

Another problem that continues to come to my attention is the lighting of bonfires at unreasonable times, and using materials that quite often can produce deleterious by products of combustion. Many people light bonfires in Autumn, but before you do please consider how this might affect your neighbours. It's a good idea to speak to them about it first, as the smoke and fumes from a bonfire can be annoying, or even worse. HBC discourages the burning of household and garden waste as bonfires can be anti-social, cause air pollution, and effect people with heart conditions, asthma or bronchitis. Burning plastic, rubber or painted materials creates noxious fumes that can give off a range of poisonous compounds. Smoke and ash from bonfires can cause annoyance for your neighbours and prevent them from using their garden, hanging out washing or opening their windows. There are no specific byelaws prohibiting garden bonfires or the times at which they can be lit, however under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 smoke and ash from bonfires that effects your neighbours can be classed as a statutory nuisance. If a council officer is satisfied that a nuisance exists then formal action in the form of an abatement notice may be taken. Failure to comply with such a notice can result in prosecution in the Magistrates Court, and should the situation persists it could lead to a fine of up to £5,000 if found guilty. Industrial or commercial waste emitting black smoke is dealt with under the Clean Air Act 1993. Smoke from a bonfire that is allowed to drift across a road can lead to a fine under section 161A of the Highways Act 1980, if it endangers

traffic or causes injury. You should contact the Police if this is the case. If you are bothered by smoke from a bonfire it might be advisable to approach your neighbour, as they may not be aware of the problems they are causing. If this fails Environmental Health should be notified. Telephone: 01424 451079.

Alternatively here is a link to a bonfire nuisance reporting form on

[www.hastings.gov.uk](http://www.hastings.gov.uk)

## **Local Issues**

Our group continues to speak out against the closure of the Isabel Blackman Centre, which remains as the only mainstream ESCC run adult day care centre in the Town. I am the first to recognise the need to save money, and in this case a significant sum that will not be realised by reductions in the office paper clips and pencils, but as with the proposals to cut the Ridge Fire Station last year, these cuts have to be found in areas of the budget away from front line services. The tremendous advances in medical science has guaranteed that the one increasing group amongst us will be the elderly. And for some of this group advancing years can mean loneliness, virtual detention in their own home, and it is this model of social care provided by the IBC that delivers that precious gift for them of human companionship. It also provides respite for the army of devoted carers without who's attentions many of these people would be placing further financial calls upon the state by way of residential care provision. After a major refurbishment just three years ago, followed by a searching review of the service model, it makes no economic or logistical sense to dispense with a facility that is absolutely functional, and fundamental to the lives of so many of our most vulnerable citizens. Having done some in depth research on the building and discovering its basis in two charities, Sarah, Countess Waldegrave and subsequently the Isabel Blackman Foundation, I find it extremely difficult to believe that its future could lie in any direction other than for the benefit of the community. The fight will continue until this County Council in Lewes recognises that it has responsibilities towards the most vulnerable in society that cannot be abdicated when relief from financial pressures on this centre could be found in another direction.

Two highway reviews have been going on with regard to the Old Town – one for High Street and a more general one to review the impact of the highway changes that were introduced on the Bourne and Rock-a-Nore Road as part of the Stade redevelopment and any spin-offs from that into other streets. A public meeting was held some time ago to talk through ideas to make High Street more pedestrian friendly and also to prevent it being used as

an alternative to the A259. County Council highway engineers have been working up some proposals for High Street and intend to present them at a public exhibition in the Old Town at St. Mary Star of the Sea, Church Hall, between 2pm and 8pm on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> October and between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup>. The more general review of traffic management in the Old Town has been conducted by Amey on behalf of the County Council. They spent some considerable time at several key points in the Old Town conducting further traffic survey work over the Summer season. Amey will be commuting this data into useful information, and coming forward with some traffic flow enhancement proposals during the Autumn.

By later October new collection arrangements will kick-in for all our waste and recycling. Leaflets preparing everyone have already started to go out. The changes will include doorstep collection of glass, the acceptance of nearly all plastics, tetrapaks etc. in the recycling, and the distribution of 7,000 seagull-proof bags to most properties in the black bag areas. These changes will be coming in from 21<sup>st</sup> October although the new boxes for glass and the seagull-proof bags should be distributed before then. The aim of time is to almost double Hastings recycling rate to 50%. The aim is also to improve street cleanliness by having our waste in bins or in the new seagull-proof bags.

On 18<sup>th</sup> October along the police the council will be launching a ban on the sale of the heavy duty beers and ciders – above 6.5%. The ban will affect all off-licenses in Central St Leonards, the town centre and the Old Town. Although it is a voluntary ban it will be backed up with the power to review the licenses of any establishment that doesn't join in and then attracts nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

Please do not hesitate to contact myself with any concerns that you might have with regards to the ward, and are within my gift to resolve.

*Kind Regards John Hodges*