

WARD REPORT - OLD HASTINGS - MARCH 2014
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or 445540)

General Issues

Over the recent months there have been a number of examples of local schools failing at an Ofsted inspection and being taken into special measures, or severely downgraded in their classification. This form of inspection is no respecter of reputations or status within the hierarchy of educational delivery. Certainly one of the mightiest to have fallen was the Sussex Coast College Hastings, but what a recovery. Fantastic efforts from the Principal and everyone else connected with the College have returned an Ofsted finding ranging from good through to outstanding, a just reward for a dedicated team of professionals. Perhaps at the other end of the scale, but just as important for the children starting their journey through the education system, another magnificent success has been achieved by All Saints Junior School. A previous Ofsted inspection had identified All Saints as a failing school and placed it in special measures, which obviously came as a bitter disappointment to all of those connected with this long standing institution. Just a few weeks ago the school was inspected once again by Ofsted, but on this occasion it achieved the best possible result given the history of underachievement when judged against the new inspection framework.

The school received Good judgements for Teaching, Behaviour, Leadership and Management and also recognition that current rates of pupil progress are good. An overall judgement was delivered "is Requiring Improvement", as achievement of last years' Year 6 was no better than the national average. There is also recognition that work still remains for our current Years 5 and 6 to catch up lost ground. In addition to the headlines, the report acknowledges the following aspects which have been achieved as a result of changes made since January 2013:

- Pupil achievement has improved significantly over the last year;
- Recent acceleration of pupil progress;
- Substantial improvements to quality of teaching;
- Curriculum strengths which promote the love of learning;
- Respectful, inclusive and welcoming ethos;
- Positive relationships abound, SMSC a strength;

- Strong sense of consistency and common purpose despite the changeover of staff.

Leaders have been acknowledged for establishing high expectations and for their capacity and ability to continue to drive school improvement. Although those involved with this success are pleased with the recognition of a very positive inspection, they are committed to continuing the journey of improvement, with the aim of the school providing an outstanding education for all of its pupils. In confirming that the school is no longer in special measures, the report goes on to recognise the hard work and commitment of Karen Bye the Head Teacher, children, staff, parents, the Interim Executive Board and the Diocese, all dedicated to the achievement of quality education at All Saints. For those of you who would like to read the full report it can be found at www.allsaints-jun.e-sussex.sch.uk.

The Hastings Planning Strategy was adopted at Full Council on 19 February 2014. This is the document that sets the long term plan to deliver regeneration and growth in the town, and the policies within now hold full weight in the determination of planning applications. Adoption of the Planning Strategy also means that some of the policies in the 2004 Local Plan are now superseded and should no longer be used. A list of these superseded policies is available on the website, alongside the 2004 Local Plan documents at http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/hastings_local_plan/.

If you have any queries about how these policies affect current planning applications, please contact the Development Management Team on 01424 451090 or email dcenquiries@hastings.gov.uk

Consultation on a revised version of the Development Management Plan runs from 9.30am on Monday 10 March until 4.30pm on Tuesday 22 April 2014. This revised Plan contains updates to the proposed site allocations and development management policies, and replaces the version dated January 2013. This is the final chance for people to comment before the Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State for Independent Examination. For more information about the consultation, to find out how to make representations, and to see how any previous representations made are being dealt with, please go to

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/environment_planning/planning/localplan/consultation/.

Another aspect of life that we as a council recognise as tremendously important to a young person's future contribution to society is the right to play. This is a part of life recognised not only by the United Nations, but by such redoubtable figures as David Lloyd George and Nelson Mandela who himself said "There can be no keener revelation of society's soul than the way in which it treats its children". Play is an essential part of a happy, healthy childhood and is recognised by Hastings Borough Council as vitally important to the wellbeing of Hastings, both economically and environmentally. There are some shocking statistics attached to childhood and life itself, none more so than the statistical prediction that a child born and growing up in Hastings can expect to live nearly five years less than someone in Lewes, just 30 miles away, where average incomes are much higher. This cannot be right, and we recognise the importance of lifelong benefits that children gain from play.

We have achieved a tremendous amount over the past 17 years, including our summer 'Play Day' events which attract up to 4 000 local people at each event, and we've helped refurbish seven existing playgrounds and create four new ones. Our new strategy builds on the good work of recent years and should ensure that children's needs and wishes about play are heard and promote the importance of play for all children and young people. It should also improve and extend the range, quality and accessibility of free play opportunities across the town by working with partners to maximise the opportunities to attract external funding for play. Perhaps the finest attributes that can prepare children for a full life, that come quite innocently out of play, are resilience, and those all important interpersonal skills that simply allow you to get along with others.

Hot on the heels of our most recent accolade that saw Hastings adjudged as the greenest town or city in the UK, our residents have now been recognised as being the most musically sophisticated as well. The award of this latest crown was based upon the responses from 94,000 participants, spread across the nation, who answered questions on their musical background and musical habits, and took part in a range of objective musical tests for the study carried out by researchers from Goldsmiths, University of London and BBC Lab UK. Although this is great news for Hastings, it is not really a surprise. We have so many great musical events in the town which showcase our exceptional musicians. Indeed we have just had the five day Fat Tuesday Festival which

celebrates local musical talent and up and coming bands. Whilst a few hundred yards along the seafront we saw the 107th year of the Hastings Musical Festival, a three week festival including instrumental, singing, dance and speech and drama, and of course we also hosted the Hastings International Piano Concerto Competition with its final held on Saturday March 8th. And then we have the International Composers Festival later in the year, with local resident, concert pianist and composer Polo Piatti as the founder and artistic director. With all of these fabulous festivals, and almost nightly performances of musical talent provided in the pubs and restaurants of the Town, such a result must almost have been a foregone conclusion.

There has been much consternation in the press of late concerning the Rock a Nore car park. I thought that it might be a good idea to put this story into context with the facts that surround the situation. The reason for partial closure was caused by the creation of deep pot holes in one part, and the loss of the front section to a depth of six inches of stones driven there by a series of storms. Clearly these conditions made the car park both unusable and unsafe, and our Officers acted with good sense in protecting the public from these hazards. Sometime at the turn of the year an order was placed upon the contractor to carry out the annual repairs to the surface, carried out in sections to minimise disruption, and brought forward by some six weeks in comparison to other years. The earliest available date for the works to commence was Feb 17th, we were fully aware that this was half term week and that is why the work was staggered and the available parking managed. Clearly the major factor in all of this, and indeed the root cause of the problem, was weeks of atrocious weather. Yes, there is funding within our business plan to lay down a metalled surface on this car park, but it is a very large sum of money and there are many calls upon our funds that may produce a greater benefit for Hastings. It is a decision that will be considered by the Charity Committee strictly on a basis of the most effective use of our assets, and not as a knee jerk reaction to an adverse press that we have all become used to living with.

There is so much good news and accolades that continue to attach themselves to Hastings, a tribute to the talent that abounds in our Town, that yet another success becomes almost de rigeuer for being part of the local scene. But this one is a little off of the mainstream. Since 2010 Hastings Brewery has been producing beer, not any old beer but one that addressed a gap in the market and created a product for vegans who enjoyed a drink. Yes, in simple terms beer without fish, no isinglass (fish swim bladders used as finings to clear the beer), a creation without the use of animal products. This

product proved to be very popular, winning several awards for the brewery and promoting their growth to the point where they moved into larger and more modern premises. Finally this month national recognition has come the way of this superb local brewery. At SIBA's (Society of Independent Brewers) National BeerX, held in Sheffield and open to all 723 current members, Hastings Brewery took the gold medal for their "Hastings Porter", and then went on to take a silver medal with this product in the competition for the overall best beer in the UK. But this is not just about beer, this all about employment with the jobs that these small breweries create, it is all about exports with currently 21% of SIBA's members already exporting, and a strong belief that this industry has a role to play in correcting our adverse balance of payments.

All of you with an interest in History will know that 2016 marks the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, which of course took place in 1066, a date that is said to be the most famous in English history. Here in Hastings we are already getting ready to celebrate 2016, we have already committed £300 000 of our own money to plan for and hold events, and we have ambitious plans to improve Hastings Castle, the first Norman castle in England. But we think that marking the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings is an event of national significance, as the 900th anniversary was in 1966. A series of commemorative stamps was issued then, which I understand are still popular with collectors today. I know that the Royal Mail regularly issues special stamps to mark important anniversaries and, indeed, the Royal Mint now also issue special coins for the same reason. These special issues take a very long time to plan. Hastings Borough Council have therefore already written to the Chief Executives of both organisations to ask them to consider issuing special stamps and coins in 2016 to celebrate this most famous date in English history, and indeed, to celebrate the battle which gave us the English language and the basis of our legal system.

Yet another annual event that takes place in Hastings, this time in the middle of Winter, and is always nationally reported is our Chess Congress. Chess was introduced to Hastings by the Normans and the present Congress grew out of the great interest in chess shown in the 1880's. A group of business men formed the Hastings and St Leonards Chess Club and Herbert Dobell was elected Secretary, which proved to be a significant event for the whole chess world. His vision meant that regular regional matches were held and County matches were played at Hastings for the first time. An annual

festival was started which included lectures and exhibitions and the strength of the club increased. This paved the way for the great Hastings Tournament of 1895, still regarded as probably the greatest chess tournament ever held. Over the years all the world champions except Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov have played at Hastings. Today the Chess Congress, supported by Hastings Borough Council remains one of the highlights of the chess calendar and is very well received by all. Indeed, Mr Croft from Margate recently wrote to the Mayor of Hastings, Cllr Alan Roberts to express his thoughts as follows "I would like to congratulate Hastings Borough Council for your magnificent support, in ensuring that the oldest Chess Congress in the world doesn't disappear from the chess calendar as it surely would have done many years ago but for your generosity and farsightedness. Every Chess player in the country, no, that is insufficient, every chess player in the world should be saluting you today. To each and every one of you – well done!" It's great to receive letters such as Mr Croft's. We are very proud to support the Chess Congress and look forward to the event this year which will take place 29 December 2014 – 06 January 2015.

Local Issues

I have long campaigned for the protection of our townscape from the ravages of the utility repair teams, and the vehicles that are too large for our streets and ride on the footpaths. I have campaigned against the unsightly scourge of "black top" encroaching upon our pavements where yorkstone mellowed with the passage of time, should remain as the surface. At last there has been convened a meeting of senior Officers from both County and Borough to hopefully provide a solution to this problem, which in effect is actually reducing the appeal of our tourism offer. I want to see an agreed list of streets where the conservation of the townscape is given formal protection against those who would destroy it. These designated streets will not only occur in Old Hastings, but in parts of Burton's St.Leonards, and hopefully one day wherever the needs of conservation are threatened, throughout the Borough.

I have been approached by several residents eager for news regarding the footpath leading into Ecclesbourne Glen. The Country Park is owned by Hastings Borough Council, but the legal position is somewhat complex. ESCC are responsible for maintaining, closing and diverting Rights of Way, regardless of land ownership. Closing and diverting DPRWs are subject to legal procedures that are instigated and managed by County. HBC as landowner is

only responsible for ensuring that they are not overgrown or blocked. Our Country Park Ranger met with an Officer from the ESCC Rights of Way Team on site earlier this month with regards to the public footpaths at Ecclesbourne Glen. The latest position from County is as follows;

- There has now been a secondary slip on the coast path suggesting that the ground is by no means settled yet.
- Consideration is being given to extending the closure on all affected paths for a further 6 months rather than re-opening the path at the end of March.
- A further meeting will take place in April to agree any re-alignment of paths and robust fencing and construction works that may be required to either prevent access to dangerous areas or allow access to new areas.

Hastings Borough Council is equally concerned about the possible loss of footpaths and will be working closely with the County Council to resolve the matter as speedily as possible. We are aware how popular this is and are concerned about the impact of the closures as we approach our busiest visitor seasons. However we are guided by County's timetable. It is clear that until the land settles and we can be assured of no more movement, County will keep the path closed. Our most pressing issue is the safety of the public on our land, and to this end we have erected barriers and warning signs to tell people to take alternative paths. However we are finding that many walkers are disregarding the warning signs and barriers and actually vandalising them.

If any of you are concerned over the loss of the DPRROW, or wish further information on this particular footpath issue, please direct them to;

Matthew Harper
Senior Rights of Way Officer
East Sussex County Council
Tel: 01273 335227 / 0345 6080193
Matthew.Harper@eastsussex.gov.uk

A new piece of bespoke machinery, nicknamed 'Poover' is now out in Hastings and St Leonards in a bid to clean up our streets. The mobile machinery, specifically designed to pick up dog mess, leaves and other small items of pavement rubbish, has been commissioned by Hastings Borough Council and is being used by the town's waste and recycling contractors Kier. The Council has a commitment to provide clean and safe streets for the people of Hastings and St Leonards and that is what it intends to do. Whether it's the introduction of new machinery such as Poover, a robust enforcement policy,

zero tolerance to dog fouling, and our rapid response to complaints, we will continue to find ways to tackle this problem. Poover will be deployed to focus on areas identified as 'hotspots' for dog fouling activity and as such the start of the campaign, will target the Seven Streets area in St Leonards. The campaign will cover the whole Borough, and that includes areas of Old Hastings where I know that this activity has become a real and unpleasant problem.

I believe that will do for this month as I do not wish to rival War and Peace, albeit that there is so much going on in this Town of ours.

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

