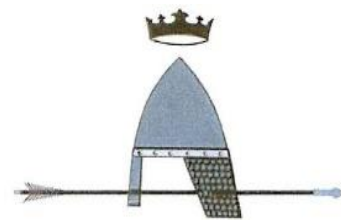


Battle Town Council

Annual Report 2019-2020



The Almonry, High Street, Battle, East Sussex, TN33 0EA
www.battletowncouncil.gov.uk T: 01424 772210

 Battle Town Council

 @BattleTownCncl

Parish Assembly 2020 - cancelled

Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the Parish Assembly, planned for Saturday 25th April, has been cancelled. However, please read the reports inside to find out what your Councillors and MP have been doing for our Community.

Please may we remind you to

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- always wash your hands when you get home or into work
- stay at home for 14 days if you have either:
 - a high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back
 - a new, continuous cough – you've started coughing repeatedly

and to use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- your condition gets worse
- your symptoms do not get better after 14 days

Please check on elderly or vulnerable family, friends and neighbours

Up to date advice may be found at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

If you have any questions or would like to seek clarification on any matters included in this publication, please write to Battle Town Council using the postal or email address above. We will respond personally and also post all the questions and responses on the Council website shortly after 25th May.

Chairman's Welcome

At the Annual Council Meeting last May, I felt honoured to be elected Chairman and Mayor for the current year. It has been an extremely busy period with a great deal of work carried out by your elected Councillors.

This publication contains Battle Town Council's Annual Report, together with reports from our MP, County Councillor and District Councillors. As indicated in the Council Plan, published soon after the election last year, a substantial number of projects and activities are being progressed. This has further increased the Town Clerk's workload and the Council thanks her for her hard work and dedication.

A Council Working Group called *Fit for Battle*, which includes representatives from the Battle Health Pathway Group and Battle Baptist Football Club, are working hard to secure grant funding to improve facilities in the Rec. There are plans to install all-weather pathways, a cycle skills area and a nature garden, and also to rebuild the Pavilion with a clubroom/refreshment area. The Council will be installing a zip wire in the Rec and is currently saving towards Street Workout equipment for teenagers and adults. Additional play equipment for children, including those who experience difficulty with mobility, is also planned for near to the Play Castle.

Battle was chosen to represent the South & South East region in the finals of the Britain in Bloom Competition in the Small Towns category. Although the competition has been cancelled this year, Battle will be invited to compete next year. Being a finalist in this prestigious national competition usually results in a significant increase in visitors, so this could help towards rebuilding the post-pandemic economy.

Red, white and blue planting - patriotic colours in recognition of the 75th anniversary of VE Day - was planned for the town this year. If you haven't already planned your summer planting, perhaps you will consider this theme for your window boxes, tubs, hanging baskets and front gardens. The Council was arranging 'Battle's VE Day Street Party' to take place on the High Street on Friday 8th May. Obviously, this has been cancelled, but perhaps businesses will still be able to dress their windows along that theme. We hope to be able to rearrange it for VJ Day in August. If not, perhaps we could consider a street party to celebrate the end of the pandemic instead.

Please take care of yourselves and be considerate of others during the pandemic.

Cllr Glenna Favell



Town Clerk's Report

This has been an interesting year with much positive activity; some results can already be seen at the recreation ground with the increased facilities. Many projects are ongoing, some taking more time than anticipated, and there has been a concerted effort to communicate with residents and to obtain opinions. As part of this objective, a new part-time role has been developed and, in January, the Council

welcomed Helen Ogden as Marketing & Town Development Officer. She will be reviewing and updating the website to make it more user friendly as well as assisting with the Council's events. The position will be monitored over a six-month period to ensure the post is effective.

The Council was finally successful in taking on an apprentice ground maintenance staff member last summer. Due to college and distance concerns, it was agreed to change the role to that of Trainee and Dan Jenner now works three days per week; generally one day with each of the grounds staff to ensure a complete training experience, and attends college to formalise his qualifications. After 20 years diligent service, latterly predominantly in the Cemetery, Gary Champion is retiring on 31 March 2020. The Council wishes him a long and happy retirement. My sincere thanks to all my colleagues for their continued support and conscientious work throughout the year.



Following the Governance Review, at the 2019 election there were 13 Councillors elected representing the four Battle Wards. The disadvantage of a lower number of Councillors is, of course, that there is more pressure on a smaller number to not only make decisions but also to carry out the actions required. Personally, I successfully completed the Certificate in Local Council Administration and am therefore a Qualified Clerk. Together with the election of more than two-thirds of Councillors this allowed the Council to satisfy the criteria to exercise the General Power of Competence. This gives the Council power to do anything that an individual may do.

Finally, I must express my enormous respect and appreciation for the time and commitment that our Councillors contribute to improving the town for the benefit of all residents. This is not always an easy undertaking as difficult decisions are sometimes required that are not always well received by everyone. Please do contact me if you would like any information on who, how or what being a Town Councillor involves.

Carol Harris

Council and Finance & General Purposes

F&GP Committee Members: Cllr. Glenna Favell, Cllr. Vikki Cook, Cllr. Jill Gyngell, Cllr. Margaret Kiloh, Cllr. Caroline Would

The 4-yearly election in May 2019 saw changes around the Council meeting table. Some Councillors did not stand for re-election, but fortunately four new people brought our number up to the full complement. Sadly, two of the new Members have since resigned. Another Member, who also resigned, has recently been co-opted, giving 11 people to serve on four Standing Committees, overseeing some

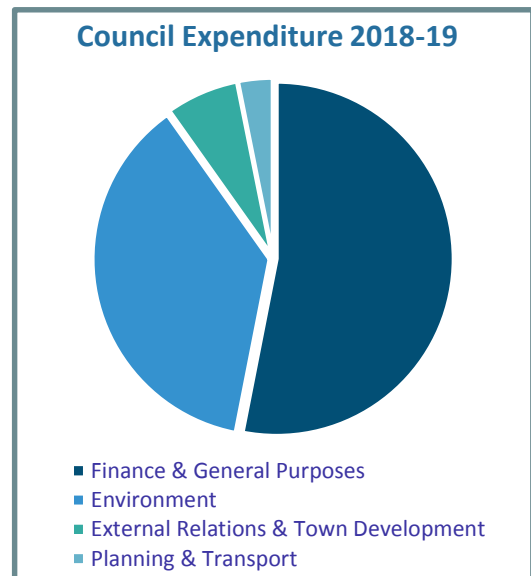
exciting projects that we believe will have a positive impact on the town. If you feel that you can bring suitable skills or experience to the Council, please contact the Town Clerk.

This Council has published its Plan, which sets out its aims for the 4-year term. These aims are translated into Action Plans for each Committee. The Action Plans detail how we will achieve our aims, together with timelines, so that we can monitor our progress. The work of the Committees is reported and discussed at monthly Council meetings. Minutes and associated Action Plans may be found on the Council's website, or available on request from the Council offices at The Almonry, High Street, Battle.

The Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is now reporting directly to Council. The Council is grateful to these volunteers who have done a vast amount of work to produce the Regulation 14 draft Plan for you to provide feedback this spring.

The membership of the Finance and General Purposes Committee comprises the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council and the Chairmen of the Standing Committees. This Committee has an overview of and responsibility for finance, personnel and policies, as well as The Almonry and the gardens. The work done in the garden by volunteers from Beautiful Battle is much appreciated.

Cllr Glenna Favell



Planning and Transport

Committee Members: Cllr. Jill Gyngell, Cllr. Andrew Brown, Cllr. Claire Davies, Cllr. Glenna Favell, Cllr. Margaret Kiloh, Cllr. Allan Russell, Cllr. Dale Wheeler.

The Council's Planning and Transport Committee act as consultees to Rother District Council (RDC); it is that Authority's Officers/Committee who decide on the merits of each application. They can agree with

**Planning and Transportation meetings
are held once a month, all welcome.**

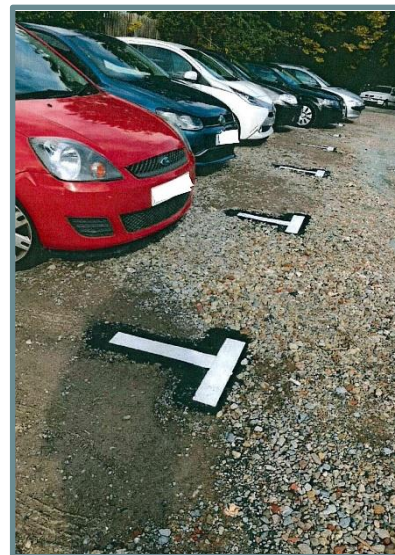
the comments made by our own Councillors, or completely ignore them. Councillors undertake regular training on planning matters and strive to represent residents' views fairly. Agendas are published on the

Council's website and on notice boards throughout the parish. An opportunity to speak and give your views on any item on the agenda is given before the formal start of each meeting. If you wish to speak, please advise the Clerk by noon on the day of the meeting.

Parking enforcement in the town is not under the jurisdiction of Battle Town Council, but we fully support moves by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to introduce parking meters in the High Street to allow more residents and visitors to Battle to park for short periods of time at a low cost. Implementation of CPE (Civil Parking Enforcement) and commencement of enforcement should be in

August/September of this year, dependent on Government legislation. Lower Mount Street car park, which was full of pot holes, has been resurfaced and bays have been marked to ensure efficient and considerate parking. The Committee met with representatives of Battle Area Community Transport and consulted Stagecoach to consider how we may support an improved public transport service.

It is the wish of many residents to see a pedestrian crossing on Battle Hill. ESCC is currently investigating traffic management/pedestrian improvements on Battle Hill, but there are several significant issues. Formal advice is being obtained from ESCC's Legal Team about the principle of a pedestrian crossing being constructed with public money to serve a private business. Alternative options are being investigated: vehicle-activated signage, road surface material treatment, virtual road narrowing, possible reintroduction of parking on Battle Hill. We hope for a good outcome.



A Design Guideline produced by the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was adopted by the Council and shared with RDC to influence the form of any development that will come forward in the Neighbourhood Plan area. Although the responsibility of ESCC, we work closely with the representative of the Battle Local Action Planning Group and Sussex Ramblers in order to identify local problems and try to ensure that public footpaths are kept in a good condition.

Members of the Planning & Transport Committee work hard to improve Battle for all its residents.

Cllr. Jill Gyngell

Environment

Committee Members: Cllr. Vikki Cook, Cllr. Glenna Favell, Cllr. Margaret Kiloh, Cllr. Lesley Samms, Cllr. Hazel Sharman, Cllr. Caroline Would.

The Environment Committee has responsibilities for the shaws, parks, cemeteries, street lighting and street furniture on its land. During 2019, like many Councils, we acknowledged that there is a climate emergency and updated our Environment Strategy to reflect our need to work towards becoming Carbon Neutral. This is not easy in an historical heritage town as can be imagined.

As a step towards this, we looked at our litter bin replacement programme and agreed that dual purpose bins (one side litter, the other recycling) would be implemented and our waste contractor has agreed to keep them separate. Recently our maintenance team have reused broken benches to repair others, particularly outside St Mary's Church, rather than replace with new. The street light bulbs that fall under the responsibility of BTC are being replaced, when necessary, by eco-friendly lights that not only use less energy but give a better light. The Full Council recently agreed to delay seeking amended planning

permission for the new pavilion until after discussions with an expert on renewable energy, in particular, solar power. The Committee are pleased that so many youngsters are enjoying the activity challenge course in Mansers Shaw and the recreation ground, and these, as is all recreation ground playground equipment, regularly inspected for wear and tear and always following an expression of concern at possible damage from a member of the public.

The Committee is indebted to the ground staff and maintenance team who work so hard, to Beautiful Battle for the amazing job they do with the flowerbeds, to the Environmental Group for their love of the wildflower verges and to the street cleaner who walks around the town daily collecting litter, leaves and sweeping our kerbsides.



Battle and Langton School recently wrote to ask if we could become a Fairtrade town. We are working with the Chamber of Commerce as well as shops and businesses towards becoming a plastic free town. Many cafes and shops joined the Battle against Plastic scheme to refill water bottles in an effort to reduce the number of bottles of water being bought and thrown away.

Cllr. Vikki Cook

ER & TD

Committee Members: Cllr. Caroline Would, Cllr. Glenna Favell, Cllr. Margaret Kiloh, Cllr. Vikki Cook, Cllr. Lesley Samms, Cllr. Hazel Sharman

It has been an exciting, busy and eventful year for the ER&TD Committee. Battle has a certain uniqueness and charm, which can be seen all year round at the many events and celebrations that the



numerous volunteers of this lively community organize, eg the Battle Festival, bonfire night and Medieval Fayre. Local achievements and successes over the last year have included the re-installation of a 24 hour cashpoint on the High Street, the Battle in Bloom awards and the town's Air Training Squadron winning a national award for most improved squadron.

One area the Town Council is looking to improve is communication with the residents of Battle. Local Councillors can often be spotted out and about

asking passers-by for their views on the town and what improvements they would appreciate. A newly formed Town Forum, consisting of a wide selection of groups and organisations within the town, has

met to discuss future development ideas. In addition, a Battle Town Council Youth Forum has started and is providing a voice for our younger residents aged 10 - 18. They have brought fresh ideas, are challenging traditional ways of thinking and are a real credit to Battle. A Marketing and Town Development Officer has also been recruited to improve our website and social media communications. Heritage is very important to the town of Battle and also attracts a large number of visitors to the area. During 2019 many residents and tourists have enjoyed exploring the newly introduced Heritage and Spy Trails. The hugely ambitious and lengthy project of applying for UNESCO protected status for Battle has started. The High Street is also pivotal to the vibrancy of Battle. Following comments suggesting the festive lighting required updating, contractors were invited to provide schemes and costs for a new display. We are delighted that this years Christmas lights in the centre of town received overwhelming support from residents and visitors and we hope that improvements like this will continue to bring more visitors to the town.

Once again, Remembrance Day was observed and greatly supported by local businesses, organisations and residents. Remembrance Sunday saw a large parade through the town, marshalled by 88 (Battle) Squadron Air Training Corps, and a church service held by the new Dean of Battle, Lee Duckett to a full church. Following the return of the parade, a community gathering in the Market Square was held. This was fully supported by a few local businesses and groups for which we are grateful and it is proposed to hold a bigger event this year. On Remembrance Day, the Town, District and County Councillors were joined by the whole of Battle Abbey School, the Fire Service, local businesses and residents for an informal gathering on the Abbey Green for the 2 minute silence. Battle Abbey School choir provided poignant music and the Battle Bonfire Boyes set off the maroon. Another great example of the whole town coming together.

“...another great example of the town coming together”

There are too many people to thank individually so many thanks to all the volunteers who organise the various fantastic events throughout the year. Please continue to attend and support the wide range of activities and groups across the town and don't forget to shop local where possible - support your local High Street!

Cllr. Caroline Would.

Neighbourhood Plan

Steering Group Members: Cllr. Allan Russell, Cllr. Dale Wheeler, Margaret Howell, Sue Best, Andrew Brown, Cate Sullivan, Paul Whymark.

When we set out in early 2015 to make a Neighbourhood Plan, we had no idea that in early 2020 we would still be planning the final stages! It has been a long haul involving lots of people, but there is already evidence that we are close to achieving what Neighbourhood Plans are set out to do, enabling the community to influence development, housing design and to protect local green spaces.

Five years of strategic and comprehensive planning for Battle has involved numerous twists and turns because of the uncertainty about sites and the developers who have come and gone. To react to such changes has demanded imagination and flexibility. The Community has and continues to have much say in shaping the direction of the Plan. Battle Town Council has recently endorsed the recent work of the Steering Group. Although it is the Parish Plan, made by people in the community, we have worked closely with Rother District Planning Officers on all details and have been ably supported by a qualified Neighbourhood Plan Consultant. For those who know little of the detail, we should remind you that throughout the process, the documents and developments have been reported continually at meetings and on the Steering Group's website, Facebook page and monthly press releases in the Battle Observer.



Currently we are at consultation stage and when the public have submitted their views and suggestions, we will be looking to agree any final changes. After which we will submit the Plan to Rother District for them to carry out a further consultation dictated by Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations. Then, an external examiner will review to ensure it does not conflict with any national planning rules. After that we look to the external examination in the coming months, completed in time for a community (Yes/No) referendum. If there is simple majority support, then the Plan will be made and take on statutory status, meaning that developers and planners must have regard for the Plan up to and until 2028. For updates please see www.battleneighbourhoodplan.co.uk, the Facebook page and the local Press.

Cllr. Allan Russell

East Sussex County Council

Once again the County Council's portion of this year's Council Tax has risen, this year by 4.99%. This represents a rise in general taxation of 1.99% plus a further 2% to be spent on Adult Social Care. Local Authorities no longer receive Revenue Support Grant from the government which means that other sources of income are even more important. This is why fees and charges have also increased.



The County Council is still having to make serious cuts to services but this year has managed to create some unallocated funding which has been directed at parts of the Council's work which is under the most severe pressure; Children's Services and Adult Social Care. It is important to remember that, particularly in relation to Children's Social Care, budgeting is very difficult because this is a demand led service; if a child needs care

he/she gets it. Rather than borrowing the money the County Council has put revenue into the capital budget to pay for a programme of dropped kerbs and the never ending need to repair pot holes. It will help but I am sure it will not be enough.

During the year a review was conducted into how the County Council looks after Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children. These young people become Looked After Children when they arrive in East Sussex and are therefore the responsibility of the County Council. There is government funding available but it only covers about 50% of the cost. As a result of the review services to these extremely vulnerable young people have been refocused and we are more able to help them.

Sadly I need to report that Broad Oak School, Heathfield, is due to be closed. Whilst on the subject of children, the Children's Centres have been rationalised. The way the funding for this excellent programme was given to Local Authorities meant that often there were two very close together and there were some in parts of the County where they were not well used. The majority which were on school sites have been absorbed into the school and there have been assurances programmes will continue as part of the school's early years work.

Cllr. Kathryn Field

Rother District Council

Elections. The 2019 Elections changed the Wards covering Battle and your three Cllrs are Field, Cook & Dixon. There was also a change of administration with the Rother Alliance of Liberal Democrats, Green, Labour and Independent Councillors joining together to run the Council.

Finance. For 2020 we must find £3.28 million of extra income and savings in order to balance our budget. We previously made savings and raised income to the value of £1.8million in order to address the loss of central government funding and rising costs.

Housing. In 2019 we adopted our new Housing and Homelessness Strategy. We've been working hard to address local concerns about housing,

- a. RDC will deliver 1,000 new homes in the next 15 years to get the housing market moving. This will be a mix of homes for sale, part owned and rented and for affordable rents.
- b. Homelessness applications reduced for the first time in two years, but this is still very high compared to before 2017. We appointed more staff to support households getting into the private rental sector and prevent homelessness.
- c. In September 2019 we had a record breaking 78 households living in temporary accommodation - this included 80 children – and 80% of those had to be placed outside Rother. Our new housing strategy addresses the lack of local temporary accommodation. We committed £3 million to buy our own temporary accommodation in Rother.



-
- d. We have over 1,700 households on our housing register (all with a local connection) - rising monthly by an average of 14.
 - e. Last year 60 new affordable homes were built and so far this year 82. This includes seven new wheelchair accessible homes. We expect up to 33 more by spring 2020.
 - f. The new development at Blackfriars, Battle, on the Local Plan for decades, received Planning approval for the spine road and outline permission for the development. The development will supply up to 220 new homes, 30% affordable, but there is still work to do.
 - g. We are writing an action plan to reduce empty homes and put them back into occupation.

Waste & Recycling. We mutually agreed with Kier to end our waste collection contract. Biffa, in a new partnership with Wealden and Hastings Councils, started operations in July 2019.

Recycling and composting rates appear similar to previous years, but we have had fewer reports of missed bins.

Climate Emergency. Rother has made a new commitment to a carbon neutral district by 2030. A working group led by Cllr Field has started exploratory work on what needs to be done.

Employment and Regeneration. RDC is investing in new employment spaces and finalising the plans needed to create new employment sites.

- a. We have purchased land at Barnhorn Road, Bexhill for commercial development and propose 3,500 sqm of employment space and a new medical centre.
- b. The Development and Site Allocations Plan received final approval from Government inspectors.
- c. We are still lobbying the Government for the extension of HS1 rail into Rother.
- d. We are creating business space for creative industries at Beeching Road, Bexhill, following a successful funding bid from the Local Growth Framework.
- e. We are progressing with a new landmark leisure centre and housing at the old Bexhill High School site.

Objectives. We are working on a new Corporate Plan and will start consulting this summer. Planning Committee. We have made it easier for the public to speak at Planning Meetings and the Town Council can also speak at Planning Meetings for the first time.

Cllr Kevin Dixon – South Battle & Telham Ward

Cllr Kathryn Field & Cllr Vikki Cook – North Battle, Netherfield & Whatlington Ward

Report from MP Hugh Merriman



It was great to start the year by helping to open the new ATM on Battle High Street. This has been a real team and community effort to bring 24/7 access to cash back to the town centre. It was over a year ago, whilst I was surveying residents on their doorsteps, that the lack of a cash machine had overtaken concerns about parking and congestion on the High Street as the number one local priority.

To bring a national solution, I introduced a new law in Parliament which would require the banks to maintain at least one 24/7 ATM for every high street which supports 5,000 or more residents. Over 100 MPs from all political parties added their name. Link, the cash point provider, then announced that the case for Battle had been made and, since then, we have all worked hard to find the right site. The new Costa coffee shop is now home to cash access. I owe it to the 100 MPs who backed the cause to carry on with it so we have better access across the UK. With bank branches closing at a rate of 55 per month, and one in ten ATM's being taken away, we need to act fast before more parts of the country become cash deserts. This has a terrible knock on for the retailers who are already on small margins and need help not hindrance. Let's hope we in Battle have shown that joint working delivers results.

On becoming your MP in 2015, I joined the House of Commons Transport Select Committee because it had become apparent that this was a key issue of concern in the constituency. I've loved the role. When the position of Chairman was transferred from the Labour Party to Conservative Party, I decided that I'd served my apprenticeship and would throw my hat in the ring to become the new Chairman.

To win this election, I had to get the support of the 649 MPs across all parties in the House of Commons. I was fortunate enough to get the votes from over half and now find myself in the hot-seat. I'm determined that the national profile can be used to help us with some of the challenges where we need the agencies to help us. The A21 is a good example. It's imperative that Highways England rise to the challenge and start coming up with ideas to make the road safer and more efficient (rather than rejecting the ideas we put forward locally). There are more organisations to challenge as well. On Network Rail, we need proper step-free access at Battle Station. We need our bus operators to use the Government's newly founded enthusiasm and investment in buses to get more frequent services in East Sussex. With the Transport sector having the largest carbon footprint of all sectors, we need industry to turn the tide on carbon in order to meet our climate change commitments in the long term. All big challenges but I am hopefully that residents in Battle will be the beneficiaries of better transport solutions.

Are you self isolating due to Coronavirus ?
Are you able to offer help to those who are isolated?



Shopping



Collecting medicines



Someone to talk to

If you need help and don't know anyone who can assist you contact us:

Carol Harris (Town Clerk)

Telephone: 01424 772210 (Mon - Fri 9 - 2) / 07309 732536 (afternoons and weekends)

Email: enquiries@battletowncouncil.gov.uk

Please have or send the following information:

- Full name, address, telephone number(s) and email address if you have one;
- Tell us if you are unwell & self-isolating or staying indoors due to government advice;
- Tell us how many other people are in your household and their situation(s);
- Contact details for a close family member could also be helpful.

Almonry Project

Battle is about to expand, so the Council needs to expand its vision to meet the increased needs of residents and visitors. The Almonry is central to our plans to improve the quality of life for residents - not just for now, but also in the future. There are three aspects to our vision for The Almonry, based on the Council Plan that was published last summer:

Providing excellent services to residents

Flexible, fully accessible space for increased Town & District Council activities, community groups and the public.

Supporting town development and economic growth

A central and welcoming hub, providing help and information for our community and for tourists.

Preserving our heritage

An expertly restored and 'reinstated' building with space for heritage exhibitions will ensure its continued use and enjoyment for years to come.

Between 2015 and 2019, plans were put in place to repair and refurbish the building and to rebuild the south wing that was demolished in the 1930s. It was hoped that this work, to include a Heritage facility, could be funded by a Heritage Lottery grant, but unfortunately the application was unsuccessful.

Council therefore agreed that the building work should be actioned by applying to the Public Works Loan Board for up to £600,000 to be repaid over 50 years, with any remaining costs being met

through Council funds. Due to concerns raised by a group of residents, the loan application was postponed.

The Almonry is now in urgent need of restoration and preservation

It needs to be brought up to current health & safety standards, made accessible to all residents and visitors and upgraded to comply with the Equalities Act 2010 regarding employees with physical disabilities.

Costs are very important, but they need to be considered in conjunction with thought about how the Council's decisions may impact the town, its residents and its heritage assets. Some benefits

do not have a monetary value. The Council needs to provide better facilities to meet the town's current needs, but also wants to future-proof The Almonry. Future needs are difficult to predict, but it is valid to consider aspirations as well as evidence. The option to pass The Almonry into the care of a trust or charity is not possible without an endowment to support the on-going maintenance and repairs. The Council is now consulting residents about other options for the building.

Option 1 - Battle Civic Centre

Provide a future proofed facility, accessible by disabled people, for Battle with: sufficient Council office space to enable expansion; a formal Council meeting room; a spacious information centre for Town and District Council services; a welcoming Tourist & Heritage information area and flexible meeting spaces for Council and Community use.

Repair & refurbishment of The Almonry and rebuilding of the south wing would cost in the region of £895,770.49. Savings are still being explored (indicated to be in excess of £100,000 at the time of going to press).

Main benefits - Flexible space to meet current and future needs of the town providing:

- Council offices accessible by disabled people;
- Space for an expanding Town Council staff;
- Town and District Councils information hub in a customised space;
- Formal Council meeting room;
- Indoor toilet, accessible by disabled people, for staff, Councillors and visitors to comply with the Equality Act;
- Tourist & Heritage Information Area to encourage visitors to spend time and money in Battle;
- Battle's only publicly owned heritage building open to the public (ground floor) to learn about and appreciate Battle's heritage;
- Interview/meeting areas for Town and District Councils to provide private or specialist support and also for social service providers, MP etc;
- Flexible community space and display space;
- Small meeting area/desk space for public hire;
- Administration/temporary archiving space for the Town Council;
- Focus for the UNESCO World Heritage bid.

To deliver this facility, the Council will work to raise sufficient funds to provide it without raising the precept. We will also continue to explore ways to reduce project costs. There are currently funds in: Maintenance budget (£12,000); Almonry Project budget (£21,000) and an Earmarked Reserve for a Tourist Information Area (£12,000). The professional fees to deliver the project to completion of the tender stage (£50,537.10) have been paid from the Almonry Repairs budget and General Reserves. Town and District Council Community Infrastructure Levy funds could also be used. Applications for support would be made to the Architectural Heritage Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council, Rother District Council and various charities. We have been advised that to undertake the work in stages will significantly increase costs.

Q 1A Do you want a Battle Civic Centre, which is future proofed and accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept does not have to be increased?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 1B Do you want a Battle Civic Centre, which is future proofed and accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 3p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 1C Do you want a Battle Civic Centre, which is future proofed and accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 5p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Option 2 - A refurbished Almonry

Provide Council office space for current staffing; a formal Council meeting room; a hub for Town and District Council information and a Tourist Information Point.

Repairs & refurbishment of the Almonry would cost in the region of £739,523.87. Savings are still being explored (indicated to be in excess of £100,000 at the time of going to press).

NB. Without suitable facilities for staff, Councillors and visitors with mobility difficulties, this option may not be viable. Alternatives to ensure full accessibility for wheelchair users will continue to be sought.

Main benefits

- Space to meet current needs of the Council;
- A tourist information point;
- Council office and Council meeting room accessible by disabled people;
- Battle's only publicly owned heritage building will be preserved and available for public access to the same extent as now (ground floor);
- Town and District Councils information hub in a more suitable space;

but, which would:

- Not meet future Council needs;
- Not provide private areas for use by Councils, social service providers, MP etc;
- Not comply with the Equality Act 2010 as the accessible toilet would be outside.

Q 2A Do you want the Almonry only to be repaired and refurbished to include an outside accessible toilet, even if it does not comply with the Equality Act 2010, if the Parish precept does not have to be increased?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 2B Do you want the Almonry only to be repaired and refurbished to include an outside accessible toilet, even if it does not comply with the Equality Act 2010, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 3p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 2C Do you want the Almonry only to be repaired and refurbished to include an outside accessible toilet, even if it does not comply with the Equality Act 2010, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 5p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Option 3 - The relocation of the Council offices

The Council would rent fully accessible premises that meet current needs. The Almonry would be repaired to rent as offices. The Council would be responsible for ongoing repairs and maintenance. Repairs would cost in the region of £517,231.27. Savings are still being explored (indicated to be in excess of £100,000 at the time of going to press).

Main benefits:

- Space to meet current needs of the Council;
- Council office and Council meeting room accessible by disabled people;
- Town and District Councils information hub;
- Indoor toilet, accessible by disabled people, for staff, Councillors and visitors to comply with the Equality Act;
- The Battle Museum of Local History would remain in situ;

but,

- It may not be possible to find a suitable building in the town centre to fully meet the current needs of the Council, let alone its future needs;
- A suitable meeting room would need to be hired for Council/Committee meetings;
- Battle's only publicly owned heritage building would not be open to the public;
- There would be no space to meet the future needs of the Council and the community;
- The current low-cost meeting space for community use would be lost;
- The focus for the UNESCO World Heritage bid would be lost;
- There would be no Tourist & Heritage Information Area.

Q 3A Do you want The Almonry to be repaired and the Council offices relocated to rented premises, accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept does not have to be increased?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 3B Do you want The Almonry to be repaired and the Council offices relocated to rented premises, accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 3p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Q 3C Do you want The Almonry to be repaired and the Council offices relocated to rented premises, accessible by disabled people, if the Parish precept had to be increased by 5p per month (Band D)?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Option 4 - The sale of The Almonry

Relocation of Council offices to fully accessible premises, either rented or purchased. The sale could raise in the region of £445,000 less professional fees and relocation costs.

Main benefits:

- Council office, accessible by disabled people, with space to meet current needs;
- Accessible Town and District Councils information hub;

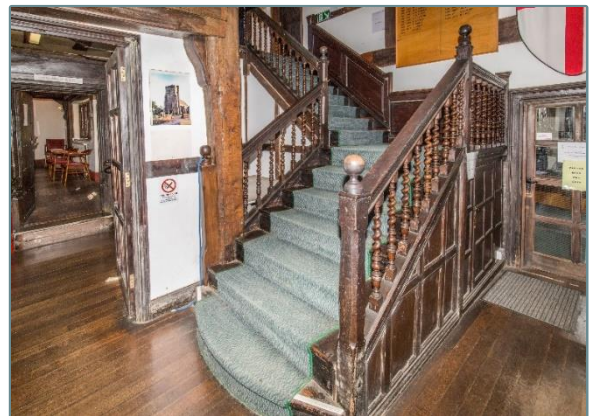
but,

- It may not be possible to find a suitable building in the town centre to fully meet the current needs of the Council, let alone its future needs;
- The Museum would also need to be relocated;
- Loss of rental income;
- A suitable meeting room would need to be hired on most Tuesdays for Council meetings;
- The grade II* listed heritage building and gardens would no longer be publicly owned and available to visit;
- There would be no control over The Almonry's future use;
- There may not be a suitable interview/meeting room;
- The current low-cost meeting space for community use would be lost;
- The focus for the UNESCO World Heritage bid would be lost;
- There would be no Tourist & Heritage Information Area.

Q 4 Do you want The Almonry to be sold and the Council offices relocated to purchased or rented premises, accessible by disabled people?

(NO) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (YES)

Comments:



The Council wants to hear from residents before deciding how to proceed

We want views from a wide range of people, so it is important that YOU HAVE YOUR SAY

Please complete and return pages 14-16 to: The Almonry, High Street, Battle, TN33 0EA
by 25th May 2020

If there is more than one elector in your household, please request a further copy by
telephone: 07309 732536 or email: enquiries@battletowncouncil.gov.uk