

Town Hall Trustees Chairman's Report

to

the Annual Parish Assembly

22th April 2011.

The Town Hall is managed by Town Councillors who are all trustees. It is held in trust by the Town Council for the benefit of the residents of Whitchurch.

The Town Council endeavours to provide a wide selection of services to the Town at a minimal cost. Services provided include an Information Service for the County, Borough and Town Councils. Free accommodation for Borough and County Councillors, the monthly local police surgery and twice yearly surgeries for our MP Sir George Young. We also provide free accommodation for Relate, and Citizens Advice Bureau, although CAB do give a donation towards costs. The registrar of births deaths and marriages who visited the Town Hall on Thursday mornings, by appointment, has been withdrawn, the reason given by HCC was lack of use, they will however, if requested, do home visits.

Income for the running and maintenance of the building comes from the HSBC lease and from rentals generated by letting the small ground floor meeting room and the first floor council chamber.

Repairs and improvements are usually reliant on a combination of grant funding, and rental income. Just before Christmas you may have seen the scaffold outside the building. This was to inspect the tower, repair a roof leak and to decorate the external paintwork. A grant was received from the SEEDA town centre improvements grant funding, under the paint your town initiative. A small amount of repointing to the front walls was also completed. The inspection of the tower revealed some wet rot to the legs, this has been repaired and redecorated to ensure no further deterioration occurs in the short term. Within the next few years there will be major expenditure needed to take down and replace the tower. It is recommended that we inspect the tower legs for any further signs of deterioration each year.

The only thing, I think you will agree, that lets the look of the town hall down is the HSBC bank leased premises. despite requests to them to tidy up and decorate their part of the building it remains in a bad state of repair.

Looking forward You will be aware that following closure of the HSBC bank the cash machine was retained. They are therefore still paying the full agreed rent and will do so until this coming September. The trustees have to consider further what the HSBC vacated area can be used for, and how to cover the shortfall of HSBC income. Reserves have been set aside to compensate for the loss of rental in the short term. Trustees are still considering how best to use the space when it becomes free. Suggestions so far include 1/ bringing the council office to the ground floor. 2/ Creating a small museum/archive facility for town archives. 3/ Adapt to rent out the space. Option 1, moving the office to the ground floor, would provide the staff much needed space and also allow better access for the public. It would also free up space to enable a lift to be put in for access to the upper floor, to enable full potential to hire out the council chamber. Included within the overall long term scheme could be the provision of a small kitchen facility. The only option without considerable cost implication for the town is option 2 the museum room/archive store, and even this would involve ongoing service costs which would have to be found by the town each year. If you have you any comments on these suggestions or have others I would be pleased to hear from you, so that the suggestions so far, and any you may offer us can be included when developing our ongoing plan.

Cllr Barry J Jackman Chairman of the Town Hall Trustees.