

Ross-on-Wye Town Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10



West Ward Councillors

Cllr C Bartrum
Cllr H Bramer
Cllr P Cutter
Cllr J Davies (resigned 8 March 2010)
Cllr G Lucas
Cllr Dr J Roberts
Cllr Mrs C Utting (elected 27 May 2010)

East Ward Councillors

Cllr D Bedford
Cllr P Coleman
Cllr J Edwards
Cllr Mrs J Hyde
Cllr Mrs J Lane
Cllr D Ravenscroft

Town Clerk: Mrs D Mason

Deputy Town Clerk: Mrs R Lewis

Councillors and Officers can be contacted at:-
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Telephone 01989 562373
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Website:- www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk

**A large print version of this leaflet is available from
the Corn Exchange or on the website**

INTRODUCTION

2009/2010 has been another busy year for the Council. A new member of staff joined the Clerk and Deputy Clerk in August, a Cemetery Officer who is responsible for the marked improvement at the cemetery. We also have a voluntary Footpath Officer to whom we are most grateful. Former Mayor, Cllr John Davies resigned in March creating a casual vacancy (Caroline Utting was elected in May to fill the vacancy).

COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Policy and Management Committee meets regularly to review the administration, policies and management of the Council. It is responsible for communication with ratepayers through the Town Council's website and its quarterly newsletters, and the implementation of the Council policies covering a wide range of topics and regulations.

The Amenities Committee is the main "spending" committee. It supplements the street cleaning service provided by the Herefordshire Council, helping to improve the appearance of the town and keeping paths and byways clear and tidy. The committee is also responsible for maintaining the assets owned by the Council including Deanhill Park, Tudorville Cemetery, Allotments, the Bandstand and the Weather Station. It also looks after the Closed Churchyard at St. Mary's and provides some financial assistance to the Open Churchyard. One of its highlights was the introduction of LED Christmas lights which provided a much improved display as well as support for energy saving measures.

The Planning Committee makes recommendations to the Herefordshire County Council planning committee on applications relevant to Ross. Although it cannot make decisions, the committee plays an important part in providing a local opinion on whether applications should be opposed or recommended. With the centralisation of the Herefordshire County planning meetings, greater attention needs to be given to local views and considerations. The planning committee continues to support the introduction of a "house style" for shop front designs when considering applications.

The Finance Committee monitors spending by the Council. It considers grant aid applications and produces the annual Budget recommendations for the approval of the Full Council. The precept remains as last year at just over £1 a week for a band D equivalent property. This was a reduction in "real" terms when inflation is taken into account.

GRANT AID

The Council continued its policy of giving grant aid to support projects that benefit local residents and encourage tourism. The popular Jamstand received additional aid helping to ensure it complied with all safety regulations. Financial assistance was given to the summer and Christmas carnivals, Country & Western Music Festival, the Ross-on-Wye Primary Schools' Choir Festival and the Sea Cadets. Grants were also given to help the Ross Rugby club and the Ross Bowling Club improve their facilities. The Council continued to sponsor a summer programme of bands playing in the bandstand on Sundays.

QUESTION TIME

At every full Town Council meeting the local police give a report, answer any questions and register any suggestions or complaints. In addition there is an agenda item for public participation as the Council is keen to give residents of Ross a chance to air their views. With several Town Councillors also serving as County Councillors, this provides an opportunity to discuss developments at both county and local level. Residents are also entitled to attend the committee meetings where matters of particular interest to them might be discussed.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Council remains committed to improving communications with local residents. Quarterly newsletters are delivered to each household and provide updated information on current events and details of the Council's activities and contacts. The Council website www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk continues to be reviewed and updated to provide background information and highlight new developments. Close links are maintained with the local press and media to ensure that the public are well informed about the Council's activities and any new developments affecting the town both locally and nationally.

OUTSIDE LINKS

The Council is often invited to appoint a representative on the committees of local organisations which play a major role in the town and county, e.g., twinning associations and the PCC and Herefordshire Association of Local Councils and the Market Towns Forum. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor continue to play a key role in giving support to local charities and events which promote the town.

The Town Council played a leading role in the establishment of the Association of Ross Traders (ART) which has shown considerable initiative in helping to promote Ross as a shopping and tourist centre. The Council and ART have established a good working relationship, which should bring considerable benefits for the town over the coming years.

Strong links have been maintained with the Ross-on-Wye Town Plan Steering Group, set up the Council to operate independently, to look at the future of the town. Using the views of residents, research work carried out in the past and results of a questionnaire circulated to all residents in 2009 (to which the response was over 36 percent), the group has produced a comprehensive report for consideration as a business plan for the Council. It was agreed to put aside £25,000 in the Council's budget for the 2010/2011 financial year to help fund any immediate measures recommended in the Town Plan report. Some recommendations in the Report will be aimed at providing short-term benefits for the town while more time would be available to consider longer-term recommendations.

The Sports and Leisure Federation, also established by the Council to operate on an independent basis, commissioned a feasibility study on ways to improve the Wilton Sports Centre, which is being considered by Herefordshire Council who owns it. The Federation also backed a plan to save the Tudorville Youth Centre from closure. An enlarged Tudorville Residents' Association has submitted a business plan to the Herefordshire Council to acquire the Centre for a nominal sum and turn it into a community centre for use by local residents of all ages.

Meanwhile the Larruperz Community Centre, acquired by the Council 21 years ago, continues to operate very successfully. Managed by an independent body of trustee/directors on a 99-year lease, it provides an increasingly wide range of community services for local clubs and organisations. Two representatives from the Council attend board meetings to help ensure that the community receives the full benefits of the Centre.

OVERVIEW

In today's economic climate, a period of intense cost cutting will inevitably affect everyone. Ross could well be hit by a reduction in the services currently provided by the Herefordshire County Council or have to pay considerably more for them. However, Ross remains in a strong position as one of the most attractive market towns in the county. The easy access to the motorway system, and the beautiful surroundings, mean that it will be able to attract new investment as well as maintaining its importance as a traditional tourist centre. The Council will continue to seek ways of promoting the town and capitalise on these advantages for the benefit of local residents.



How your money was spent

Below is a summary of the accounts for the year 01/04/2009 - 31/03/2010. A more detailed breakdown is available online at www.rosstc-herefordshire.gov.uk or from the Town Council offices at the Corn Exchange.

Income	
Cemetery	3,714.00
Grants and Donations	6,067.00
Interest	2,502.98
Precept	200,000.00
Rental Income	8,720.00
Sundry Receipts	12.80
Total Income	£221,016.78
Expenditure	
Administration	33,132.08
Amenities	50,501.93
Community Centre	13,999.64
Donations	32,930.40
Mayor's Allowance & Regalia	2,296.79
Salaries and Street Cleansing	47,213.44
Weather Station	695.89
The Corn Exchange	31,447.70
Total Expenditure	£212,217.87

Councillors' Attendance at Meetings from 11 May 2009 to 9 May 2010

Full Council Meetings

	Possible	Actual	Approved absence
Cllr C Bartrum	12	12	
Cllr H Bramer	12	8	2
Cllr P Cutter	12	11	1
Cllr J Davies	8	2	5
Cllr G Lucas	12	12	
Cllr Dr J Roberts	12	11	1
Cllr D Bedford	12	12	
Cllr P Coleman	12	5	7
Cllr J Edwards	12	12	
Cllr Mrs J Hyde	12	9	2
Cllr Mrs J Lane	12	11	1
Cllr D Ravenscroft	12	11	1

Committee Meetings

	Possible	Actual	Approved absence
Cllr C Bartrum	14	13	1
Cllr P Cutter	7	4	2
Cllr J Davies	10	1	3
Cllr G Lucas	20	15	4
Cllr Dr J Roberts	26	23	3
Cllr D Bedford	20	19	1
Cllr P Coleman	33	11	14
Cllr J Edwards	14	12	2
Cllr Mrs J Lane	33	28	4
Cllr D Ravenscroft	20	17	2

The Mayor, Cllr J Edwards and Deputy Mayor, Cllr Mrs J Lane were also in attendance at some committee meetings as ex-officio members.