

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT 2007/2008 CIVIC YEAR

I am pleased to present this report at the end of my mayoral year, the first of the new administration and one that I have personally enjoyed very much. The Council, which was elected in May 2007, has continued to focus on service delivery, maintaining quality in our financial and support administration and trying to ensure at all times that we listen to and serve our community as meaningfully as possible, including through direct representation.

Normally my predecessors have concluded their report with thanks to their elected Councillor colleagues for their dedicated public service. This year I intend to bring this to the beginning. I do this primarily so that I can pay particular tribute to the service of Alan Lord, a Town Councillor since 1995, former Town Mayor in 2001-2002, who sadly died on Wednesday, 7th May. Alan was the epitome of the sort of Councillor we would all aspire to be, hardworking, diligent, forensic and, above all, someone who could relate to all. He was a people's champion in a whole sphere of activities but none more so than representing the needs of the elderly and the young, in battling for local health care services and in support for the voluntary sector. He will be enormously missed and we, as a Council, will be poorer for his absence.

I should like to thank all my fellow Councillors for their support for me this year and for their own hard work. There have been, during the year, 8 Council meetings, 42 Committee meetings, 3 meetings of the Best Value Review Group, one Annual Town Meeting and 5 meetings of the Charities Committee. Councillors' attendances at all of these have been excellent, 82% for Committees and 86% for Council meetings, and Members have fulfilled their responsibilities with distinction. I have been particularly grateful to my Deputy Town Mayor, Councillor Mrs Waddingham, who has supported me at many functions and represented me at others when I was not available, the Leader of the Council and the Committee Chairs.

Can I also begin by thanking the public, who have supported the Council in its work. As always these meetings have attracted varying attendances from the public. Attendances have been particularly good when we have had controversial planning applications, or discussions on items that have a wide community interest. I would like to thank those who have supported us through their attendances at meetings, mentioning particularly the local Press.

The Planning Committee considered approximately 400 planning applications during the civic year. The Committee gave detailed attention to all the applications and many Members visited the application sites in their Wards and studied the plans in advance of the meetings. The District Council reported on 391 applications and some 84% of the Committee's recommendations were upheld at the District Council, identical to last year.

There has not been much progress with the Area Action Plan this year, although this will resume in importance later this year. However, there has been a strong focus on the Core Strategy, a document for Mid Sussex, which has given rise to serious questions locally. The Town Council, working in partnership with the community, and for which a public meeting was held at the end of February, has made its views known in response to the consultation. Broadly, there is no support for the scale of housing proposed locally, but a smaller amount of housing, as yet undefined in term of numbers, would be acceptable given clear guarantees and assurances regarding infrastructure contributions. The Town Council has constituted a Three Tiers Group to drive forward its own contribution in this regard.

It will be interesting to see the effect that the credit crunch has on planning issues locally. There is already evidence that developers are struggling to sell some of the many flats

erected in recent years. If this brings a change to the pattern of development locally with a greater emphasis on small family housing, the Planning Committee would welcome this. That Committee continues to make recommendations on all applications submitted within the civil parish and comments also on planning appeals and other consultations.

The Public Services Committee has been engaged in a whole range of consultations ensuring effective and considered representations are made in the interests of the local community. Primary focus this year has been on health care issues including the badly thought out “Fit for the Future” proposals. The Town Council has made clear that this needs to have regard to cross boundary issues and that there needs to be a particular focus on issues of accident and emergency and maternity and obstetrics services, specifically as they impact upon East Grinstead. The Town Council was also pleased to support the campaign to preserve services at the Princess Royal Hospital. Other matters considered by the Public Services Committee, details of which are well documented in Committee reports and minutes, have included proposals for enhancement of the household waste recycling centre at High Grove, evaluations of the BAA noise and track keeping systems, parking issues in the Town, the King Street public toilets, post box facilities, public transport issues, footway lighting agreements, the South East Draft Water Resources Management Plan, proposals for a Definitive Map Modification Order for Rice’s Hill – an application specifically initiated by this Council, community safety issues, CCTV, and the electoral review of West Sussex County Council. In addition there have been regular reports on policing issues, an area where we enjoy excellent relationships with our Sector Commander and his staff and specifically in relation to Speed Watch, monitoring of crime statistics and the valuable work of Local Action Teams.

The Leisure and Tourism Committee is responsible for all buildings in the ownership of the Town Council. Income remained high for our three buildings – Meridian Hall, East Court Mansion and the Old Court House – but following a maintenance audit significant long term investment in those properties was identified and for which programmes have been prepared that are likely to continue for the remainder of the administration. There has been a comprehensive review of the usage of the buildings and of fees and charges with the intention of improving their efficiency and effectiveness. Particular attention here is being focused upon making energy efficient improvements.

The work of the Housekeeping Team has continued and the introduction of new performance indicators, including for graffiti removal, is designed to provide Members with more information regarding these important services. It was pleasing that East Grinstead received a Silver Award in last year’s South East in Bloom competition and the work of the East Grinstead in Bloom Committee, in partnership with the Housekeeping Team and other agencies, is recognised here.

The Council is committed to maintaining high standards of maintenance in its land holdings. In respect of Mount Noddy Cemetery works are now well advanced with the memorial wall, which is due to be constructed early this summer. Our two allotment sites, at Mount Noddy and Imberhorne, continue to be fully subscribed and we again pay tribute to the dedicated local Associations that manage and maintain these within the long-term leases that the Town Council has with them.

I would also wish to pay tribute to the East Grinstead Tourism initiative and the work of the staff in this area. The Town Council is pleased to have facilitated a “Planning for the Bluebell” Conference in the Meridian Hall in April, which was well supported and which prompted significant proposals for enhancements, not only to the Station area itself but more generally along Railway Approach. Here we would acknowledge the financial contribution of SEEDA who generously gave £9,500 to the consultancy works.

The Charities Committee, which looks after Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre and the Parish Halls Trusts, is independent of the Town Council but is managed by the Town Council

as sole custodian Trustee. All Councillors have the opportunity of becoming Trustees of these Charities and the Town Clerk serves as Clerk to the Trustees. Chequer Mead has had another excellent year with a continuing attractive programme of events and activities in the Theatre, in the Gallery and increasing numbers of bookings in the meeting rooms. Our caterer has maintained high standards. As always we are grateful to the Chief Executive and his hard working and diligent staff for their achievement. Pleasingly equity in the Trust again increased during the year.

The Parish Halls have had a difficult year, mainly occasioned by a number of building defects, which came to light during the inclement winter. As a consequence the Trust's balances were spent on maintenance. Following a detailed review the Council decided that the Parish Halls should receive a major injection of capital funds in order to comprehensively refurbish the Large and Small Halls. At the same time it was agreed to demolish the predominantly single storey central section to enable a new build to be constructed to provide dedicated accommodation for Age Concern. The needs of that organisation have been clearly identified for a number of years, most recently in the Health Check. The organisation had not been able to find suitable alternative premises and the opportunity for the Trust to work in constructive partnership with Age Concern, with funding support from the Town Council, has clearly been seen as a win win for both organisations. We were grateful to Mid Sussex District Council for its offer of a generous financial contribution towards the scheme. A loan will be taken out for residual capital costs and it is hoped that works will commence later this calendar year.

The Finance and General Purposes Committee has overall responsibility for the Council's resources, its finances and staffing. Following the Local Government Bill achieving Royal Assent in the spring the Town Council no longer has a statutory duty of best value, although the Town Council's commitment to ensure this in everything it does will continue.

The Town Council's financial position is healthy. The Council has no debts, increased its revenue balances during the year, although we had budgeted for a slight deficit, and we were able to provide a modest and viable capital programme. In the coming year a Band D council taxpayer will pay £62.11 for their portion of the Town Council's services, an increase of 8.9% on 2007/2008 financial year. The Council has given a commitment that future increases for the life of this administration will be less than 5% annually.

The Finance & General Purposes Committee is responsible for community support and for our various partnerships. The Council recognises that it is best able to fulfil its obligations where it works constructively in partnership with others. This creates an enhanced degree of community ownership and real benefits, not least financial. Here I would like to particularly commend the East Grinstead Town Twinning Association, the East Grinstead Community Partnership, the Christmas Lights Committee and the East Grinstead Christmas Promotions Committee all of who do such sterling work locally.

There are also many other voluntary groups and organisations working within the town who do excellent work. It has been my pleasure to see them at work this year, and I am delighted that the Town Council is able to support their work with grant aid and/ or assistance in kind. Particularly I would mention the Council for Voluntary Service, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern, the Access Group, Furnihelp, East Grinstead Community Transport, East Grinstead Credit Union and East Grinstead branch of Fairtrade. There are also many other groups and organisations who operate quietly and productively within the Town and we do thank them all.

The Town Council has during recent months re-energised its commitment towards business support and green issues and the environment generally. Two dedicated working groups have been established to further our work in these areas and these will be reporting back to Council via their parent programme committees.

Last autumn I was pleased to hold a Civic Service at St Swithun's Church, and I would thank the Minister, the Rev Canon Clive Everett Allen for helping to arrange this.

During the year I was pleased to raise £5,200 for charity. A number of fundraising events were held including a Fashion Show, a Race Night and a Charity Dinner Dance at Chequer Mead. I would like to thank everyone who supported these and other events. As a consequence I am able to present a cheque for £4,700 to the Greenstede Talking News for the Blind, my main chosen Charity for the year and a cheque for £500 to Chatterbox, a local charity based at the Queen Victoria Hospital who provide speech therapy for stroke victims. These come with my sincere best wishes and gratitude for the work both charities undertake.

In my year as Town Mayor I have attended 203 events, excluding council and committee meetings. A list of these is attached to this report as Appendix A. I am most grateful to my wife, Janet, who has served as my Mayoress, and given all the support that I could have asked for throughout the past year. Every event I have attended has been worthwhile and enjoyable and I am grateful for the warm welcome I have received from everywhere I have been.

At the beginning of this meeting I thanked Members of the Council for their contribution towards its work during the year and I now wish to thank the Town Council staff for their support for the Council and its work during the year also. It has been much appreciated. This year we were particularly pleased to welcome two new employees, including Alison Merricks, our Receptionist and Simon Wheaton, Outdoor Services Assistant. We wish them both well and hope they have a long and enjoyable period of employment with the Council.

Finally I wish to thank the public of East Grinstead for the welcome they have given myself and Janet throughout the year and for their many messages of support. We have many great memories, which will stay with us always and for that we are most grateful.

Councillor Ian Dixon,
Town Mayor
2007/2008 civic year.

**TOWN MAYOR'S DIARY OF EVENTS
2007/2008**

- May
- 15 Interview for Meridian FM Radio at East Court
- 17 Escapade Theatre's production of Romeo & Juliet at Chequer Mead*
- 18 Commemoration of John Mason Neale at Sackville College
- 23 It's a Knock Out at Kings Centre
Presentation of grant cheque to Stoolball Club at East Court Playing Fields
- 24 Presentation of certificates for Open University Adult Learners Week
- 26 Scouts Camp at Nutley*
- 28 Classical Concert at Saint Hill Manor
- June
- 1 East Grinstead Operatic Society's Production of Keep Smiling Through at Chequer Mead*
- 3 Street Clean up in Town with EGTC Members and Staff for World Environment Day.
- 5 Good To See You Day at East Court for MS Society*
- 7 Opening of refurbished shop for British Heart Foundation in London Road*
- 8 Scouting Exhibition at Town Museum*
Production of "Straight No Chaser" by Arts Gigantic at Chequer Mead*
- 10 Assisted East Grinstead in Bloom with hanging of flower baskets in Town Centre*
Nautical Training Corps Founders Day Service at Brighton*
Homelessness Service at St Peter's Church*
- 12 Meeting with East Grinstead Arts Society to hang new pictures in Mayor's Parlour
- 13 Patronal Festival Evensong at St Barnabas Church, Dormansland*
- 15 Meeting with Mr & Mrs Wickerman in Mayor's Parlour to discuss Farm School venture at Peredur Centre
Age Concern AGM and Cream Tea in Meridian Hall
- 16 Street Collection in High Street for Access Group
St Mary's School Fair, Windmill Lane
Sleep Out in High Street to raise awareness for the homeless*
- 17 Production of Twelfth Night at Saint Hill Manor
- 20 East Grinstead Carer's Cream Tea at Glen Vue Centre*
Tourism Forum at Town Museum
- 22 Art Exhibition by Joannis Antoniadis at Chequer Mead
- 23 Street Collection for Sackville College in Need
Opening of Founder's Day celebrations at Sackville College
Myfanway Townsend Melanoma Research appeal at Dove's Barn Nursery
East Grinstead Choral Society Concert at Imberhorne School, Windmill Lane*
- 24 East Grinstead Music & Arts Festival Garden Party at East Court*
- 25 Production of Macbeth at Peredur Centre, Dunnings Road
- 26 Trefoil Montessori children's production of Midsummer's Night Dream at Peredur Centre
Meeting with East Grinstead Traders Association members in High Street
North East Area Music Centre Concert at Chequer Mead
- 27 Student's Questions "What do Councillors Do" at Sackville School
Laying of Wreath at East Court Memorial and attendance at Meridian Hall for Veterans Day*
Production of Shake, Ripple & Roll at Fonthill Lodge School
- 29 Represented by Mayoress at Dutton-Homestall Lecture at Stoke Brunswick School*
- 30 8th East Grinstead Scouts BBQ and party at St Mary's Church Hall, Windmill Lane*

- July
- 1 Summer Swing Time with Acker Bilk at Saint Hill for Princess of Wales' birthday in aid of British Red Cross and the Bluebell Railway*
 - 3 Chatterbox Speech Therapy Club 1st Birthday Party at Queen Victoria Hospital.*
 - 5 Opening of Hallmark Travel Exhibition at Felbridge Hotel.
 - 7 Street Collection for Sackville College in Need.
School of Oriental Medicine Graduation Day at Green Hedges Avenue
Girl Guide Camp at Blacklands
 - 8 Summer Garden Party at Saint Hill Manor*
 - 10 Meeting with Mr Watson of Caravan Club in Mayor's Parlour
St Mary's Primary School Gold Arts Awards
 - 12 Bowls Evening with Members and Town Council staff at East Court
 - 13 Choirpower Concert at Chequer Mead*
 - 15 BBQ and Fun Day at Turners Hill Park
 - 17 Jigsaw4U Tea on the terrace at East Court
Say No to Drugs evening at Saint Hill Manor*
 - 18 Opening of HSBC Bank in London Road
Meads School production of "Alice the Musical" at Chequer Mead*
 - 22 Soroptimist's Garden Party at Sackville College*
 - 27 Communion at Sackville College
 - 30 Opening of new nets at East Grinstead Cricket Ground
 - 31 Presentation of Meridian Line Certificates at East Court
- Aug
- 1 Centenary Celebration of Scouting at East Court
 - 5 Classical Concert and Arts Festival Opening at Saint Hill Manor*
 - 11 Presentation of grant cheque to East Grinstead Football Club, accompanied by Councillor Mrs Mainstone
 - 16 Grenestede Talking News AGM at East Court*
 - 23 Young People's Environment Project at St Luke's Church
 - 24 Communion at Sackville College
 - 30 Big Magic Recycling Bus project in car park opposite Library
- Sept
- 6 Rotary Club's Charity Golf Tournament at Lingfield Golf Course
 - 8 Open Day at Fire Station, London Road
 - 9 Patronal Service at St Mary's Church, Windmill Lane*
Chief Scout Awards and Lunch at Windmill Lane*
Songs of Praise at St Mary's Church, Windmill Lane*
 - 10 Amnesty International Tree Planting at East Court
Open of new Indian Restaurant at Crawley Down
 - 12 Scout AGM at Steyning
 - 14 "Through the Lens" Exhibition at Town Museum
East Grinstead in Blooms Awards at Meridian Hall, East Court
 - 20 Presentation of IIP plaque to Blonde McIndoe Centre at Queen Victoria Hospital
 - 21 Music & Arts Festival AGM at Meridian Hall, East Court*
 - 22 Cutting of start ribbon for Aquaduct Charity Bike Ride at Sackville School
 - 24 East Grinstead Access AGM and presentation of Burrin Award at East Court
 - 25 Carers Support Exhibition at Meridian Hall
 - 27 East Grinstead Council for Voluntary Service AGM at East Court
 - 28 Visit to Blonde McIndoe Laboratories at Queen Victoria Hospital
Opening of Joe O'Donovan's Art Exhibition at Grenestede Gallery, Chequer Mead*
 - 30 Town Mayor's Civic Service at St Swithun's Church*
Mid Sussex District Council Chairman's Garden Party at Danny House*

- Oct
- 2 Presentation of Queen Victoria Hospital Staff Awards at Chequer Mead
- 3 Opening of refurbished East Court playground
- 4 Gateway Club Party at Wallis Centre*
- 5 1343 Squadron Dinner at Roebuck Hotel*
- 6 Presentation of Writing Award for National Literacy Trust at Wealden House
Multiple Sclerosis Charity Tea
- 7 Athletic Club's Cross Country Run at East Court
- 9 Sackville School Art Exhibition at Chequer Mead
- 10 Sussex Partnership NHS at Hove
- 11 CVS Volunteering at The Library, West Street
- 13 Guinea Pig Dinner at Felbridge Hotel
- 19 East Grinstead Society AGM at East Court
- 23 Friends of Queen Victoria Hospital handover ceremony in Meridian Hall
- 28 Nautical Training Event at the Triangle, Burgess Hill
Presentation of cheque to Bluebell Railway at Saint Hill Manor*
- 31 NSPCC Annual General Meeting at Old School Hall, Cuckfield
- Nov
- 3 East Grinstead Football Club Firework Display at East Court
- 6 Launch of East Grinstead Monopoly Board at Martells, Queens Walk
- 7 Nautical Training Corp prize giving at Wallis Centre
- 10 Outset Youth Action & Duke of Edinburgh certificate presentations at the
Library, West Street
East Grinstead Choral Society Concert at St Mary's, Windmill Lane*
- 17 East Grinstead Music & Arts Festival Dinner at Rowfant
Thanksgiving Service for HM the Queen & HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's
Diamond Wedding at Chichester Cathedral
- 23 Town Twinning AGM in Meridian Hall
- 24 Photo call for Sainsburys and Waitrose Supermarkets – parcels for soldiers in
Iraq
- Dec
- 1 Tree Lighting Ceremony for Rotary Christmas Tree in High Street
Scouts Christingle at Imberhorne Lower School
- 5 Meeting with Chamber of Commerce at Dorset Arms
SAFFA Christmas Concert at Chequer Mead
- 6 Concert at Fonthill Lodge School*
- 7 Christmas Carol Service at Sackville College*
Reading of a Lesson at Carol Service for the public at Sackville College
- 8 Supporting fund raising event at Stildon Nursing Home
Christmas Lights Concert at Chequer Mead*
- 9 Christmas Shopping Event and Santa's Procession through Town*
MSDC Civic Service at All Saints, Lindfield
- 10 Chamber of Commerce Lunch at Ashdown Hotel
Selling of Poppies for Royal British Legion in High Street and London Road
Drinks Reception at Queen Victoria Hospital
- 11 Attendance at East Court Memorial and High Street Memorial for
Remembrance Sunday
Presentation of gift tokens to winners of Mayor's Xmas Card Competition at
Fonthill Lodge School
- 12 East Grinstead Pensioners Association Party at Church Hall, Windmill Lane
Christmas Party at Sackville College
- 13 Dinner for Council for Voluntary Service at Rowfant House
- 14 Interview with Meridian FM at East Court
Age Concern East Grinstead Christmas Party at East Court
Walking the Town to promote Traders' Christmas Shopping Evening
- 15 Raffle for Red Cross at West Street shop
U3A Concert in Parish Halls

- 16 East Grinstead Choral Society Concert at Sackville School
Mayor's Carols and Reception at East Court
Carol Service at St Barnabas Church, Dormansland
- 18 Sponsorship Sign press event at Akorn Recruitment
Air Cadets Christmas Presentation
- 19 Birthday Party for Cllr Jean Glynn at Alexandra House
Presentations to Year 13 students at Imberhorne School
- 20 Sackville School Carol Service at St Swithun's Church*
- 21 Town Council Staff Lunch at East Court*
- 24 Tour of Wards at Queen Victoria Hospital
- Jan 2008**
- 8 Service at St Swithun's Church for Mr Keith Brown
- 12 Fonthill Lodge School Bi-centenary service at St Swithun's Church
- 13 Celebration Tea for First Class Weekender launch at Sheffield Park Bluebell Railway Station*
- 17 Rotary Club "Youth Speaks" Competition at Chequer Mead
- 18 Exhibition at East Grinstead Town Museum
- 23 Fundraising event for British Heart Foundation Nurses at BHF shop, London Road
- 25 Art Exhibition at The Gallery, Chequer Mead*
- 28 Presentation of prizes to Kumon Maths/English students at Kings Centre
- Feb**
- 1 Town Mayoress represented Mayor at opening of new Tyre Centre on Birches Estate
Town Mayor's Charity Race Night in Meridian Hall
- 2 East Grinstead Lions Senior Citizens Party at Sackville School
- 4 Presentation of Outset Youth Action Awards at Pizza Express
- 5 Sackville School Careers Convention*
- 12 MS Society Lunch at Crawley College
- 23 Act One Beginners presentation of Lion, Witch & Wardrobe at Chequer Mead*
- 27 Launch of Audio Visual facility at Tourist Information Centre in Library
- 29 Grenestede Talking News Anniversary event at Old Court House
Sovereign Finance birthday celebration cake cutting
Presentations on behalf of War Memorial Company in Meridian Hall
- Mar**
- 7 Interviewed by Notre Dame students as part of national news reporting project
- 8 East Grinstead Chamber Orchestra Concert at St Mary's Church Hall
- 13 Verbania students visiting East Court and Meridian Line
Founder's Birthday event at Saint Hill Manor
- 15 Production of The Tempest at Brambletye School
- 17 County Local Committee meeting at Ashurst Wood Village Centre
- 20 Visit by Imberhorne and Tanzanian students to East Court and Meridian Line
- 29 Lunch event at Rugby Club, Saint Hill
East Grinstead Choral Society Concert at St Mary's Church Hall*
- Apr**
- 1 Rotary Club Lunch and Talk at Woodcock Inn
- 2 Meeting with Managing Director of company relocating to Birches Industrial Estate
Opening of new Indian Restaurant in King Street
- 3 Fashion Show in Meridian Hall in aid of Grenestede Talking News*
- 4 MSDC Chairman's Dinner & Dance at Effingham Park Hotel*
- 5 East Grinstead Town Football Club Game for League promotion
- 6 Classical Concert at Saint Hill*
- 11 Town Mayor's Charity Dinner Dance at Chequer Mead*
- 12 Search for a Star at Chequer Mead*

- 16 Soroptimist Dinner at Yew Lodge, Felcourt Road*
- 18 Dinner in aid of Say No to Drugs Campaign at Saint Hill*
- 22 Production of Gingerbread Lady by The Forest Players at Forest Row Parish Hall in aid of Mayor's Charity*
- 24 Reception for St Barnabas and St Luke's Churches in Mayor's Parlour, East Court
- 25 Opening of new Company on Birches Industrial Estate
- 26 Sunshine Sevens Event at East Grinstead Rugby Club, Saint Hill
- 26 Ladies Day Sunshine Sevens Event at East Grinstead Rugby Club, Saint Hill*
- 27 Vintage Bus Day events*
Sunshine Sevens Event at East Grinstead Rugby Club, Saint Hill*
St George's Day Parade and reception at St Swithun's Church Hall*
- 30 Young Enterprise at Chequer Mead
- May
- 2 Wallis Centre Judo display at Chequer Mead
- 3 East Grinstead Sports Centre G4S Netball Centre official opening
Football Club presentation of certificate for Sussex County League promotion
- 5 Lions Mayfair in High Street
- 6 Presentation of graduation certificates to Imberhorne School students at Lingfield Racecourse*
- 9 Public Meeting in Meridian Hall to discuss East Grinstead Community Play
- 11 Haywards Heath Town Council Civic Service at St Pauls RC Church*