

PERFORMANCE PLAN 2008/2009



Amenities Team in action

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

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1. BEST VALUE IN DELIVERING PERFORMANCE - AN INTRODUCTION

In my introduction to the Town Council's Best Value Performance Plan last year (2007/2008) I wrote: "This may well be the last year that the Town Council is subject to the statutory duty of best value. The Local Government and Public Health Information Bill, which is currently going through Parliament seeks to remove this duty for parish and town councils. Notwithstanding this the Town Council remains fully committed to delivering best value in all aspects of its service operations and will continue to produce an annual performance plan in future years whether or not there is a legal requirement so to do." Well my prophecy was correct, the new legislation is in place and the statutory duty of Best Value is no more.

However as promised we have remained fully committed to measuring, and importantly, reporting on our performance and yet we are now able to do this in a way that is if anything more transparent than previously as instead of ticking boxes in conformance of what civil servants in Whitehall thought was necessary we can now provide evidence in a more readable format that specifically focuses on the past year – what we said we'd do, what we've done, and how much it cost for example, and what we intend to do in the coming year. To support this report we have included performance statistics wherever possible, and where we have failed to meet our targets we have indicated what we intend to do in future to improve matters. Interestingly one of our key measures for the coming year is to comprehensively review our performance management systems and measurable indices to ensure these are truly robust and meaningful.

James Baldwin

Leader of the Council

September 2008

2. TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC CONSULTATION PROCESSES

East Grinstead Town Council is committed to the concept of active and meaningful public consultation and liaison.

For many years the Town Council has encouraged public participation at all meetings of Council and Programme Committees. A period of 30 minutes at the commencement of each Council meeting and 15 minutes before each Committee meeting is specifically set aside for **public question time** and this procedure is written into the Council's Standing Orders. In order to ensure the widest possible public involvement in the process no advance tabling of questions is required and neither is it necessary for questions to refer to items on an agenda for the meeting in question or even relate to the work of the Committee at which the question is asked. Wherever possible questions are answered at the meeting but where this is not possible written replies are forwarded within seven working days. All questions and answers are recorded in the public minutes of the meeting.

The Town Council issues on a quarterly basis its newsletter '**Civic News**' as a means of explaining its policies and the key issues being dealt with at any specific time to local residents. This newsletter, which comprises a minimum four sides of A4, is distributed to all residents, usually by the Royal Mail household delivery service. Each edition records the names of all elected Members, their home address, telephone number and party affiliation. It positively encourages public communication.

All members of the Town Council hold **public surgeries** in East Grinstead Library on a regular basis and details of these are available from the Library or on the Town Council's Web site.

The Town Council offices at East Court are open to the public from 9 am until 4 p.m., five days per week. In addition a **Help Point** (telephone 01342 300780) is maintained in East Grinstead Library as an opportunity for the public to raise concerns about the services provided by any public authority. This is a partnership initiative between West Sussex County Council (the lead authority), Mid Sussex District Council, East Grinstead Town Council and a number of other agencies.

The Town Council maintains a comprehensive **web site (www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk)** and this is regularly updated. The site, which is a past national winner amongst all parish and town council sites in the Local Council Review/Co-operative Bank communication awards, includes up to date information regarding elected Councillors (including a photograph of each Councillor to aid public identification), details of meetings, services provided by the Town Council, the last audited accounts and editorial regarding specific issues before the Town Council at any specific time. There is also a comprehensive news section and an opportunity for visitors to the site to give feedback. The approved Performance Plan appears on the web site and this includes a summary of the key action plan requirements emanating from each service review as they are completed.

The Town Council uses the **Annual Town Meeting** as a Forum to discuss with interested electors issues pertaining to best value and in particular local services and service delivery.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNCIL, ITS MEMBERSHIP AND ESTABLISHMENT

East Grinstead Town Council is a successor authority that was formed in 1974 consequent upon the Local Government Act 1972. The Council serves an homogenous area located in the North East of the County of West Sussex and north of the High Weald in Mid Sussex. The Town is fortunate in it is surrounded by attractive countryside with Green Belt to the north in Surrey, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and south (where the boundary abuts East Sussex) and with an area of development restraint to the west which coincides with a strategic gap that separates the town from Crawley Down and then from Crawley. There is a second strategic gap to the southeast that protects against coalescence with the village of Ashurst Wood.

The Town Council has achieved Quality accreditation status (less than 10% of all parish and town council councils nationally attain this success), and was a past national runner-up in the NALC Council of the Year awards (2006).

Staffing

The Town Councils staffing establishment is headed up by the Town Clerk, who is assisted by a team of full and part-time officers. A chart giving details of the approved staffing establishment in 2008/2009 is reproduced in Appendix A.

All office staff are based at the Town Council offices at East Court. The outdoor service personnel carry out their functions at a number of sites within the civil parish of East Grinstead but all work out of Mount Noddy Cemetery in Blackwell Road. The caretaking/cleaning staff team are responsible for East Court Mansion, Meridian Hall, the Old Court House and the Parish Halls (a registered charity owned and managed by the Council). The Tourism and Information Officer and his part-time assistant work out of East Grinstead Library with the co-operation and active partnership support of West Sussex County Council Library Service.

This establishment has stabilised in recent years and annual staff changes run at about 10%, which is below sector average. The approved establishment reflects councillor's priorities to ensure the council is adequately resourced to meet service delivery demands, including opportunities for devolution, to recognise the incorporation at arms length of Chequer Mead (by means of a sole custodian charity) and to provide enhanced support to the Town Clerk and elected members.

Elected Councillors

A list of East Grinstead Town Council Members is attached to this Plan as Appendix B. The current Council (18 members in a total of six wards) was elected in May 2007 for a new four-year term. The next elections are due to take place in May 2011. Historically elections have always been fought and there is a history of active civic involvement in the Town that is considered to be healthy for effective democracy.

All Members are unpaid but have entitlement to modest allowances, which are set by an Independent Panel, which recognises the significant commitment they are required to give to fulfilling their democratic responsibilities and mandate. The following Members received a gross allowance of £927.82 based upon the recommendation of the Mid Sussex District Allowances Panel. From this deductions were taken as appropriate for tax and allowances: Councillors Baldwin, Banks, Mrs Bennett, Mrs Brunsdon, Mrs Collins DL, Dixon, Johnson, Joyce-Nelson, Mainstone, Mrs Mainstone, Reed and Starmer. No allowances were paid to, or claimed by, Councillors Barnett, Gillbard, Lord, Marmara, Musk or Mrs Waddingham.

The Town Council elects a Town Mayor from its own membership each year along with a Deputy Town Mayor at the Annual Town Council meeting in May of each year.

In June 2006 the Town Council approved a policy document that set out the expectations of elected Town Councillors in terms of their **roles and duties**. These are reproduced below.

- (i) Collectively be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out strategic and corporate management functions;
- (ii) Contribute to the good governance of the area and encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
- (iii) Effectively represent the interests of their electoral divisions and of individual constituents and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process;
- (iv) Respond to constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially;
- (v) Participate in the governance and management of the Council, and
- (vi) Be available to represent the Council on other bodies.

In addition to having a specified role, **Councillor's rights and duties** were also agreed as follows:

- (vii) Councillors will have such rights of access to such documents and information as are necessary for the proper discharge of their functions and in accordance with the law, and will be supported at all times by the Council's paid staff in training, and advice generally.
- (viii) Councillors will not make public information, which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Council or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a councillor or officer entitled to know it.
- (ix) Councillors will at all times observe the Members Code of Conduct and behave in an ethical manner.

Code of Conduct

The Town Council adopted the revised Code of Conduct on 2 April 2007 the principle of the new Code of Conduct was formally accepted and all Councillors formally signed to adhere to this prior to taking up their roles as Town Councillors.

Committees

At the Annual Town Council meeting in May, Committees are agreed for the following civic year together with their Chairman, Vice Chairman and elected membership. Details of the Committee structure are attached to this Plan as Appendix C. A list of Council and Committee meeting dates for 2008/2009 civic year is attached to the Plan as Appendix D. Details of individual Committee memberships can be obtained from the Town Council offices or they can be downloaded from www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk

Much of the Council's work is delegated to the four programme Committees - Finance & General Purposes, Amenities & Tourism, Public Services, and Planning. Council and each Committee have dedicated Terms of Reference, which were last reviewed as part of the Best Value Plan process in June 2007.

A full listing of the new Terms of Reference is set out below.

Terms of Reference for Council

- (a) The power of raising loans and making the Rate;
- (b) The power of incurring capital expenditure not specifically included in the Council's approved estimate of expenditure for the time being;
- (c) The appointment to or co-option on a Committee or Sub-Committee of a person who is not a member of the Council or the Committee;
- (d) Standing Orders and the functions and constitution of Committees and Sub-Committees;
- (e) Dates of meetings of the Council;
- (f) Appointment or nomination by the Council of persons to fill vacancies on outside bodies arising during the Council year;
- (g) Filling of vacancies occurring on any Committee of the Council during the Council year, and
- (h) The appointment or dismissal of the Town Clerk.

Terms of Reference for the Finance & General Purposes Committee

- (a) The making of recommendations to Council in respect of the following items:
 - (i) The appointment to or co-option on a Committee or Sub-Committee of a person (on a strictly non-voting basis) who is not a Member of the Council or the Committee;
 - (ii) Standing Orders and the functions and constitution of Committees and Sub-Committees;
 - (iii) Dates of meetings of the Council;
 - (iv) Appointment or nomination by the Council of persons to fill vacancies on outside bodies arising during the Council year;
 - (v) Filling of vacancies occurring on any Committee of the Council during the Council year; and
 - (vi) The appointment or dismissal of the Town Clerk.
- (b) Dealing with all matters relating to the general day-to-day administration of the Council;
- (c) Dealing with matters specifically referred by the Town Council or any other Standing Committee and with all matters not specifically referred or delegated to any other Standing Committee:
- (d) Dealing with the Terms and Conditions of Service and superannuation of the Town Council's staff and making appropriate recommendations relying on, where appropriate, the Scheme of Conditions of Service of the National Joint Councils, the

National Association of Local Councils, and the Local Conditions of Service of the Mid Sussex District Council;

- (e) The making of appropriate recommendations in respect of community and other grants from the Town Council's revenue and capital funds;
- (f) Giving consideration to, agreeing and making appropriate recommendation in respect of the Town Council's revenue estimates, including reimbursable expenditure;
- (g) Acting as lead Committee in respect of any partnership initiative of a corporate nature with the principal Local Authorities for the area including, as appropriate, the development of Joint Partnership Committees and recommendations on Terms of Reference and constitutional matters.

Terms of Reference for the Public Services Committee:

- (a) The making of representations to the appropriate authority in respect of highways matters.
- (b) The making of representations to the appropriate authority in respect of public transport services.
- (c) The making of representations to the appropriate authority in respect of all health care/service matters.
- (d) The making of representations to Sussex Police Authority and other appropriate police personnel in respect of all local policing matters, including the establishment of joint partnership initiatives.
- (e) The making of representations to Mid Sussex District Council regarding Public Entertainment Licensing and Licensed Premises generally.
- (f) All other matters (except planning) which are the responsibility of third party agencies and directly affect the town's basic infrastructure

Terms of Reference for the Amenities & Tourism Committee:

- (a) Dealing with the provision, maintenance and management of the Parish Halls, The Old Court House, East Court Mansion and grounds, the Meridian Hall, and the maintenance and management of any other land holdings and/or buildings of a leisure nature - amenities, sports, cultural or community for example - and the making of recommendations annually to the Finance & General Purposes Committee of rents and charges;
- (b) Dealing with the provision and maintenance street furniture and Town Council public owned facilities including: -
 - (i) Public clock
 - (ii) War memorials
 - (iii) Public seats
 - (iv) Bus Shelters
 - (v) Public Notice Boards
 - (vi) Salt and Grit Bins
- (c) Dealing with the provision and maintenance of allotments and cemeteries;

- (d) The co-ordination and direction of the Council's environmental improvement programme and related initiatives;
- (e) Dealing with the publication of the official Town Guide, Town Map and other publications relevant to the work of the Committee;
- (f) The provision of an emergency community handyman/housekeeping service;
- (g) The provision and maintenance of all street and footway lighting in the ownership of the Town Council;
- (h) Co-ordination of any Town Council community safety initiatives including the local provision of CCTV.
- (i) The making of recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee regarding matters relating to the Town Council's staff engaged on caretaking and cleaning duties and in the cemeteries.
- (j) The making of recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee regarding grant applications from the Council's Capital Initiatives Fund.
- (k) The facilitation of Tourism initiatives and the provision of tourist information facilities for the Town in liaison, as appropriate, with other local authorities and agencies.

Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee:

- (a) The making of representations to the Local Planning Authority on applications for planning permission which have been notified in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, Section 20, Schedule 16 and other relevant legislation.
- (b) The making of representations in respect of appeals against the refusal of planning permission.
- (c) The making of recommendations regarding street naming.
- (d) To consider and monitor the Town and other developmental plans and the making of all appropriate representations.
- (e) The facilitation of economic development initiatives, including those pertaining to town centre matters, for the benefit of East Grinstead and the making of recommendations on all related matters and liaison as appropriate with other agencies.
- (f) The making of representations to the appropriate Planning Authority in respect of other planning matters not otherwise referred to in Terms of Reference (a) - (e) above.

Terms of Reference for the Charities Committee

During 2004 the Town Council established an independent Charities Committee, with the following specified Terms of Reference, to deal with all matters pertaining to Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre and Parish Halls Trust. All members serve on this committee in a capacity of Trustees and not Councillors. Their prime duty is to the two charitable trusts and not to the council.

'To further the objects of the Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre Charity (1108890) and the East Grinstead Parish Halls Charity (charity no. 206371) strictly within the terms of the appropriate declarations of trust and charitable law according to the requirements of the charity commission.'

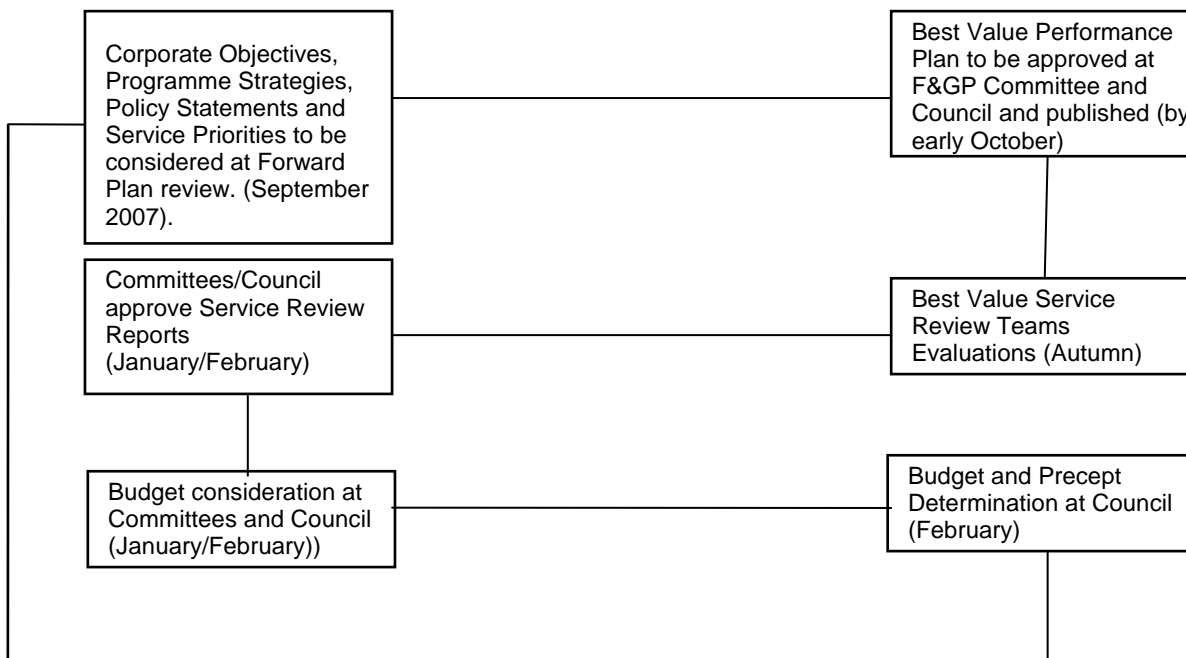
The work of the Charities Committee, being arms length from the Town Council, is not reviewed as part of the Best Value Plan although the grant aid that is paid to Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre is subject to this Plan and was the subject of the 2006/2007 review. This is reported on in greater detail in section 6 of the Plan.

The Parish Halls Trust is generally self-financing from income though recent building maintenance issues adversely impacted on balances to the extent that a grant of £15,000 was awarded the Trust in March 2008 to ensure continuing viability pending the major redevelopment programme that is likely to commence late 2008/2009 financial year.

4. THE TOWN COUNCIL'S BUSINESS PLANNING PROCESSES

The Town Council has an established business planning process that sets out its priorities and how these are to be achieved. At the beginning of each new administration a strategic forward action plan is approved setting out detailed service and policy intentions for that and the following year and outline draft programmes for the following one or two years. These are then updated annually on a dynamic basis as part of the Performance Plan process. This recognises that a framework of approved services, strategies and work programmes is essential for the effectiveness of the Council's management and operation.

Summarised in flow chart form the Council's business planning process will be as follows during the coming civic year: -



As an integral element within the business plan the Council has approved a series of **corporate (strategic) objectives and a mission statement**. These were agreed in direct response to a recommendation of District Audit arising from the audit of the 2001/2002 Plan. These are set out below. The corporate objectives were last reaffirmed in June 2007.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To ensure East Grinstead is a desirable and thriving place in which to live and work by facilitating and providing quality, sustainable and affordable services which accord with the community's needs and aspirations.

CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

1. To be an accessible and accountable Town Council, fully responsive to the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, upholding the civic values and heritage of the town at all times. *(This objective is the primary responsibility of Council).*
2. To provide a range of local leisure, recreation, community and tourism services/facilities which complement those provided by the principal authorities, private and voluntary sector, seeking to work in positive and co-operative partnership with such bodies. *(This objective is the primary responsibility of Amenities & Tourism Committee).*
3. To provide effective, coherent and timely representational responses about services provided by other councils, agencies and organisations that have direct impact and relevance to the public of East Grinstead, to monitor the quality and scope of such services and to seek to influence the initiation of new services as appropriate. *(This objective is the primary responsibility of the Public Services Committee).*
4. To ensure that the Council's human and financial resources and built assets are managed efficiently, effectively and equitably, at all times in accordance with the principles of best value. *(This objective is the primary responsibility of Finance & General Purposes Committee).*
5. In conjunction with other bodies and the local community to make East Grinstead a pleasant place to live and work, to promote economic growth and prosperity and seek to ensure that all future development is planned, environmentally sustainable and appropriate. *(This objective is the primary responsibility of Planning Committee)*

In addition each Committee recommends and Council resolves a series of **programme strategies and policy statements**. These were last approved in June 2007 as part of the 2007/2008 Performance Plan. These strategies and statements that are set out below derive from the authority's overall vision and corporate planning process. They, in conjunction with the corporate objectives, assist in identifying service priorities and help to inform the forward revenue and capital programme which is agreed in November/December annually.

Finance & General Purposes Committee Programme Strategies and Policy Statements

Strategy Statement No. 1

The efficient and effective administration of the Town Council's affairs for the benefit of the residents of East Grinstead with specific attention to resource allocation, financial well-being and the pursuit of effective partnerships wherever possible.

Policy Statements No. 1

The Committee will: -

- (i) Look to provide the Town Council's services at the net minimum cost commensurate with maximum and effective fulfilment of the Council's operational role and policy aims.
- (ii) Seek to ensure the most profitable and efficient investment management policies.
- (iii) Adopt positive staffing policies and ensure compliance with national conditions of

service, welfare and health and safety at work legislation etc.

- (iv) Recognise the need for good business management in operating its services and will regularly undertake performance and systems reviews to ensure an economic, effective and efficient Town Council, including, where beneficial, opportunities for the introduction of new technology within the Council's office systems.
- (v) Recognise the need for, and benefits of, Member and staff training and will positively initiate and react to positive and appropriate opportunities within the context of overall budget resources.
- (vi) Pursue effective partnerships wherever possible, including those of a financial nature, in order to enhance existing service delivery or to bring new opportunities into the town for community benefit.

Strategy Statement No. 2

To provide a range of public education services to educate and inform local residents and others with regard to Council policies and regarding the Town and its history generally.

Policy Statement No. 2

- (i) To maintain positive and constructive working relationships with the local press and other media regarding all aspects of the Committee's operations and policies.
- (ii) To have published, and issued on a quarterly basis for the benefit of all local residents and taxpayers, the Town Council's newspaper "Civic News".
- (iii) To encourage throughout the Council's business operations more opportunities for democratic public input and participation including the provision of a period of Public Question Time at all Committee meetings.
- (iv) To recognise the important role the Town Council has, by itself and with others, to promote and encourage community opportunities for the overall benefit of the people of East Grinstead.

Amenities & Tourism Committee Programme Strategies and Policy Statements

Strategy Statement No. 1

The efficient operation of the Council's halls and lettings facilities - Meridian Hall, East Court Mansion, Parish Halls, the Old Court House, and any other leisure premises within the ownership of the Council - with specific regard to range/quality of service and financial viability, whether managed directly or as an agency by others.

Policy Statement No. 1

The Committee: -

- (i) Recognising the diverse needs of potential customers, should provide a range of leisure-based opportunities within its hall facilities, including opportunities for community, commercial and private hire.
- (ii) Will seek to encourage participation by promoting the Centres as social hubs for the community.
- (iii) Recognises the need for good business management in operating its major

halls/community facilities and will regularly review their operations to ensure an economic, efficient and effective service.

- (iv) Will seek to ensure the Council's buildings are as energy efficient as possible and that practical energy conservation measures are introduced wherever circumstances permit, and
- (v) Wherever possible, positively encourage the provision and use of facilities for people with disabilities.

Strategy Statement No. 2

Review the need for new or expanded leisure facilities and programmes where clear need and demand exist.

Policy Statement No. 2

The Committee will: -

- (i) Positively recognise the nature of changing public needs, the Council's own limited financial resources and the fact that any new facilities should be cost-effective.
- (ii) Constructively work with other public authorities and the private sector wherever possible to attract capital investment into East Grinstead to the overall benefit of the local community.
- (iii) Ensure that before any new commitments are entered into detailed capital and revenue financial appraisals, project specifications and other related considerations have been thoroughly analysed and reviewed.
- (iv) Wherever appropriate and subject to the Council's limited financial resources, seek to prevent the sale or disposal of public open space within the town for other than public use purposes and, where such sale may be at or close to public open space value, positively consider acquiring such land for the benefit of the local community.
- (v) Wherever possible, positively encourage the provision and use of facilities for people with disabilities.
- (vi) Positively encourage healthy living throughout the community.

Strategy Statement No. 3

The efficient provision of the Council's land based services - Cemeteries, Allotments, green spaces and general infrastructure - with particular emphasis on standards, customer liaison and costs.

Policy Statement No. 3

The Committee will: -

- (i) Seek to maintain and enhance the appearance of all its land holdings and particularly the Mount Noddy Cemetery, recognising the significance and importance of such standards.
- (ii) Ensure that in undertaking the Cemeteries and Allotments services, regard is had to the appropriate legislative requirements and that these are complied with at all times.

- (iii) Maintain and develop constructive and harmonious working relationships with allotment representatives to further the best interests of all allotment tenants.
- (iv) Ensure that a basic provision and upgrading of public seats is provided to the benefit of the local community and that such provision is most effectively located and maintained to an acceptable standard.

Strategy Statement No. 4

Seek to maintain and improve the town's environmental infrastructure with special attention given to litter and other campaign initiatives.

Policy Statement No. 4

The Committee will: -

- (i) Endeavour to improve the attraction of the town environment, working whenever possible in close liaison with the County and District Councils and other authorities/agencies.
- (ii) Participate in national, regional and local initiatives designed to stimulate public awareness and commitment to environmental issues.
- (iii) Encourage community participation and involvement in litter and other campaigning issues for education and environmental improvement purposes and to encourage environmental awareness and actions through the Town Council's own operations and in its liaisons and influences with other bodies with particular reference to local schools.
- (iv) Provide specific revenue funds to permit positive Council action in tackling issues of litter, grass cutting and one-off environmental improvement projects and to provide, maintain and improve, where appropriate, the Town Council's public lighting services, a basic provision of bus shelters and the ongoing maintenance of CCTV cameras (phase 2).

Strategy Statement No. 5

To provide a range of public information services to educate and inform local residents and visitors with regard to Council policies and regarding the Town and its history and tourism opportunities available.

Policy Statement No. 5

- (i) To maintain positive and constructive working relationships with the local press and other media regarding all aspects of the Committee's operations and policies.
- (ii) To deliver a range of visitor services from the East Grinstead Tourist Information Centre in accordance with policies agreed, as appropriate, with other local authorities.
- (iii) To produce and publish, as appropriate, Town Information Maps and Town Guides and other publications relevant to the work of the Committee.

Public Services Committee Programme Strategies and Policy Statements

Strategy Statement No. 1

Fulfil a positive, dynamic and effective local role and liaison in respect of all matters affecting the town community that are the responsibility of other local authorities and agencies.

Policy Statement No. 1

The Committee will: -

- (i) Develop its existing role as the major local community catalyst seeking to maintain existing services and secure improved services, achievements and benefits for the town and a greater awareness and understanding of the town's needs.
- (ii) Encourage closer relationships with other local authorities, Sussex police, public transport undertakings, health services and other agencies, including the establishment of regular opportunities/meetings for objective discussion and liaison.

Strategy Statement No. 2

To provide a range of public information services to educate and inform local residents and others with regard to Council policies that are relevant to the work of the Committee.

Policy Statement No. 2

- (i) To maintain positive and constructive working relationships with the local press and other media regarding all aspects of the Committee's operations and policies, and
- (ii) To have published, and issued as appropriate, publications relevant to the work of the Committee providing information about local services.

Committee is invited to give consideration to this report and recommend to F&GP accordingly.

Planning Committee Programme Strategies and Policy Statements

Strategy Statement No. 1

To seek to ensure high standards of planning for all new developmental activity within the Town boundary with specific attention to all appropriate local and statutory plan policies.

Policy Statement No. 1

The Committee will: -

- (i) Ensure positive and constructive input to Mid Sussex District Council in respect of all planning applications submitted.
- (ii) Ensure positive, constructive and well-researched input to all Local and Structure Plan reviews and to other planning and consultation documents issued by a principal authority for the area.
- (iii) Seek to ensure, within overall resources, maximum publicity and awareness of

planning applications by means of public notices and through effective press liaison.

- (iv) Positively contribute to discussions, evaluations and consultations in respect of major or contentious new development activity, including the establishment of formal meetings with professional planning staff to exchange views and consider detailed proposals whenever necessary.
- (v) Seek to prevent the loss of private and public open space, including playing fields, whenever possible.
- (vi) Recognise the intrinsic and historical importance of the High Street Conservation Area and East Court Conservation Area and seek to protect the environment of those important parts of the town at all times by close adherence to Local and Structure Plan policies for the areas.

Strategy Statement No. 2

To seek to influence the economic development and prosperity of the Town, in conjunction with other agencies where appropriate, with particular emphasis on retailing and tourism sectors.

Policy Statement No. 2

The Committee will: -

- (i) Constructively contribute to all Town Centre Management issues as appropriate and in conjunction with the Council's private and public sector partners look to positively influence matters relating to East Grinstead's retail economy.
- (ii) Seek to work with the County and District Councils and other agencies to enhance the economic development of the Town generally with specific emphasis towards appropriate and sympathetic tourism and use initiatives.

Strategy Statement No. 3

To provide a range of public information services to educate and inform local residents and others with regard to Council policies and regarding the Town and its history generally.

Policy Statement No. 3

To maintain positive and constructive working relationships with local press and other media regarding all aspects of the Committee's operations and policies.

Council Action Plan 2007-2011

In addition to the priority plans for each Committee the new Council administration at the beginning of its term of office agrees specific short, medium and long-term priorities to be addressed during the four-year term. For the 2007-2011 administration this Action Plan was agreed at an Away Day held at Ashdown Park on 14 July 2007. A copy is attached as Appendix F. Progress in achieving these actions will be measured annually at the September Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, commencing 2008, and will be reported in the following years plan. Specific aspects of the Plan are also incorporated elsewhere in this document.

5. TOWN COUNCIL SERVICES - AN OVERVIEW ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

This section provides information about past and future services performance in respect of the following aspects:

- * Overall financial outturn against budget / net cost of providing the service.
- * Committee responsibility;
- * Service Description and Objectives;
- * Achievements and Targets;
- * The performance indicators being used by the Council to monitor the service.

The Town Council's budget for 2007/2008 financial year was approved at Council on 5 February 2007, and the budget for 2008/2009 was approved at Council on 4 February 2008. The following table shows the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 original budgets and the outturn figures for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 financial years. The latter figures have been produced from information available prior to completion, and audit, of the Statement of Accounts. Accordingly there may be marginal differences between these figures and those contained in the final Accounts, partly accounted for by FRS17 adjustments, depreciation, and as some adjustments to reserves have not been fully taken into account. As similar situations have arisen in previous years comparisons are valid on a like for like basis.

Service Summary	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Democratic Representation/Management	54,569	94,510	82,829	87,680
Corporate Management	30,311	29,540	12,555	50,700
East Court Estate	106,822	90,800	130,214	127,140
Community Grants & Partnerships	123,167	128,710	133,238	161,490
Planning and Economic Development	32,957	22,360	21,110	24,810
Tourism Information Services	32,009	31,310	30,631	30,960
Cemetery Services	50,401	63,680	51,094	61,560
Grounds and Open spaces	-	131,850	110,846	121,650
Outside Services	112,099	-	-	-
Transfer to Capital fund/ Capital Exp. (net)	51,106	46,000	46,000	38,500
Total Services Expenditure	593,431	635,160	618,517	704,490

In respect of the capital fund it should be noted that year on year variances are primarily accounted for by the extent to which capital schemes are progressed in any one-year. Whilst funds are transferred into the capital fund on an annual basis the expenditure may well be incurred in a later year hence the variation between budget and actual spend.

Details of the Town Council's precept since 1998/99 is as follows with the Band D tax quoted alongside in brackets:

	£
1998/1999	435,000 (£40.48)
1999/2000	450,220 (£41.82)
2000/2001	464,140 (£45.56)
2001/2002	477,000 (£47.53)
2002/2003	506,000 (£49.86)
2003/2004	520,890 (£51.40)

2004/2005	536,000 (£52.22)
2005/2006	564,000 (£53.77)
2006/2007	583,800 (£55.37)
2007/2008	601,000 (£57.02)
2008/2009	660,890 (£62.09)

The latest year on year increase in precept is 8.9%. The tax base stayed broadly static at £10,644.00 compared with £10,540.80 in the previous year. It should be noted that the Band D Council tax for East Grinstead remains within the lowest decile for the 41 best value Town Councils. The above inflation rise in precept was accounted for by the Government's withdrawal of the statutory best value grant of £30,000 and the costs of the elections. The Council has made a public commitment to keep future rises in council tax during the lifetime of this administration at below 5%.

Wherever possible services have been linked within a broad cost centre in an attempt to aid and simplify financial management/monitoring and the review process. All Town Council services are incorporated within the service headings listed. The Town Council does administer a number of charities for which separate charitable accounts. These charities are not included within this Performance Plan and they are not subject to the statutory best value process.

The "resident" figures for East Grinstead, which have been used to calculate the performance indicators, are as set out below. Up to and including 2003 the figures were based on the 1991 census with adjustments advised by the demography units at West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council. The figures for 2004 - 2008 have been taken from the West Sussex County Council web site detailing the official census statistics as recorded in 2001. No other information is available at the present time.

1998 (revised)	-	24,121	1999 (revised)	-	24,081
2000 (revised)	-	24,066	2001 (estimated)	-	24,050
2002 (estimated)	-	24,100	2003 (estimated)	-	24,200
2004-2008	-	23,942			

Comparison of Services With Other Authorities and Organisations

Following the withdrawal of the Best Value grant from central government and the statutory requirement for best value at parish and town council level no further work has been conducted in the sector on benchmarking. However the Town Council has decided that it wishes to comprehensively review its detailed performance management system and this will be the subject of a Scrutiny study during the autumn of 2008 reporting to F&GP Committee. The outcomes of that work will be reflected in next years Plan.

Benchmarking

Due to the above the National Association of Local Councils conducted no national benchmarking exercise for 2007/2008. However using the previous years figures as a guide we have extrapolated our own performance against a basket of indicators, the results of which are set out below. Whilst these can be a good guide to performance there may be underlying factors which distort – high costs of interments for instance may result from the cemetery having a traditional layout with kerbstones as opposed to more modern lawned layouts where maintenance is substantially easier and costs reduce accordingly. Similarly the Town Councils allotments performance in terms of subsidy per plot has been consistently sector best because both sites have been let to local allotments associations and the terms of those agreements require the associations to meet all costs associated with the sites.

Performance Item	EGTC Performance 2006/2007	Sector Top Quartile 2006/2007	Sector Average 2006/2007	EGTC Performance 2007/2008
Average Cost of Interment	£800	£141	£529	£866
Average Cost of Allotment Plot	-£0.54	£23.00	£121	-£0.56
Planning Application Recommendations to Planning Authority within deadline	100%	100%	94%	100%
Invoices Paid within 30 days	99%	100%	95%	99%
Average No of Working Days Lost due to Sickness	4 days	Not available	Not available	5.3 days

Performance Indicators

The performance indicators being used above conform to best practice, which was initially recommended in independent research commissioned by the DTLR and the National Association of Local Councils. This is an acknowledgement of the enhanced performance management procedures that the Council needs to adopt to ensure better performance in a transparent environment. Corporate and Non-Corporate (service specific) performance indicators are set out below. It needs noting that no public satisfaction surveys were carried out during the year but these will be resumed in 2009.

Corporate Performance Indicators	Actual 06/07	Target 07/08	Actual 07/08	Target 08/09
Income (exc. precept and sale of land) as a %age of gross revenue expenditure for all services	35.3%	31%	32.6%	33%
Average number of staff working days lost to sickness absence	4.0	4.0	5.3	4.0
Number of Council buildings that are suitable/accessible for the disabled	5 out of 5	5 out of 5	5 out of 5	5 out of 5
% turnout for Town Council elections	N/A	40%	39.7%	30%
%age correspondence received & answered in 10 working days	95%	95%	91%	93%
% of Invoices for commercial goods and services paid within 30 days of invoices being received	99%	99%	99%	99%

Notes: -

- 1 Income for Council services increased for every cost centre. This was particularly evident for burials income, agency contracts, the Meridian Hall and Old Court House.
- 2 The Town Council's staff sickness levels remain at significantly less than sector average notwithstanding a small increase on the previous year. Three members of staff, two of who no longer work for the Council, account for 67% of recorded sickness.
- 3 The target set for this performance indicator in 2007/2008 was agreed prior to the May 2007 election. Unlike the vast majority of parish and town councils all elections in the May 2007 main election were contested. The individual turnouts per ward were: Herontye – 44.75%; Worsted – 37.22%; Imberhorne – 46.05%; Town – 36.05%; Baldwins – 36.83%; and Ashplatts – 36.77%
- 4 All the Town Council's buildings conform to the satisfaction of the local Access Group.

Non - Corporate Performance Indicators	06/07 Actual	07/08 Target	07/08 Actual	08/09 Target
%age of Committee and Council agendas despatched to Members over 3 days in advance of meetings	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of engagements undertaken by the Town Mayor	235	200	203	200
% Councillors attendance at full Council meetings	86	83	89	88
Average number of public attending Council meetings	15	17	16	16
Attendance at Annual Town meeting	32	40	21	32
Civic News - cost of service per copy published per edition.	8.4p	10.5p	7.1p	8.0p
Web Site hits	195169	270,000	275,467	280,000
East Court Estate - Net cost of service per head of population	£4.46	£3.79	£5.43	£5.31

%age Days that Meridian Hall was booked	83%	88%	87%	88%
Number of burials in an earthen grave	34	34	24	30
Number of ashes interments	18	30	35	35
Net cost of providing burials service per resident	£2.11	£2.66	£2.13	£2.57
Total number of Town Council owned hanging baskets maintained	0*	60 (exc. Bloom)	60 (exc. Bloom)	122 (+ 105 Bloom)

Notes:

- 1 A schedule of Councillor attendances at Council and Committees during 2007/2008 is set out in Appendix G.
- 2 Two editions of Civic News in 2007/2008 were distributed through the local free newspaper due to the unavailability of a Royal Mail household delivery slot at that time. Four editions were paid for during the year (two of 14,000 copies and the two through the local press at 10,000 copies). In 2008/2009 Royal Mail Household Delivery service is being used for two editions but due to unavailability of other dates two editions are being distributed through the local free newspaper, a less than ideal situation.
- 3 Hits on the Town Council website www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk was a new performance indicator in 2006/2007. This performance indicator has pleasingly shown ongoing year on year growth, which reflects well on our award-winning site.
- 4 Costs of running the East Court estate increased significantly in the year due to unanticipated maintenance on buildings and, particularly, essential work to Blackwell Hollow bank, essential on health and safety grounds. Savings from other cost centres largely covered these over costs.
- 5 Due to the drought affecting the Southeast region the Town Council resolved for 2006 only not to plant out hanging baskets in the Town Centre. Some baskets were still erected on those Council landholdings where there is a proximity to recycled water supplies and some planters in the Town Centre were maintained, also with watering from recycled sources. Subsequently this service has grown significantly as a result of the Council's commitment, in conjunction with East Grinstead in Bloom, to enhance the scale the scale of Town Centre planting. In addition to the Town Council hanging baskets in 2008/2009 the Council also provided and maintained 13 half-barrel planters, 14 ground based planters, 10 railing mounted planters, and 6 wall mounted planters.

Procurement Strategy

The Town Council approved its current Procurement Strategy at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 20 September 2007 (minute 176). The Council aims to use effective ways to procure, work in partnership with others, and manage services that will: better achieve community plan objectives, deliver consistently high quality services that meet users' needs, with a range of partners from other sectors, provide savings and better value for money, thereby improving the cost effectiveness of the Council, and support delivery of the e-Government agenda.

The principal benefits of a cohesive strategy that reflects the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (ODPM October 2003) are to deliver improvement of public services and renew public assets like East Court, Parish Halls, Chequer Mead and Mount Noddy Cemetery, establish partnership with West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council to build quality design into projects for the improvement of the built and natural environment in East Grinstead, to use creative buying power to stimulate innovations such as the use of recycled materials or fair trade products, to achieve the Council's commitment to improve continuously, to comply with EU procurement regulations, and to remove unnecessary red tape to reduce time and costs for the Council and its suppliers

:

Equalities

The Town Council is committed to pursuing an equal opportunities approach in employment of staff and in the way in which services are provided for the public. This policy has regard to equality on grounds of age, gender, sexuality, colour, race, disability and religion.

Furthermore the Council has developed and adopted a specific Race Equality Policy. This states: -

"East Grinstead Town Council acknowledges the general duty placed upon it by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The Council will continue within its functions and policies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote racial equality between people of different racial groups."

Contracts and the Transfer of Staff

We have not awarded any contracts in the past year that have involved the transfer of staff, but we confirm that in the award of any such contracts we would adhere to the requirements set out in the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Contracts.

Investors in People

The Town Council has been accredited Investors in People organisation since 2002. In March 2007 the Town Council secured re-accreditation for a further period of three years.

5.1 SERVICE: DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION & MANAGEMENT

Committee Responsibilities: Finance & General Purposes

Service Description and Objectives.

This service comprises the following functions: -

- * Council, Committee and Member support and administration, and
- * Mayoralty and Civic Support.

This item includes all aspects of member's activities including corporate, programme and service policy making and more general aspects relating to governance and the representation of local interests.

The Mayoralty is an important element in reinforcing the civic traditions of the town. Annually there is a Christmas Reception and a Mayoral charity event to raise funds for the Town Mayor's charity for her/his year of office. In most years there is a Mayor's Civic Service.

The Council's objectives in providing these services are: -

- * To provide effective and efficient services by elected members in full compliance with statutory requirements and the policies of Council;
- * To provide effective training and support for Councillors to enable them to undertake their duties relating to policy and representation, including, importantly, at ward level;
- * To preserve the historic traditions and identity of the town;
- * To support and encourage the work of local organisations and clubs through the attendance of the Town Mayor or Deputy Town Mayor at their functions;
- * To organise a number of civic functions annually as agreed with the Town Mayor,

The Cost

The net cost of providing the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £87,680. This is reduced from the previous year, which had included provision for the 2007 elections. Details are set out below together with the original budget and outturn for 2007/2008 and the outturn for 2006/2007, all for comparison purposes. It should be noted that the outturn figure for employer's national insurance and superannuation includes, for this and other cost centres that follow, an element of pension service costs identified by the actuary and included in the FRS 17 that have been reallocated.

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries	23,224	28,710	28,691	29,320
Emps NI & Superannuation	8,297	6,250	6,234	6,350
LA Assoc's Subscriptions	2,001	2,000	2,020	1,250
Civic Ceremonial	908	1,200	2,577	1,230
Cllrs Training/Conferences	746	1,250	922	1,230
Town Mayor's Account	1,150	1,200	1,200	3,000
Election Costs	0	11,000	12,732	0
Ward Member Budgets	0	13,500	11	13,500
Member Allowances	0	12,000	11,167	14,000
Central Admin Recharge	18,243	17,400	17,276	17,800
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	54,569	94,510	82,829	87,680
Income	0	0	0	0
NET COST	54,569	94,510	82,829	87,680

Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

During 2007/2008 Member allowances were paid for the first time following policy agreed the previous year. As indicated elsewhere not all members claimed these and the payments were where appropriate subject to deductions for tax and national insurance. The allowances which are paid in accordance with the recommendations of the Mid Sussex Allowances Panel contribute towards the personal costs that councillors incur in carrying out

their duties including for example travel within the parish, postage, telephone and computer costs (paper, ink etc.).

A number of Councillors availed themselves of formal and informal training opportunities during the year to better assist them in fulfilling their democratic duties.

5.2 CORPORATE MANAGEMENT

Committee Responsibilities: Finance & General Purposes

Service Description and Objectives: -

This service contains those activities and costs which provide the infrastructure to be provided, whether by the authority or not, and the information which is required for public accountability. Hence this provides for the maintenance of statutory registers, provision of public information, preparation and publishing of the annual business plan, statements of accounts, the annual report, public performance reports and the annual Performance Plan. It also embraces the costs of external audit, treasury management and bank charges.

The Council's objectives in providing these services are: -

- * To ensure effective management and implementation of the Council's policies and priorities, and
- * To be aware of, and comply with, all duties and objections as laid down by Acts of Parliament, statutory instruments and specific guidelines.

Cost of Service

The cost of the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £50,700 significantly up on the previous year, recognising the withdrawal by central government of the statutory best value grant of £30,000. Conversely audit fees have reduced as a consequence. Investment income is up following recent increases in rates. Details are set out below together with the original budget for 2007/2008 and the actual outturns for both 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. These are provided for comparison purposes.

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries	40,770	39,800	39,758	41,380
Emps NI & Superannuation	11,432	8,730	8,670	9,040
Legal Fees & Expenses	1,016	1,500	315	1,500
External Consultancy	2,346	2,000	1,310	5,000
Best Value Audit Fee	3,800	4,400	3,700	0
Financial Audit Fee	6,000	6,100	2,410	1,950
Finance & Bank Charges	1,416	2,000	1,387	1,700
Central Admin Recharge	19,840	19,010	18,878	20,310
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	86,639	83,540	76,427	80,700
Bank/Investment Income	26,328	24,000	33,873	30,000
Best Value Grant	30,000	30,000	30,000	0
NET COST	30,311	29,540	12,555	50,700

Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

Two targets were set for this service, details as follows, and both were **achieved**, namely to produce the Annual Statement of Accounts without external audit qualification and to achieve a “without qualification” audit of this years Best Value Performance Plan.

The only target established for 2008/2009 is to produce the Annual Statement of Accounts without external audit qualification. The accounts for 2007/2008 (Appendix H) were approved at F&GP Committee on 26 June 2008 and are awaiting external audit by Mazars.

5.3 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

Committee Responsibilities: Finance & General Purposes

Service Description and Objectives: -

These services are those central services, which are separately costed and then allocated back to all other cost centres in accordance with criteria set out in the CIPFA Accountancy Code of Practice. The Councils objectives in providing the service are: -

- * To provide an efficient and effective administration support service;
- * To deal with all correspondence, telephone and personal callers in a prompt, courteous and efficient manner and
- * To publicise the Council's services through the most appropriate medium.

Cost of Services

The cost of the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £149,050. In accordance with the C.I.P.F.A. Accounting Code of Practice these costs are reallocated to other service cost centres. These have been reviewed this year to ensure that costs reallocated broadly correspond to support services delivered and are reasonable. The detailed breakdown including the original budget figure for 2007/2008 financial year and the actual outturn figures for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 financial years are, for comparison purposes, as follows: -

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries	74,756	73,760	75,191	77,990
Employers NI & Superannuation	14,284	15,380	14,412	15,910
Telephones	3,220	3,000	3,285	3,100
Insurances	16,844	18,220	20,210	21,000
Office Equipment Purchases	6,988	1,000	1,123	2,500
Office Equipment R&M	2,326	2,800	2,577	3,000
Printing & Stationery	5,116	4,650	6,131	4,800
Books& Journals	422	600	907	600
Postages	2,667	2,000	1,869	1,300
Subscriptions	504	1,350	1,332	850
Civic News	3,506	5,900	3,108	5,600
Corporate Promotion & Advertising	275	400	380	450
Officers Training/Seminar Expenses	3,557	5,200	4,029	4,750
Travel & subsistence Expenses	3,373	4,000	2,937	4,000
Concessionary Fares	1,723	1,650	1,952	1,800
Miscellaneous	1,188	500	1,383	1,200
Press & Public Relations	1,500	2,000	1,350	2,000
Web Site Costs	1,270	1,000	580	1,200
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	143,519	143,410	142,755	152,050
Admin & Miscellaneous Income	1	0	332	0
Service Charge to Charities	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Allocation of Expenses	140,518	140,410	139,423	149,050
NET COST	0	0	0	0

Committee Responsibilities: Amenities & Tourism

Service Description and Objectives: -

East Court Mansion is a Grade II Listed property, built in 1769. It serves as the Town Hall providing offices for the Council's administration (five full-time and two part-time staff are based here) and a dedicated Council Chamber and Mayor's Parlour. There are a number of rooms for hire by local community groups and organisations and the building is also let for private parties with the Main Hall and Cranston Suite being licensed for civil weddings. The building also houses Meridian FM radio station, a Toy Library (due to vacate summer 2008), East Grinstead Model Railway Club, and offices for the Family Welfare Association, Jigsaw4U, New Downland Housing Association and an office for West Sussex County Council Children and Young Peoples Service. The Town Council seeks to optimise use of the property for appropriate civic and community use, to maintain the property to a high standard and to generate income to offset some of the operational costs of running the property.

The Meridian Hall was opened in 1986 immediately adjacent to East Court Mansion. The building comprises a 2000 sq ft Main Hall, entrance foyer with disabled toilet facilities and cloakroom, a large commercial kitchen and, on the first floor, men's and ladies toilets. Outside there is an attractive enclosed piazza area. This new build facility incorporating a former garage and flat serves as a high quality hall for local groups and organisations, private hirers and as a licensed venue for civil weddings. The objectives in providing the service are to give a local venue to meet the realistic community needs of East Grinstead, to increase utilisation in order to reduce public subsidy and to maintain the facility to a high standard.

The Town Council acquired the Old Court House from West Sussex County Council on a five-year peppercorn lease in 1994 and the freehold was subsequently purchased in 1999. The premises serve as a valuable community resource centre for East Grinstead and all rooms are currently fully let to local groups and organisations on leasehold terms. Groups occupying the premises include Grenestede Talking News for the Blind, East Grinstead Council for Voluntary Service, All Kids Ltd, Paddington Playgroup and ConChord Music Society. The objectives of providing this service are to give a high quality affordable venue for essential local groups/organisations at no cost to the taxpayers of East Grinstead.

Most of the grounds at East Court are in the ownership of East Grinstead War Memorial Co. Ltd. and leased to Mid Sussex District Council. The Town Council has over three acres of grounds in its ownership including the terraces/gardens immediately around the Mansion, a children's playground, which was extensively refurbished during 2006 and 2007, and the War Memorial Garden. Two all-weather tennis courts are leased to Estcots Lawn Tennis Club. The Council employs a gardener to maintain its landholdings on the estate, with some casual/seasonal support.

Cost of Service

The net cost of providing the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £127,140. Details are set out below together with the original budget for 2007/2008, and the actual outturns for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, for comparison purposes: -

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries & Wages	83,937	77,340	93,973	101,140
Emps NI & Superannuation	18,396	12,840	15,161	17,260
U.B.R. All Buildings	17,304	15,500	16,485	16,000
Gas	5,886	8,000	6,131	5,900
Electricity	4,463	4,000	2,904	3,600
Water/Sewerage Charges	3,538	3,500	5,429	4,400
Telephones	752	750	1,019	1,240
Equipment Purchases	2,931	1,500	5,016	2,060
Equipment R&M	1,979	3,000	2,261	2,700
Service Contracts	8,623	11,450	10,210	5,000
Buildings R&M	23,730	14,250	21,431	22,000
Grounds Maintenance	5,295	8,000	33,841	19,200
Play Area	1,402	1,000	848	750
Cleaning Mats/Clothing	2,693	3,500	2,026	1,950
Waste Collection	1,950	1,850	3,410	4,700
Legal Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Advertising & Promotions	495	800	345	1,000
Protective Clothing	0	0	0	350
Miscellaneous	979	500	518	500
Central Admin Recharge	38,539	39,220	38,949	42,390
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	223,908	208,000	260,957	253,140
Income – East Court	37,255	41,000	44,105	44,000
Income – Meridian Hall	48,468	44,000	52,650	49,000
Income – Old Court House	31,184	32,000	33,801	32,800
Agency Grounds Mtc.	179	200	186	200
TOTAL INCOME	117,085	117,200	130,743	126,000
NET COST	106,822	90,800	130,214	127,140

Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets 2008/2009

Three targets were set for this service in 2007/2008 and all were **achieved**. Firstly to review catering arrangements in the Meridian Hall to take effect from April 2008; the review was completed during the financial year and new arrangements introduced. Secondly to review caretaking and cleaning services on the Estate with a view to enhancing standards, including security; This service was the subject of an executive review, a new post of senior Caretaker was introduced and on-site security presence enhanced. Thirdly to complete phase 2 installation of new play equipment on the East Court Play Area, providing improved facilities for older children. The new equipment was installed and officially unveiled/opened during the year.

During 2008/2009 the focus will be on completing the capital enhancements to the heating system in the Meridian Hall on time and within budget, and commissioning outstanding buildings maintenance survey reports for the Mansion and Old Court House as a basis for prioritising future estates maintenance during the lifetime of this administration. There will also be a continuing focus on generating income and ensuring that as a percentage of gross operational expenditure this performance indicator improves.

Service Description and Objectives: -

The Council supports by annual grant aid a range of local organisations providing statutory and voluntary support in specific spheres of activity to the overall benefit of town residents. In addition a budget is available annually for application by local groups and organisations in accordance with criteria that are regularly reviewed by the Council. The service objectives are to show commitment and support to the local voluntary sector in the community work they undertake and to provide modest support for activities and community based initiatives that, without Town Council support, might not otherwise be possible.

The Town Council actively supports international twinning. Formal links have been established with Bourg-de-Peage (France), Mindelheim (Germany), Verbania (Italy), Sant Feliu de Guixols (Spain) and Schwaz (Italy). The day-to-day administration of this twinning activity is devolved to East Grinstead Town Twinning Association. A friendship link has been formed with Dundee in the province of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The emphasis here is on educational links and this is co-ordinated locally by Sackville School.

Chequer Mead Arts Centre was built by the Town Council in 1995/96 and opened to the public in November 1996. The building was leased for 28 years on peppercorn terms to Chequer Mead Arts Centre Trust Limited, a Charitable Company limited by guarantee. The Trust called in administrators in late March 2004. The Town Council took over the running of the centre throughout 2004/2005 financial year operating successfully within the approved grant budget originally earmarked for the Trust. The Centre comprises an exhibition room, bar/cafeteria, meeting rooms, arts/crafts room, a dedicated 340-seat theatre, back stage accommodation and a garden area. The Centre provides a dedicated venue for the performing and visual arts serving the needs of East Grinstead and its wider catchment community. The business focus under the Town Council operation was on community and education use with all business conducted by means of lettings. On 6 April 2005 the Charities Commission approved a new sole custodian charity – Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre (charity no 1108890). East Grinstead Town Council leases the premises to the new Trust. All Councillors are Trustees and the Trust and not the Council employs the staff working at the Centre. The new arrangements have proven successful and at 31 March 2008 equity in the Trust stood at over £200,000.

Many other successful partnerships are supported, working in collaboration with the County and District Councils and voluntary sector as appropriate. These partnerships embrace various youth initiatives, major town events, and subsidy of concessionary rail passes. The East Grinstead Community Partnership, East Grinstead Credit Union, and East Grinstead Youth council are examples of new groups, formed for a specific purpose, actively facilitated by the Town Council. The Council runs a number of grant aid programmes, including funding major community based charities, supporting registered community groups and supporting youth sport development. In 2007 grants were made available to Local Action Teams for the first time to facilitate their ward-based work, undertaken in partnership with the Town Council, Sussex Police and local community volunteers. Enhanced support was given to the Town Museum, a registered charity, whose work is largely facilitated by community volunteers, recognising in particular the value of their research facilities, and education/schools outreach programme.

Cost of Service

The net cost of providing the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £161,490. Details are set out below together with the original budget for 2007/2008 and the actual outturns for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for comparison purposes: -

	2006-2007 Actual	2007-2008 Estimate	2007-2008 Actual	2008-2009 Estimate
Salaries & Wages	8,622	8,200	8,197	8,380
Emps NI & Superannuation	2,467	1,780	1,781	1,820
Christmas Lights	1,615	780	774	800
Town Twinning	1,550	1,600	1,600	1,640
Citizens Advice Bureau	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,100
Age Concern	600	320	470	330
Christmas Promotions	500	520	520	530
E.G. C.V.S.	1,700	1,750	1,750	1,800
Community Grants, Other	4,000	2,500	18,350	3,500
Town Event(s)	750	900	0	900
Youth Initiatives Fund	0	1,000	0	1,000
Campaign Initiatives	1,300	1,000	0	1,000
Youth Sports Participation	2,125	2,000	2,075	2,000
EG Youth Council	914	1,030	(-)201	1,060
Youth Sports Development	2,000	1,500	0	1,500
Consultancy Support	1,559	5,000	650	5,000
Chequer Mead	80,000	80,400	80,400	80,400
Community Partnership	1,000	4,200	2,700	3,000
Mid Sussex Badger Group	250	260	260	270
Brendoncare Foundation	200	200	200	0
EG Credit Union	0	400	400	500
EG Town Museum	0	500	500	2,000
LATs Support	0	1,000	1,000	1,000
Environment Group	0	0	0	1,000
Parish Halls Grant/Debt Charges	0	0	0	30,000
Central Admin Recharge	8,014	7,870	7,812	7,960
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	123,167	128,710	133,238	161,490
NET COST	123,167	128,710	133,238	161,490

Service Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

Two targets were set for 2007/2008; one of which was **achieved** and one is ongoing. The annual allocation of community revenue grants was successfully agreed in September 2007 and sports participation grants at a meeting in November 2007 in accordance with the relevant approved budget and criteria. The Town Council's support to Age Concern was reviewed and, working with others, the Council is seeking to resolve issues relating to that Organisation's accommodation needs. Accommodation is being earmarked in the Parish Halls and Charities Committee will, later in 2008 be agreeing detailed issues relating to the project for which a Scrutiny Group has been established. Architects/Lead Consultants have been appointed. The one-off grant to the Parish Halls in 2007/2008 of £15,000 was funded from Community Grants (Other) resulting in the overspend on that head. In 2008/2009 this project is programmed to be substantially concluded.

5.6 SERVICE: PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Committee Responsibilities: Planning

Service Description and Objectives: -

This service cost centre embraces the Town Council's representational planning role and work in supporting economic development initiatives within the town.

Planning

The Town Council has its own Planning Committee that meets fortnightly except in December and August. The Committee considers about 400 planning applications annually, contributes to the South East Plan, Local Development Framework and Structure Plan discussions/consultations, responds to planning appeals, deals with street naming and generally champions planning infrastructure issues as they impact upon the civil parish.

Town Centre Management

The Town Council allocates a small budget annually to facilitate Town Centre management initiatives. This recognises the importance of the commercial, retail, service and industrial sectors to the well being of East Grinstead and those who live or work in the community. The Council is represented on East Grinstead Chamber of Commerce and their sub-committees, works closely with local traders/retailers and helped to establish the East Grinstead Business Association, which is now working well as an independent organisation with its own Board and Chief Executive..

The small budget allocated for this service is also used to pump prime initiatives such as the weekly Farmers Market (Thursdays 9am-2pm), successfully located in the High Street.

As a commitment to the local economy, the Council's procurement strategy recommends goods and services are purchased from local firms where they offer best value.

Cost of Service

The net cost of providing this service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £24,810. Details are set out below together with the original budget for the former cost centre for 2007/2008, and the actual outturns for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for comparison purposes:

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries & Wages	8,442	8,200	8,197	9,450
Emps NI & Superannuation	2,366	1,790	1,781	2,050
Economic Dev. Initiatives	2,056	2,500	661	1,500
Business Support Group	0	0	0	1,500
Planning Consultancy	15,000	5,000	5,637	5,000
Central Admin Recharge	5,092	4,870	4,833	5,310
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	32,957	22,360	21,110	24,810
Income	0	0	0	0
NET COST	32,957	22,360	21,110	24,810

Service Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

In the 2007/2008 Plan the Town Council set itself two targets for this service. Firstly to continue to campaign effectively and responsibly for a settlement to the Area Action Plan that recognises the identified needs of East Grinstead, and the infrastructure enhancements that are necessary associated with any new developments and that help address the existing infrastructure deficit that currently exists in the East Grinstead area. This work, which has now been substantially overtaken in importance by the Core Strategy, is **being progressed** through the Three Tiers Group. It is intended that the East Grinstead Three Tiers Group frame a local Core Strategy submission by late 2008 to help inform the developing Core Strategy in the light of the recently announced changes by the Secretary of State to the draft South East Plan. This work will remain as a focus beyond the coming year

and remains the Council's single highest priority focus of all its work on planning and forward development.

The second target was to build enhanced relationships with local business groups and organisations and to develop shared objectives with them linked to the regeneration of East Grinstead Town Centre, including partnership working with Mid Sussex District Council and Thornfield Properties plc. The creation of a Town Council Business Support Working Group, reporting to the Amenities and Tourism Group, has been successfully **achieved** and important links have been established with local retailers. In addition the imminent merger of the East Grinstead Business Parks Association and the Chamber of Commerce, facilitated in part by the Town Council will be a positive step forward in seeing a single representative voice for the local business community. Insofar as Town Centre redevelopment is concerned the Town Council supports in principle phase 1 of the Thornfield Masterplan and awaits detailed planning proposals. All of this work is **ongoing**.

5.7 SERVICE: TOURISM INFORMATION SERVICES

Committee Responsibilities: Amenities & Tourism

Service Description and Objectives: -

A dedicated Tourist Information Service is provided from East Grinstead Library. The Tourism & Information Officer and his part-time Assistant, who are employed by the Town Council, provide tourist information regarding accommodation, attractions and public transport. This is a partnership initiative between the Town, District and County Councils. The service objectives are to market the town and surrounding area to residents and visitors alike, to develop the tourism economy of the area, to provide tourist information, to facilitate tourism publications and to work in positive partnership with the local tourism industry.

Cost of Service

The cost of the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £30,960. Details are set out below together with the original budget for the cost centre for 2007/2008, and the actual outturns for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for comparison purposes:

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries & Wages	26,141	26,750	26,792	26,440
Emps NI & Superannuation	6,549	4,740	4,582	4,590
Tourist Board Subscriptions	353	370	12	250
Tourism Initiatives/Establishment Costs	2,971	3,600	3,414	3,700
Central Admin Recharge	8,000	8,220	8,163	8,610
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	44,016	43,680	42,962	43,590
MSDC Tourism Grant	12,007	12,370	12,331	12,630
NET COST	32,009	31,310	30,631	30,960

Service Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

As advised in last years Plan the Town Council organised a successful Planning for the Bluebell conference in the Meridian Hall in spring 2008. Achieved. This was attended by about 50 stakeholders and saw the launch also of the Town Council commissioned research, undertaken by Colin Davis Associates and part funded by SEEDA, seeking to enhance the street scene in the vicinity of the Railway Station and linking the Station to the

Town Centre via Railway Approach. Further progress is intended 2008/2009 with Network Rail and Bluebell Railway regarding a new Station building and in general preparation for completion of the northern extension in 2010. The northern extension to the Bluebell Railway, concluding at East Grinstead, is due to be completed in late 2009, with up to 60,00 additional visits to the town annually. This has the potential to bring major benefits to the Town's tourism economy.

During 2008/2009 the tourism staff will be producing a new visitors guide, developing a number of marketing initiatives, including related to the Farmers' Market, the Museum and seeking generally to maximise opportunities to better promote the town to tourists and visitors alike. In line with Member's policy wishes there will also be an enhanced focus on developing the role of the Tourism Officer more broadly across the business spectrum.

5.8 SERVICE: CEMETERY SERVICES

Committee Responsibilities: Amenities & Tourism

Service Description and Objectives: -

The Town Council is the burial authority and is responsible for the following facilities: -

Mount Noddy Cemetery

This nine-acre cemetery off Blackwell Road, opened in 1909, is the only open cemetery provided in East Grinstead. Separate sections are laid out for the different denominations and for interment of bodies and ashes. Council employees maintain the cemetery and administration is undertaken at East Court. The Cemetery Foreman tenants the Lodge house under an occupational licence. The cemetery is located in an established residential area and emphasis is placed upon providing high standards of grounds maintenance.

Queens Road Cemetery

This now closed cemetery has its main access in West Hill. There is no continuing burial activity on the site. The former chapels were sold for residential development in the early 1980's and the residents are responsible for keeping the grass cut.

St Swithun's Churchyard

The Town Council maintains this closed churchyard in accordance with the provisions of Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cost of Service

The net cost of providing the service in 2008/2009 is budgeted at £61,560. Details of the budget are set out below together with the original budget for 2007/2008 and the actual outturns for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 for comparison purposes: -

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries	34,538	48,920	40,070	45,620
Emps NI & Superannuation	9,596	8,320	7,388	8,900
Electricity	183	460	167	380
Water/Sewerage Charges	245	200	73	210
Telephone	652	600	576	500
Equipment purchases	4,057	4,000	5,381	5,800
Equipment R&M	2,528	2,100	5	1,850
Buildings R&M	1,685	3,350	3,115	3,150
Plants & Materials	269	600	759	900

Fuel & Vehicle Tax & costs	2,246	1,500	1,850	1,630
Cleaning Mats	0	200	37	190
Protective Clothing	0	0	0	500
Waste Disposal/Skips	795	1,000	827	1,250
Repairs to Queens Rd Wall	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Central Admin Recharge	16,061	16,430	16,314	17,690
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	76,458	89,680	78,562	90,570
Income – Fees & Charges	2,348	23,500	25,028	26,500
Income – Lodge Rent	23,709	2,500	2,439	2,510
TOTAL INCOME	26,057	26,000	27,468	29,010
NET COST	50,401	63,680	51,094	61,560

Service Achievements 2007/2008 and Service Targets for 2008/2009

The Council has now let a contract for the building of the Memorial Wall at Mount Noddy and these works will be undertaken beginning late September 2008. **Substantially achieved.** The scheme should outturn within capital budget provision of £15,000. On 9 July 2008 a memorial stone was unveiled commemorating those 22 people, of the total 108 persons who were buried in the communal grave.

Following significant investment in the Cemetery service, including on equipment, facilities and staffing, in recent years the main objectives thrust in the coming financial year will continue to be focused on enhancing service standards and further planting out of the Mount Noddy Cemetery to enhance the visual appearance.

5.9 SERVICE: OUTSIDE SERVICES

Committee Responsibilities: Amenities & Tourism

Service Description and Objectives: -

This is a relatively new cost centre service introduced in 1 April 2006 and incorporating all of the Grounds and Open Spaces, and Local Environment services previously run as two distinct cost centres. It embraces all of the landholdings outside of East Court and the Cemetery service for which the Town Council has responsibility. The objective is to maintain Town Council owned land, and other areas that are owned by other local authorities under agency arrangements, to a high standard.

Mid Sussex District Council owns the vast majority of parks and recreation grounds in East Grinstead. The Town Council grounds at East Court are maintained by the Town Council and the costs of that are recorded against the East Court cost centre (5.4).

The Outdoor Services cost centre covers all other grounds maintenance, including Turners Hill Road Recreation Ground, all seasonal planting/hanging baskets, other sites in Town Council ownership, and agency work for West Sussex County Council on roundabouts.

Two allotment sites are owned at Mount Noddy and Imberhorne comprising some 250 plots. The two sites are let on 21-year leases to independent Allotment Associations who are responsible for all maintenance and administration. The Town Council receives peppercorn rents for the sites. Since the revised management arrangements came into force in the 1990's standards of maintenance on both sites have increased, vacant plots have been eliminated and the costs to the Town Council in administering this aspect of the service have been eradicated.

The Town Council is also responsible for a number of highly visible non-statutory services, details as follows: -

Approx 250	unadopted footway lights;
1	town clock in London Road;
1	town clock in the High Street
2	War Memorials
7	non-advertising bus shelters
3	notice boards
approx 60	litterbins
approx 20	salt/grit bins
approx 30	public seats

The Council also provides a dedicated community housekeeping service, which has been significantly enhanced since 2005 and which, in addition to work on the Council's own landholdings also provides a range of contracted agency services to other councils, including in relation to graffiti removal, highways weed spraying and play area inspections. Some of this contracted work is in neighbouring parishes within Mid Sussex. In addition graffiti removal has been undertaken in Forest Row parish on a rechargeable basis.

Objectives of providing the services are: -

To provide and maintain all items of street furniture to an acceptable standard;

To provide litter/salt/grit bins to meet identified needs;

To promote Council/Committee meetings on public notice boards prominently sited;

To honour the Town's dead from the two World Wars and other subsequent conflicts;

To provide a clock focus at the northern entry to the town centre and in the conservation area;

To provide bus shelters on public amenity grounds at bus stops either through the advertising contract with Adshel or by direct Council provision where the advertising contractor considers it is not appropriate to provide an advertising shelter;

To provide footway lights, to non-adopted standards, on safety grounds with management and maintenance responsibilities being undertaken under an agency arrangement by West Sussex County Council;

To provide public seats on the highway and on the various Town Council landholdings.

To provide agency services for West Sussex County Council and Mid Sussex District Council where this provides local community benefits, enhanced services and accountability.

Cost of Service

Details of the budget for 2008/2009 financial year is set out below together with data on the 2007/2008 original estimate and outturn, and the outturn for 2006/2007.

	2006-2007 Actual £	2007-2008 Estimate £	2007-2008 Actual £	2008-2009 Estimate £
Salaries & Wages	76,440	84,050	75,252	76,870
Emps NI & Superannuation	18,739	14,970	13,961	14,480
Telephones	1,208	900	1,082	660

Equipment Purchases, Repairs & Mtc.	20	600	238	200
Plants, Materials, Baskets & Roundabouts	1,050	4,000	4,699	4,100
Street Scene Planting	68	1,500	1,139	1,500
Public Works	1,641	2,500	1,533	2,000
Graffiti Removal	2,428	2,500	1,708	2,500
Council Vehicle – Running & Mtc Costs	5,381	5,900	7,889	5,900
Turners Hill Rd Recreation Ground	1,869	2,300	1,926	2,400
Street Lighting	7,260	8,000	8,454	8,750
Miscellaneous	580	800	1,200	900
CCTV Contribution	5,375	7,000	3,576	7,000
Bloom Grant	1,300	1,340	1,320	3,000
Town Clocks	572	950	622	780
War Memorials	0	500	45	500
Public Seats	1,166	1,000	1,518	1,000
Protective Clothing	0	0	0	750
Litter Bins	1,140	1,000	488	1,000
Salt/Grit Bins	0	400	270	420
Bus Shelters	0	900	0	900
Urban Grass Cutting	0	3,600	0	0
Notice Boards	0	400	45	420
Central Admin Recharge	26,728	27,390	27,198	29,160
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	152,965	172,500	154,163	165,790
Allotments Associations Rents	129	150	134	140
WSCC Roundabouts Agency Income	1,989	2,000	2,061	2,000
Roundabouts Sponsorship	851	1,500	2,606	3,000
MSDC Agency Grant	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
WSCC Graffiti & Highways Agency Grants	27,896	27,000	28,516	29,000
TOTAL INCOME	40,865	40,650	43,317	44,140
NET COST	112,099	131,850	110,846	121,650

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS 2007/2008 AND TARGETS 2008/2009

Work was undertaken during 2007/2008, to develop more effective work management programmes and reporting and monitoring systems within the Commercial and Operational Services unit than had existed hitherto. This was aided by some internal reorganisation and the creation of a dedicated Foreman post (self funding) to provide enhanced onsite supervision. The agency contracts with Mid Sussex District Council and West Sussex County Council for graffiti removal, spraying to prevent weeds in the gutters, play area inspections and the like will need renegotiation during the latter period of 2008/2009 to ensure these provide value for money and that output requirements are more clearly understood and measured. The Commercial and Operational Services team changed their name to Amenities during the early part of 2008/2009 to reflect more accurately the breadth of work being undertaken and to create synergy with the responsible committee, now renamed Amenities and Tourism.

5.10 SERVICE: CAPITAL PROJECTS

Committee Responsibilities: Various

Service Description and Objectives: -

The Council is committed to a capital programme of works that is updated annually. Where capital schemes are suitable for attraction of external funds, including Lottery funds for example, appropriate applications for partnership contributions will be sought.

Cost of Service

During 2007/2008 financial year an amount of £46,000 was transferred from precept into the capital fund for identified schemes and a gross amount of £45,565 was actually spent, though this was offset by £16,500 received from Mid Sussex District Council towards the East Court Play Area phase 2 scheme, resulting in a net amount of £29,065. Six schemes were progressed, two of which (marked with an *) were major, requiring inclusion in the schedule of fixed assets. Details of these schemes, were as follows:

	£
Garden Machinery	8,084
East Court Play area Phase 2	24,968 (net £8,468)*
East Court Enhancements	2,995
Meridian Hall Enhancements	5,623*
Capital Initiatives Fund	2,150
Mount Noddy Memorial Wall	1,745

Altogether £29,147 net was spent from the capital fund account during the year. The difference between that figure and the totality of the figures above, £82 is accounted for by bank charges.

At 31 March 2008 the amount in the capital fund account totalled £34,570. Of this £15,000 is earmarked towards a future youth building project, £13,255 is set aside for the Mount Noddy Cemetery Memorial Wall on which only design work was undertaken in 2007/2008, and £6,355 is earmarked for outstanding buildings work on the East Court estate.

The 2008/2009 capital programme totalling £38,500 provides for the following schemes: -

	£
Upgraded Heating System for Meridian Hall	15,000
New Double Glazed Windows and Doors to Meridian Hall	12,500
Enhanced Insulation – Meridian Hall	3,000
East Court Mansion – New Boiler Control Panel	3,000
Jet washer	5,000

Objectives for each scheme are identified at the time the Capital Programme is agreed and detailed reports are taken through the appropriate programme committee, which in all cases above is Amenities & Tourism Committee. There are no specific performance indicators for the capital programme.

6. BEST VALUE/SERVICE REVIEWS

Best value legislation initially required the Town Council to review all of its functions every five years. Although this requirement was subsequently removed and the statutory requirement of best value no longer exists, Town Councillors in considering their current review programme have still sought to achieve the following objectives: -

- * To give relative priority to those service areas which represent the largest area of net expenditure or where a review is considered to be potentially beneficial in enhancing performance;
- * To review related services as a group in order to give possible advantages of economy of scale, and
- * To use reviews to achieve significant improvement in service provision and performance standards, and to explore alternative options for service delivery.

Nominated elected Councillors with appropriate skills and expertise undertake the review function for each service or group of services, where available. They form the Review/Scrutiny groups. They are supported in their work by the Town Clerk and/or nominated Head of Service. In accordance with the Council's approved toolkit the review specifically looks at the 4 C's, details as follows:

- * **Challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being provided;
- * **Compare** its performance with the performance of other Local Councils providing a similar service;
- * **Consult** local people and key partners, including local businesses, and voluntary organisations in the setting of priorities and performance targets;
- * Use fair and open **competition** wherever practicable as a means of securing efficient and effective services.

Wherever possible the Review Groups seek to achieve efficiency improvements overall consistent with the 2% target that was originally set for local authority expenditure as a whole. Although this is no longer a statutory requirement of Government it remains, for the time being, an objective of the Town Council

Service Review Timetable and Summary of Outstanding Action Plan Implementation

The currently approved review programme, including historic review details, is as follows:

Year 1 - 2000/2001 (Completed)

Civic and Mayoral Services

Economic Development comprising Town Management, Tourism and CCTV

Civic News

During the first year of best value three separate reviews of the above services were extensively conducted. There are no outstanding issues still arising from those reviews.

Year 2 - 2001/2002 (Completed)

East Court Estate comprising: East Court Mansion, Meridian Hall, The Old Court House and those East Court Grounds in the ownership of the Town Council.

During the second year of best value a comprehensive review of the East Court estate was undertaken. This focussed on a wide range of issues including Fees and Charges, Disabled access and Buildings Improvements, Grounds Maintenance, Customer Services, Charitable status, Signage, Catering, Conditions of Hire and a proposed Lottery bid for the estate.

As a consequence of the review some changes were implemented immediately such as outsourcing grass and hedge cutting whilst other expensive requirements including significant works to the Mansion in order to conform to the Disability Discrimination Act were completed over a two-year time frame.

Two items were not concluded. Despite successful completion of a master plan for the whole estate, including landholdings belonging to East Grinstead War Memorial Ltd and Mid Sussex District Council, no Lottery bid has yet been submitted. As explained in previous plans, the Town Council would not be lead agency for such bid as the bulk of the areas of the estate needing investment are in the ownership of others. Secondly Members are not pursuing, in the short/medium term, any further work on Trust status for the Town Council's landholdings at East Court although this can be revisited at any future date should Members so instruct.

Year 3 - 2002/2003 (Completed)

Street Furniture and Floral/Grounds Maintenance Services in the Town Centre.

During the third year of best value (2002/2003) Councillors conducted a crosscutting review of Town Centre street furniture and planting. All ten agreed actions were implemented over the following 18 months and were duly reported in the 2004/2005 plan.

Year 4 - 2003/2004 (Completed)

A staffing and organisational review.

External consultants were asked to undertake a detailed review of the Council's organisation and staffing structure during the summer/autumn 2003. These areas had not been comprehensively looked at in over a decade, during which period the Council increased its services and responsibilities considerably. Accordingly, and because of the workload associated with the successful application for Quality Local Council status, no formal best value review was undertaken during that year. The detailed Organisation and Structure review report was formally approved at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 25 March 2004. The recommendations, including a new staffing structure, were successfully implemented over a fifteen-month period concluding 30 June 2005. This was the subject of regular reporting to Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Year 5 - 2004/2005 (Completed)

Community Grants and Partnership Initiatives

This is a service with a high level of net expenditure, and an area of increasing pressure, specifically due to principal authority cutbacks in real terms, which are currently impacting on many of the groups that the Town Council has historically sought to support in a relatively modest way through this budget. The review

provided an opportunity for Members to assess whether their funding makes a positive difference to the various bodies supported, whether it provides value for money and whether it is most appropriately being targeted in the best way.

The review was conducted during October and November 2004. The review group, including four elected members and two external critical friends, met on three occasions and their work was supported and reinforced by extensive consultation and research. The action plan that was recommended by the review team was subsequently approved at Finance and General Purposes Committee on 25 November 2004 and confirmed at Council on 6 December 2004. Details, with agreed timetable and executive accountability for implementation, were reported in the 2005/2006 Plan and all aspects have been implemented.

Year 6 – 2005/2006 (Completed)

Cemetery and Burial Services.

This was identified as a priority area for review following the benchmarking exercise undertaken in conjunction with other statutory best value town councils in 2004. The outcome of this exercise showed that the average cost of burials in Mount Noddy Cemetery, East Grinstead was above the benchmarked average for responding councils and significantly greater than the top quartile. Whilst it was considered issues pertaining to the size of cemetery set against the number of interments may be a factor in this situation, as may be the case that other councils maintain lawned cemeteries whilst Mount Noddy is essentially operated on traditional lines, Members considered it right that there should be a detailed service review to investigate this matter further. This review confirmed the original observation.

The review was conducted between October 2005 and January 2006. The review team comprising four elected members and two external critical friends met on three occasions. All findings and recommendations were reported in the 2006/2007 Plan and all items have now been actioned and implemented with the exception of the erection of the Memorial Wall at Mount Noddy and here a contract has now been let and works will be completed late summer/early autumn 2008.

Year 7 – 2006/2007 (Completed)

Grant Aid to Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre

The Town Council owns Chequer Mead and has leased the Centre to Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre Trust, a sole custodian Charity. Councillors are Trustees of the Charity and the Charity, together with the Parish Halls Trust, is run at arms length from the Council through a Charities Committee. In 2008/2009 the Council's grant aid to the Trust is £80,400. The Council is the only main funder for the Trust, which is otherwise self-funding with sound assets. Members wished to put in place a long-term funding strategy for the Centre and considered this would be best achieved through a fundamental best value review. This was undertaken during the autumn and winter 2006/2007 and the review team included elected councillors and two external critical friends.

The findings of the review team were that Chequer Mead was performing strongly in its charitable trust format, that a healthy equity was being necessarily built up to meet long term building maintenance requirements, and that compared with similar facilities elsewhere the public subsidy on the Centre was the lowest identified. Having confirmed the Town Council's grant for 2007/2008 at £80,400 the review team went on to recommend as follows:

- (1) that no further indexation of grant would be agreed beyond 2007/2008 although the matter could be reviewed again at any time upon a formal request being made by the Charity at the time the budget is being reviewed;
- (2) that Grant Aid at the level of £80,400 should continue until the financial year following that in which total equity, comprising general revenue balances and rolling renewal fund, but not fixed assets, should reach £250,000 at which time a further review of future grant funding should be undertaken for consideration by the Town Council's Finance and General Purpose Committee, and
- (3) that the Town Council acknowledges and welcomes the policy decision of Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre Trust to set aside £20,000 from its funds annually into a rolling renewals fund and recognises also the Trusts commitment to significant annual expenditure on buildings maintenance from within its general revenue budget in order to reflect their obligations for maintenance under the terms of their lease.

:
When the Review Group recommendations were considered at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 25 January 2007 they were formally resolved and, subsequently, approved as Council policy at Council on 5 February 2007.

Year 8 – 2007/2008 (Completed)

Review of Committee Services

The review group, comprising six elected members, met three times between September and December 2007. The recommendations arising from their work were considered at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 24 January 2008 and were duly approved. These were designed to ensure that the Council's committee arrangements, including work (but not policy) deputed to Working Groups and Scrutiny Committees was fit for purpose and appropriate to meet the new administrations support requirements through to, and beyond, the next council elections in 2011. The following arrangements were agreed and are all being implemented.

- (i) Working Groups should submit proposed Terms of Reference to their parent Committee for approval. These should encompass both the Working Groups general objectives and specific, measurable objectives;
- (ii) The parent committee should be responsible for giving direction to the Working Groups (e.g. by approving Terms of Reference and objectives), receiving their reports and debating recommendations submitted by the Working Groups;
- (iii) Working Groups should submit their reports to their parent committees for each cycle, with the Working Group Chairman and/or Vice Chairman in attendance to speak to them;

- (iv) Only parent committees can agree policy. Commitments or initiatives that require urgent decisions by the Council should be first discussed with the Chairman of the parent committee;
- (v) Membership of Working Groups should be open to all Councillors but a core group of Members will be invited to serve as such by the Working Group Chairman, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council. Appropriately qualified members of the public may be invited to serve on a permanent or occasional basis by the Working Group Chairman, and
- (vi) Working Groups will continue until such time as their parent committee by recommendation to Council consider that they have served their useful purpose.
- (vii) The Town Council will, with effect from 1st April 2008, replace the current arrangement of Best Value Reviews with new scrutiny arrangements that will themselves form part of the new Town Council Performance Management Plan;
- (viii) There will be no more than two scrutiny groups established at any time and that in the first year, 2008/2009, they will be established for the purposes of scrutinising the Parish Halls Remodelling and reviewing the Town Council's Performance Management systems and use of performance indicators;
- (ix) Each scrutiny group will comprise a maximum of five Members and the Town Council's officers will service the groups. In certain cases members of the public may be invited to participate in a scrutiny group subject to approval by full Council;
- (x) Detailed terms of reference and objectives will be set at the outset for each scrutiny group established.
- (xi) That the Terms of Reference of the committees should give a clear introductory explanation of their work and that specifically Standing Order (k) for Leisure & Tourism Committee subject to a name change recommended in (xii) below, be amended to read "the facilitation of tourism, and related business, initiatives and the provision of tourist information facilities for the town in liaison, as appropriate with other local authorities and agencies";
- (xii) With effect from the Annual Town Council meeting in May 2008 the name of the Leisure & Tourism Committee be changed to an alternative name to be resolved at full Council on 4th February 2008, (Note: The name determined was Amenities and Tourism Committee) and
- (xiii) The Town Clerk be authorised to make all appropriate changes to the standing orders and Terms of Reference

of the Council for ratification at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 27 March 2008.

The Council appreciates that all efficiency reviews, in each year, need to be concluded by mid-January so that the efficiency improvements identified can be fully reflected in the following financial year's budget which, in accordance with the Council's business planning timetable, is now agreed during the January/February cycle of meetings. These are now to be conducted by Scrutiny Group with specific remits, no more than two of such groups being established in any financial year though the work of particular groups may continue beyond a particular financial year. In 2008/2009 groups were established with remits for review of the Council's performance management systems, and for the redevelopment of the Parish Halls complex were established from June 2008.

The Town Council also recognises that reviews properly and comprehensively undertaken may require difficult decisions on the best value option for future service delivery. It will be necessary to set demanding targets for service improvement and action plans to deliver these to a realistic timetable. The reviews present an opportunity for the Council to set its own priorities and demonstrate its ownership of the best value process.

7. CONSULTATION STATEMENT

Effective communication and consultation with the community is an essential element of Best Value. Locally Members are concerned to ensure that the policies and service plans are subject to the full rigours of public scrutiny and debate. The methods of consultation to be adopted will be realistic in terms of cost and available resources.

The key elements of consultation will be: -

- V Active staff involvement in the Member driven process;
- V Annual Town meeting as a forum for public views, opinions and consultation;
- V Public Question Time before Council and Committee Meetings;
- V Issue of press releases to local newspapers and radio stations;
- V Issue of Town Council newsletter 'Civic News' on a quarterly basis;
- V User and non-user surveys and public questionnaires;
- V The involvement of "critical friends"/ independent experts in the review process where considered appropriate;
- V The Town Council's web site as a promotional information source and
- V Active liaison with representative groups and organisations - East Grinstead Society, Residents Associations; Local Action teams; Focus Groups, Local Clubs and Pressure Groups, and the Mid Sussex District and West Sussex County Councils, for example.

The results of public consultation exercises undertaken are periodically reported to the appropriate Programme Committees and the results taken into account by the Service Review teams at the appropriate time.

Summary Quantitative Results of Questionnaire Surveys Conducted

Only one questionnaire survey was conducted this past year due to other work pressures. The survey sought to establish satisfaction levels from those stakeholders present at the *Planning for the Bluebell* conference held in the Meridian Hall on 18 April 2008. From the 14 forms returned 100% recorded satisfactory or better with over 90% registering good or excellent across all categories.

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8. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE AUDIT REPORT ON THE 2007/2008`
PLAN

The Best Value Statutory Opinion and Report is a statutory document that the Council's auditors, Mazars, produced and submitted to the Town Council and the Audit Commission on 13 November 2007. It contains their opinion on the Best Value Performance Plan along with their recommendations in relation to the Plan. The Town Council considered the Auditors report at Finance & General Purposes Committee on 22 November 2007 (minute 255) and the formal minute was subsequently approved at the Town Council meeting on 3 December 2007.

The Auditor's opinion was that "East Grinstead Town Council has prepared and published its best value performance plan in all significant respects in accordance with Section 6 of the Local Government Act 1999 and statutory guidance issued by the Government. Accordingly they were able to recommend that the Audit Commission should not carry out a Best Value inspection of the Council under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and that the Secretary of State should not give a direction under section 15 of the same Act.

The Auditors report contained no statutory or non-statutory recommendations requiring a response. In accordance with legal requirements the Council published its response to the report within the appropriate recorded minutes and on the Town Councils web site. Notices were also posted on the main Town Council notice board at East Court for a period of four weeks from 4 December 2007.

Since this was the final ever Auditor's report on the Best Value Performance Plan (since with effect from this edition future plans are not statutory and therefore not subject to specific audit) it should be reported that since the first Plan was produced in 2000/2001 eight successive Plans were given a completely clean audit. Furthermore no statutory recommendations were ever made by the auditor.

9. ABOUT OUR PERFORMANCE PLAN

East Grinstead Town Council accepts full responsibility for the preparation of this Plan and for the information contained within it. Every effort has been made to ensure that the information is correct and that, insofar as is reasonably possible, it meets the requirements of the legislation.

Copies of this Plan are available for public reference in East Grinstead Town Library, at the Help Point in West Street and at the offices of East Grinstead Town Council, East Court, College Lane, East Grinstead. Copies have also been sent to West Sussex County Council, Mid Sussex District Council, Sussex Police and key representative organisations within the town and a full copy of this can be viewed on the Town Council's dedicated website (www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk). Any individual wishing to purchase a printed copy can do so for £5 (including post & packing) from the Town Council offices - cheques made payable to East Grinstead Town Council.

Views on the Performance Plan

The Town Council would welcome public views and comment on the Performance Plan and these can be made in writing to any Town Councillor at their home addresses as listed in Appendix A, or to the Town Clerk, Mr C. J. Rolley, at East Court in writing or by any of the following means: -

Tel: (01342) 323636
Fax: (01342) 327823
Email towncouncil@eastgrinstead.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF ESTABLISHMENT 2008/2009

Town Clerk	Chris Rolley
Town Clerk's P. A.*	Mrs Sarah Bunting
Tourism & Information Officer	Simon Kerr
Tourism Assistant*	Mrs Dawn Spalding
Community Support & Development Officer*	Vacant (currently frozen)

Finance & Support Services

Head of Finance & Support Services	Barry Male
Finance Assistant	Peter Carr
Secretarial & Office Assistant*	Mrs Sheila Martin
Receptionist/Administrative Assistant*	Mrs Alison Merricks

Amenities Services

Amenities Manager	Keith Astley
Assistant Amenities Manager	Nigel Foster
Bookings Assistant*	Mrs Linda Wilson
Administrative Assistant	Mrs Katrina Hamill
Cemetery Services Foreman	Garry Hearn
Cemetery Assistant	Graham Woodward
Outdoor Services Foreman	Jonathan Ansley
Outdoor Services Assistant	Mark Hayward
Outdoor Services Assistant*	Norman Woodward
Outdoor Services Assistant	Simon Wheaton
Outdoor Seasonal Assistant (summer only)	Edward Astley
Gardener	Martin Gaved
Senior Caretaker	Stuart Townsend
Caretaker	Ken Gupwell
Cleaner*	Mrs Rose Humphrey
Cleaner*	Mrs Carol Madgwick
Caretaker*	Mrs Sue Batt

* Part-time positions.

Note: Although the Town Council are sole custodian trustees for Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre the staff are employed by the charity and not by the council. The staffing establishment currently five full-time and five part-time was last comprehensively reviewed during 2007. The Chief Executive Officer, John Durrant, reports direct to the Charities Committee, which was first established in 2004/2005 and is accountable to the Town Clerk who also fulfils the position of Clerk to the Managing Trustees.

APPENDIX B

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

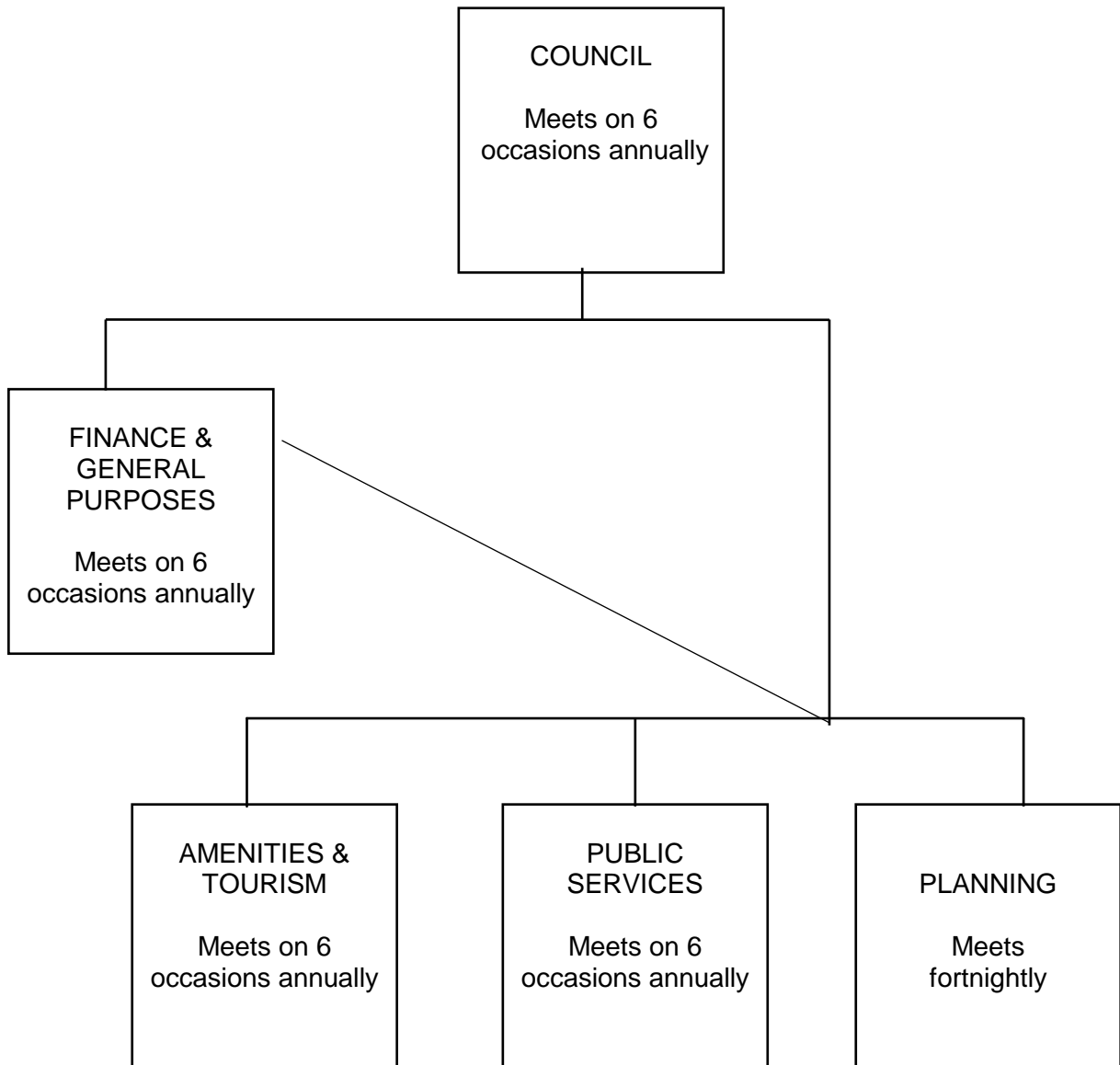
COUNCILLORS 2008/2009

Tel: - Private

J W BALDWIN (LD)	Scarletts, Sandy Lane East Grinstead, RH19 3LP	Town	01342 321347
D J BANKS (LD)	29 St Johns Road East Grinstead, RH19 3LG	Imberhorne	01342 312258
S J BARNETT (LD)	10 Woods Hill Close Ashurst Wood, RH19 3RJ	Herontye	01342 326001
MRS L BENNETT (C)	39 Copse Close East Grinstead, RH19 3EF	Ashplats	01342 301007
MRS H A BRUNSDON (LD)	83 Blount Avenue East Grinstead, RH19 1JN	Imberhorne	01342 327200
MRS M E COLLINS (LD)	Bodinnick, Lewes Road East Grinstead, RH19 3UD	Worsted	01342 324296
I C H DIXON (LD)	Chevalhurst, Dunnings Road East Grinstead, RH19 4AD	Herontye	01342 317213
B A GILLBARD (LD)	7 Meadowcroft Close East Grinstead, RH19 1NA	Baldwins	01342 325184
P J JOHNSON (LD)	Kingsmere Cottage, Stoneleigh Close, E.G. RH19 3DY	Ashplats	01342 311359
J W JOYCE-NELSON (LD)	1 Dexter Drive East Grinstead, RH19 4SU	Town	01342 314727
B MAINSTONE (LD)	Mallaig, Windmill Lane East Grinstead, RH19 2DY	Imberhorne	01342 326454
MRS C A MAINSTONE (LD)	Mallaig, Windmill Lane East Grinstead, RH19 2DY	Baldwins	01342 326454
L A MARMARA (LD)	Mill House, The Feld, London Rd East Grinstead, RH19 2QL	Baldwins	01342 301265
R MUSK (LD)	Scandia, Hurst Farm Road East Grinstead, RH19 4BL	Herontye	01342 313310
L QUINN (C)	6 Dallaway Gardens East Grinstead, RH19 1AZ	Ashplats	01342 317817
P REED (C)	38 Fulmar Drive East Grinstead, RH19 3NN	Ashplats	01342 311926
B T STARMER (LD)	Kimberley, Pine Grove East Grinstead, RH19 3BB	Imberhorne	01342 300534
Mrs V WADDINGHAM (LD)	11 Beckett Way East Grinstead, RH19 4SF	Town	01342 326627

(LD) = Liberal Democrat (C) = Conservative

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



Notes: Finance & General Purposes Committee - 10 members
 Planning Committee - 9 members
 Leisure & Tourism - 9 members
 Public Services - 9 members
 In addition the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor are ex-officio on all Committees.

The Council also has a Charities Committee with its own constitution. All Councillors are members of this. The Charities Committee meets quarterly.

The Council's Standing Orders also provide for the establishment of Working Groups and Scrutiny Committees, reportable to specific programme committees. Two Working Groups focussing upon Business Support and, Environment and Sustainability were set up from 2007/2008 civic year. Two scrutiny groups with remits for review of the Council's performance management systems, and for the redevelopment of the Parish Halls complex were established from June 2008.

APPENDIX D

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

DIARY OF MEETINGS 2008/2009

2008

12th May	(M)	Annual Town Council
13th May	(T)	Planning
2nd June	(M)	Planning
12th June	(Th)	Public Services
16th June	(M)	Planning
19th June	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
19th June	(Th)	Charities
26th June	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
30th June	(M)	Planning
7th July	(M)	Council
14th July	(M)	Planning
28th July	(M)	Planning
26th August	(T)	Planning
8th September	(M)	Planning
11th September	(Th)	Public Services
18th September	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
18th September	(Th)	Charities
22nd September	(M)	Planning
25th September	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
6th October	(M)	Council
7th October	(T)	Planning
20th October	(M)	Planning
3rd November	(M)	Planning
6th November	(Th)	Public Services
13th November	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
17th November	(M)	Planning
20th November	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
1st December	(M)	Council
2nd December	(T)	Planning
11th December	(Th)	Charities
15th December	(M)	Planning

2009

8th January	(Th)	Public Services Committee
12th January	(M)	Planning
15th January	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
22nd January	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
26th January	(M)	Planning
2nd February	(M)	Council (Precept)
9th February	(M)	Planning
23rd February	(M)	Planning

9th March	(M)	Planning
12th March	(Th)	Public Services
19th March	(Th)	Amenities & Tourism
19th March	(Th)	Charities
23rd March	(T)	Planning
26th March	(Th)	Finance & General Purposes
6th April	(M)	Council
7th April	(T)	Planning
8th April	(W)	Annual Town Meeting
20th April	(M)	Planning

NOTES:

- 1 All full Committee and Council meetings are open to the public and commence at 7.45 pm with the exception of the June, September and March Charities Committee meetings which will commence immediately following the Amenities & Tourism Committee meetings on those evenings, or at 8.30 pm, whichever is the later.
- 2 All Council meetings provide a maximum period of 30 minutes for public questions commencing at 7.45 pm.
- 3 All Committee meetings provide a maximum period of 15 minutes for public questions commencing at 7.45 p.m.
- 4 All Council and Committee meetings are held in the Council Chamber at East Court Mansion. The annual Town Meeting is held in the Main Hall.

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 (renamed Amenities and Tourism from henceforth) 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, Dunning's 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 Christmas 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
 East Grinstead Choral Society Concert at Sackville School
- 16 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*

ACTION PLAN 2007/2011

As the final exercise the two new groups looked at identifying a small number of short term (2007/2009), medium term (2009/2011) and long-term projects. These are as follows:-

Short term

1. Comprehensively review the Council's Committee and working structure (democratic services) and recommend any changes necessary in order to deliver the Council's business agenda.
2. Engage with Mid Sussex District Council (alongside other local councils) in order to ensure parish and town councils receive an element of Section 106 funding.
3. Develop an holistic, strategic plan, working with Mid Sussex District Council, for the Town as a whole.
4. Remodel the Parish Halls and complete an audit for all Town Council premises.
5. Improve partnership working at all levels and seek devolution of appropriate services.

Medium term

1. Engage with outside agencies, Government and others, using benchmarking and lessons from other councils to identify other grants, commercial revenue streams and other finance opportunities.
2. Develop and deliver a marketing plan for the Town to maximise tourism opportunities levered by the Bluebell Railway extension and other initiatives.
3. Subject to review, seek Town Centre premises for Town Council and related agency services.
4. Subject to what happens at Mid Sussex District Council consider subsidised bulky refuse collections locally.
5. Seek devolution and enhancement of public toilets, working in conjunction with Mid Sussex District Council.

Long term

1. To have a long term economic plan for maximising East Grinstead's prosperity.
2. To seek to make East Grinstead Town Council a carbon neutral authority.
3. To review the possibility of providing enhanced leisure services at East Court.
4. The provision of a sustainable transport link between East Grinstead and Crawley/Three Bridges.