

Seaford Town Council - Press Release

Council Tax Increase Information

Following the release of the Council Tax Bills there have been a number of enquiries about the increase in Seaford Town Council's element of the Council Tax.

The purpose of this press release is to try and answer the queries that have been received publically for all to see.

On the 28th January Town Councillors, who are all unpaid volunteers and pay Council Tax bills themselves, had to make some difficult decisions to address the financial position Seaford Town Council is in. Seaford Town Council has always strived to keep its Council Tax bills as low as possible. However the Council's financial reserves are very low and need to be replenished in case any unforeseen expenses arise in the future. The main reasons for them being low were the costs incurred during recent litigation, the costs incurred to build The View at Seaford Head and to develop it as a business and finally the cost to refurbish Hurdis House (which will soon be rented out at a profit for the local taxpayer). It was anticipated that it would take some time to run The View at a profit but until it does, which is projected to be in 12 - 18 months' time, it will need Council reserves to support its running. After this time it is anticipated it will run at a profit so will be able to contribute to keeping Council Tax bills down in the future. This is not an unusual position for a new business.

There were also a number of important projects which in response to public requests the Council wished to progress. These included creating a Neighbourhood Plan (£30,000 plus), refurbishing the Martello Public Toilets (£70,000) creating a new entertainments area at the Martello Tower (£20,000) and continuing with the regeneration of The Salts.

Despite the 15.5% increase, which equates to a £8.77 per year for a typical Band D property, Seaford Town Council remains by far the lowest Council Tax rate of the five main towns in Lewes District. Please see the leaflet provided by Lewes District Council to explain Council Tax spending at:

http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/ctax_summary.pdf

Despite this the Town Council is looking to make additional savings of at least £25,000 this year to ensure bills are kept low in the future. This is a practice that will be followed to generate more income and cut costs where possible.

Many have questioned what the Special Expenses are; these are paid to Lewes District Council and are explained on Lewes District Council's website as "a system of special expenses introduced on 01 April 2014. This means that the cost of maintaining the (District) Council's open spaces it owns and manages is paid for within the local area where the facilities are located." Details of the site locations in Seaford and the level of expenses can be viewed in the link below:



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http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/ctax_special_expenses.pdf

Seaford Town Council has taken over the management of most of the open spaces within Seaford so the Special Expenses for Seaford are very low, as can be seen on the table below. The table also shows the amount of Council Tax paid to the five main Town Councils within Lewes District for a typical Band D Property.

| Town | Town Council Tax | Special expenses | Total |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Lewes | £141.70 | £49.22 | £190.92 |
| Newhaven | £122.55 | £27.52 | £150.07 |
| Telscombe | £89.75 | £20.88 | £110.63 |
| Seaford | £65.41 | £5.82 | £71.23 |
| Peacehaven | £86.64 | £8.65 | £95.29 |

Another question that has been asked is “why do we have a Town Council?” Seaford Town Council delivers many local services including The Salts, The Crouch, many open spaces, South Hill Barn, Seaford Head Nature Reserve, Seaford Head Golf Course, Public Noticeboards, Public seating, the Seafront and concessions, Beach huts, Seaford in Bloom, Christmas Lights, The View and giving Grants totaling over £25,000 to local voluntary groups. Also through valued partners the Town Council delivers Seaford Allotments, the Martello Museum, The Crypt Art Gallery, CCTV for the town and major events such as Christmas Magic, Armed Forces Day, the Circus and Show rides, car boot sales and many more events. The Town Council also campaigns for the town such as responding to over 100 planning applications every year and for example fighting the recent proposals to sell the Buckle Car Park. Please see the link below to the last Annual Report of 2014 / 15 for more details;

<http://www.seafordtowncouncil.gov.uk/Annual-Reports.aspx>

If there were no Town Council these services would be transferred to Lewes District Council to run. This means that the decisions on how and whether to run the services in Seaford would be taken by Councillors from all over the District rather than unpaid Councillors that Seafordians elect to do this for them as is the case now. The cost to run these services would then be added to the special expenses charge that only Seaford would pay so would be unlikely to change the net Council tax bill.

END.



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