

Battle Parish Assembly 2019

Questions submitted by members of the public

Precept

In the last 6 or 7 years the Town Council's share of the Council Tax has doubled, including a massive increase of about 35% in 2017-18. At the same time the County and District Councils have been under enormous pressure because they are legally required to keep annual increases below 3% unless public consultation endorses a higher figure. Though the Town Council is not subject to these controls will it, in future, follow the spirit of the legislation and consult with residents before proposing an increase in the precept of more than 3%?

Yes

Wedding Ceremonies

How much did it cost to set up this facility in terms of licences etc?

The licence cost £2,600 and is valid for three years.

How much is it to hire?

	Non-resident couples	Resident couples
Wednesday to Friday	£350	£300
Saturday	£400	£350
Sunday	£450	£400

What profit have weddings generated?

There is a three year plan to break even and this is year one.

The Council has not made a profit this year and was not expecting to do so.

How many weddings are scheduled in the coming year?

One is confirmed.

How do you staff this facility – attendants, cleaners, security etc and what are the on-going annual charges for licence renewals?

A Council staff member or a nominated 'Responsible Person' is on duty.

The licence lasts for three years.

The Almonry

I understand that as part of the proposed plan for refurbishment and redevelopment of the Almonry, there is included, a plan for rear access to the Almonry complex ie Gardens, Museum and main building, from Market Square. That being so, have you addressed the potential security issues and practicalities of such a proposal?

There is not a plan for rear access.

Appendix A

"Plans for the Almonry" heading in the 2018/19 Annual Report, there is reference to the proposal to apply to the Public Works Loan Board for £600,000 to carry out work on the Almonry in line with the planning approval. It says that public opinion was sought on the proposal. It goes on to say that "The majority of respondents were pleased that the building would be repaired and restored to wider public use.

Two questions arise from this.

First, I am unaware that the Almonry was ever in wide public use in living memory, so how can it be restored to wider public use?

The wording "restored **for** wider public use" would have been better. We apologise for this.

Second, there is of course a difference between wanting to see the Almonry being repaired on the one hand and being prepared to support a loan of £600,000 for the work, on the other. Accordingly, my second question is - "How many Battle Town Council Tax Payers actually replied, in writing in response to the call for opinions, saying that they supported the proposal to apply for a loan?"

We received 11 responses. All supported refurbishment of the Almonry, with four varied recommendations to restrict to urgent repairs initially. One responder also supported the reinstatement project. 10 were not in favour of the "education" area.

What will be the purposes of each of the rooms in the proposed redevelopment/refurbishment of the Almonry?

The existing office will become the Council Chamber with formal table and space for members of the public;

An open plan reception for Town and District Council staff and Tourist Information Centre;

The current meeting room will continue as a wedding venue and for private hire;

The reinstated area (currently the courtyard by the kitchen) will become a multi-functional space for private consultations and other purposes.

This area will provide easy wheelchair access and indoor accessible toilet facilities.

How much is the cost of refurbishing the Almonry without the extension room?

The Quantity Surveyor's report indicates an approximate overall cost of £600,000. Of this, around three quarters, about £450,000 relates to the refurbishment.

To ask for the New Council to review the plans for the Almonry starting with a professional survey of the structure of the building and services to establish the base cost of bringing the structure and fabric of the building to a fit for purpose standard and for a hold to be put on any application for loans until this process has been completed.

Council has agreed that surveys of the condition, the structure and the roof are to be undertaken in conjunction with the revision to the Quantity Surveyor's Cost Plan prior to the PWLB application being submitted.

Telham Playing Field

My question is what are the options being discussed for the Telham Recreation Ground?

Appendix A

This is an amenity for the local children and residents and I'd be disappointed if we were to lose it.

Certainly during the summer months I've seen it used by a lot of families and I always take my grandchildren to play on the equipment there.

My understanding is that the 'Rec' has been left in perpetuity by the original landowner and cannot be used for other purposes. My greatest fear is that the Council sell the ground to a housing developer.

I would hope that any proposals by the Council will be discussed with local residents.

There are no plans to sell the ground to a housing developer. It will remain a greenfield site per the Neighbourhood Plan proposals.

I would like to know specifically what improvements or changes are being or may be considered in respect of Telham Recreation Ground, and when and how Telham and other residents will be consulted on any proposals that may be forthcoming. This is considered to be a valuable amenity, and over the years residents have paid for the play equipment. Last year a new path was installed through residents' personal efforts and expense.

Council has agreed that most of the play equipment will remain, but any decaying pieces will be removed for safety reasons.

We are grateful to the dog walkers who improved the access footpath to the Playing Field.

The Pavilion

What is the estimated cost of clearing the site and providing the fully fitted out building?

An indicative cost of between £270,000 - £400,000 has been provided by the Football Foundation, one of the proposed funders for this project.

How will the cost be funded?

Council has committed £30,000 over three years.

There is also £7,500 from 2017/2018 in an earmarked reserve for the café.

Contributions will be sought from the Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, Football Foundation, Football Association, Sport England and others.

What is the total spent by BTC to date?

Architect fees £425 (50%)

Planning consent application £940.57

Consultant fees £297.50

This has come out of the £30,000 budget

What funding is being provided by the football club, the main user?

The football club rents the pavilion. The Council owns the building.

The football club contributed half the cost of the Architect fees and is supporting the Council by providing access to football related grant funding bodies, such as the Football Foundation.

Annual running cost excluding the café

Appendix A

This will be dependent upon the final plans, which are currently being discussed with the Football Foundation. A modern Pavilion will be more fuel efficient and cheaper to maintain.

The actual running costs are likely to rise due to increased use by other sports teams, but the rental income will increase proportionately.

Annual running cost of the café

The business plan is still in draft following the decision to rebuild the Pavilion.

The original plan to employ a manager, supported by volunteers, may change as there have been recent enquiries from people wishing to run the facility. In which case, the anticipated running costs may have to remain confidential until after bids have been submitted.

What number of questionnaires were received back following recent issue and what opinions did it produce?

104 questionnaires were returned

Should the Pavilion be replaced with a new Pavilion & Café?

Yes 83

No 17

Not answered 4

The full results will be published on the website.

Grass Verges

Grass verges at entry points to our town.

Have the members of the Council reviewed the policy to stop mowing these areas during the summer period, as the lack of maintenance has made the town look very shabby, & encourages rubbish and a proliferation of advertising hoardings that are never removed.

These grass verges are the responsibility of East Sussex County Council.

CLlr Field confirmed that many of the verges have been designated as wildflower areas and will not receive the previous level of cuts. However, if there are any junctions which prove difficult to egress due to visibility, these should be reported for cutting.