

## **District Councillors Report October 2018**

### **INDEPENDENT PEOPLE SOUGHT TO MAINTAIN STANDARDS AND REVIEW MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES AT COUNCILS**

Independent people are sought to maintain high standards of councillors' conduct and review councillors' allowances. Tendring District Council (TDC) is looking for applicants to play an important role in relation to councillors' conduct and the amount councillors receive in allowances.

Those selected will be involved in helping to promote and maintain the highest possible standards of behaviour in the work of the council, and playing a part in deciding whether complaints received about elected members need to be investigated. In this role they will work alongside both the council's Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee. The second element is to make recommendations in relation to the members' scheme of allowances.

An allowance of £600 a year will be made to those who take on the role as well as mileage expenses. The role requires attendance at up to four formal day meetings, and up to six ad hoc meetings in a year.

Both aspects not only apply to Tendring district councillors but also town and parish councillors in the area. The Council is keen to hear from applicants with a broad range of experience, an independent and analytical mind, who are tactful and have good interpersonal skills, demonstrate probity and high levels of integrity in their conduct.

The applicants will want to have a desire to serve the public interest and the local community, to uphold local democracy and act as an ambassador of impartiality.

More information and an application pack can be downloaded from the council's website at [www.tendringdc.gov.uk/council/independent-people-needed-help-maintain-standards-and-review-councillors-allowances](http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/council/independent-people-needed-help-maintain-standards-and-review-councillors-allowances) from October 5, 2018. The deadline for applications is October 26, 2018. Some eligibility restrictions apply, which are outlined in the information pack if requested.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR COUNCIL OFFICES REFRESH TAKE ANOTHER STEP FORWARD**

Plans to carry out internal alterations to Clacton's Grade-II listed Town Hall will be decided upon later this month. Tendring District Council's Planning Committee at its meeting on October 16 will consider proposals for alterations to the 1930s building in Station Road.

The application has been put forward by Tendring District Council (TDC) as part of its Transformation Project, to modernise working methods and its buildings.

Building work began on Clacton Town Hall in 1929 and the building was opened by Prince Arthur of Connaught in 1931 – and one of the civic rooms bears his name to this day. The building is formed of two wings with the popular Princes Theatre in the middle. Over the years the building has been altered in a number of ways and part of the planned works will be to reverse some of those changes. A number of areas of internal partitioning will be removed to make larger, more open offices.

In addition the former council chamber, which is currently the housing reception, will be restored to make a new meeting room. No changes to the outside of the building are planned. Carlo Guglielmi, TDC Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, said it would be good to see the Town Hall return to its more original internal design.

"The council has invested in technology in order to become more efficient," Cllr Guglielmi said.

“The fruits of these investments are ripening and we now need to finish the works to the buildings so that they match the positive and flexible engagement of our staff. The improvement of offices and services combined with a strong commitment to Clacton Town Centre are a real win-win scenario.”

The Transformation project aims to use more technological solutions to improve services and to be more efficient. The programme will also see the redundant offices at Westleigh House in Carnarvon Road make way for more town centre parking in late 2018, and a move out of the Weeley site in late 2019.

An initial phase of works at the council’s Pier Avenue offices is nearing completion, and work on the Town Hall phase is scheduled to begin in early 2019. Any application put forward by the council must go before the committee, and these works also required listed building consent.

The proposals are recommended for approval by planning officers.

### **BUSINESSES WHO WORK WITH ANIMALS BEING MADE AWARE OF NEW REGULATIONS COMING INTO FORCE**

Companies whose business involves animals are being written to advising them of new national rules. The Animal Licensing Regulations came into force from October 1, replacing a number of existing laws and replacing them with a single licensing regime – setting nationally applicable conditions. A ratings system is also being introduced dependent on how well businesses meet certain criteria. Those affected include pet boarding homes and day care facilities, firms which sell animals as pets, horse hiring, dog breeding, and keeping or training animals for exhibition.

Firms with a zoo licence or a dangerous wild animal licence are unaffected until their permits expire, at which point they will move over to the new Animal Activity Licence. Similarly, those with a Performing Animals (Regulation) Act licence will move across on March 31, 2019.

The new regulations could also affect the public who may sell animals from their private home or online, such as rabbits, guinea pigs or dogs, who will need a licence if they make more than £1,000 a year from sales. Pet shops which sell only food and items, not animals, are unaffected.

Tendring District Council’s Animal Licensing Team – which this year won a Gold RSPCA PawPrints Awards for the sixth consecutive year for its work – has written to existing licence holders informing them of the change. The team will be responsible for processing applications and inspecting premises, as well as giving advice. A schedule of fees for the new licence will be available on the Tendring District Council (TDC) website. People who are unsure if they need a licence are urged to contact the Animal Licensing Team for advice.

Michael Talbot, TDC Cabinet Member for Environment, urged people and businesses that might be affected to read up on the changes. “This new licensing regime will in many respects simplify the process by creating a single licence covering multiple areas,” Cllr Talbot said. “However, as with any change, there can be quite some work to do in the transition period. That is why we are encouraging people to read up on the new regulations so they can be informed about them, and whether or not they need a licence. If in doubt, our Animal Licensing Team will be happy to help.”

Full details on the legislation can be found at [www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/486/contents/made](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/486/contents/made) while advice and guidance notes can also be found through the Pet Industry Federation website at [www.petcare.org.uk](http://www.petcare.org.uk)

### **INVITE TO INFORMATION EVENT ON PREPARING FOR WINTER**

A Be Safe: Winter Ready event is being held in Tendring to encourage people to get ready for winter.

Organised by Tendring District Council's Emergency Planning team, in partnership with the Environment Agency and the Jaywick Sands Community Forum, the drop-in afternoon will see a number of organisations on hand to give advice on staying safe this winter. Although the Be Safe: Winter Ready event is focused on preparing for winter risks, including flooding, some of the advice given will be relevant to people year-round.

Advice will include preparation of an emergency grab bag, containing everything you may need should you have to evacuate, where to keep up-to-date with information, and other top safety tips. The Be Safe: Winter Ready event takes place at Golf Green Hall, Golf Green Road, Jaywick Sands, from 12.15-4.15pm on Wednesday, October 24, 2018.

Lynda McWilliams, Tendring District Council (TDC) Cabinet Member for Health and Education, including Community Safety and Emergency Planning, urged people to go along. "With the blazing hot summer we've had it can be easy to forget what a harsh winter came before it, but we are fast approaching that time of year again," Cllr McWilliams said. "While this event takes place in Jaywick Sands, which has been evacuated twice in the past decade due to flooding concerns, the information available on the day is relevant to everyone. Of course we hope such events will not happen again, but as a council we are always ready for such eventualities, following the old adage of 'prepare for the worst and hope for the best'."

#### **LANDLORDS REMINDED EXTENSION OF LICENSING FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION HAS COME INTO FORCE**

Landlords are being reminded that many more shared houses and flats are now covered by a mandatory licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) after a rule change which came into force on Monday, October 1.

From the start of that week the licensing requirement was extended to cover more types of accommodation – in particular if shared by five or more unrelated people with some shared facilities. The requirement for the building to be of a certain number of storeys has also been removed, whereas before only buildings of three storeys or more required licensing.

Landlords are therefore being encouraged to contact Tendring District Council (TDC) for advice, or to make an application via the website if they feel their property may fall within the remit of mandatory licensing. TDC has received some applications and will be approaching landlords directly if applications are not received.

Local authorities have been given far more wide-ranging powers to deal with unlicensed properties, including the power to issue Civil Penalties of up to £30,000 and an extension to Rent Repayment Orders – allowing councils to claw back rent if certain offences are committed.

A national database of rogue landlords has also been introduced and landlords who are found guilty of housing-related offences will have their names registered as part of the enforcement process. Paul Honeywood, TDC Cabinet Member for Housing, said the council is committed to raising standards in the private rented sector. "We contacted landlords about these changes and publicised them back in May, so there is really no excuse for landlords not to have already applied for a licence," Cllr Honeywood said. "However, we recognise there is always a transition period when such changes come into force, hence we are once again reminding landlords of their responsibilities. Now, though, is the time to take action. We intend to implement these new powers where necessary and enforce where there has been a blatant disregard of the law, so landlords must act now."

## **COUNCIL WELCOMES NURSERY'S INDICATION IT WILL APPEAL ENFORCEMENT NOTICE OVER WINTER WONDERLAND SITE**

An indication given by a local business that it will appeal against an enforcement notice issued by Tendring District Council (TDC) has been welcomed by the authority. TDC served an enforcement notice on St John's Nursery in Clacton last month (September), having issued a Planning Contravention Notice (PCN) in July advising the firm it was thought to be operating outside of its planning permission and requesting more information. Despite being told the company would discuss any plans to hold a Christmas Wonderland this year with TDC, the council received complaints from local residents at the end of August that preparations were underway for the seasonal attraction, and no communication on this matter has been received.

Ever since the issues raised last year by the Winter Wonderland TDC has been working with the nursery, both on what needed to be done to resolve the issue and with the council's regeneration team helping to find suitable alternative sites. The council was also minded to approve an application from the business to improve the access road, but the nursery appealed before the decision was issued. However, the improvements put forward would not address bigger issues around access, such as widening or the junction with St John's Road, and in any case the road is not within the company's or council's control.

TDC's planning department has also been working with the landowner of the nursery site, and also with the landowner of the road on issues around access. Fred Nicholls, TDC Cabinet Member for Corporate Enforcement, said the council had been engaging with the business at every stage, but with no planning application coming forward or indication of a move to an alternative site, the authority had no choice but to issue an enforcement notice. "We are not against business success, and do a lot of work to support businesses in Tendring. What we are against are businesses operating outside of planning permission," Cllr Nicholls said. "Last year when a High Court judge turned down our application for a temporary injunction against the Winter Wonderland, he instructed all sides to work together to resolve the issues – and we have been doing just that. It is disappointing that we have got to this stage, and that the nursery is looking to put on a Christmas Wonderland despite warnings from us throughout the year that we would deem it in breach of planning permission. However, I welcome comments made in the local press by the nursery that it intends to appeal against our enforcement notice. This may seem unusual, but if the nursery appeals – and in effect therefore enters a planning application, which will be dealt with by a planning inspector – then a judgement can be made on this issue once and for all, and we can all draw a line under it. The suggestion by the nursery that its site use and access are equivalent to applications approved by us for nearby housing developments, with new, acceptable road junctions is a gross oversimplification of planning matters."