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**The 2016 Annual General Meeting will be held in Stade Hall  
commencing at 7.00 pm on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May**

Doors open at 6.15; reception at 6.30. This is the 497<sup>th</sup> meeting of HOTRA.

## A G E N D A

**ATTENDANCE** and any apologies

**MINUTES** of the 2015 AGM

**ACCOUNTS, REPORTS and ELECTIONS :**

- Annual Accounts prepared by Phil White + Membership - *for approval*.
- Chairmans Report for the last year [ see pages 2,3 and 4] - *for approval*. Questions and comments welcome.
  
- Elections - All positions are subject to annual election. The officer posts are Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. This year Jill Bradley is standing down as Secretary in anticipation of her move to the Isle of Wight. Jill has worked hard especially with the Minutes and will be greatly missed. Thank you Jill for all that you have done. Phil White as Treasurer and I are willing to serve for another year.
- The Management Committee comprises 6 with up to 2 co-optees. If you wish to stand for any position please notify me by 9.00 am on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> May so a ballot paper can be provided. Meetings are held monthly and last up to 2 hours.
- Examiner of Accounts The Accounts are audited by an independent person before presentation.
- Any Other Business - Dr Craig Namvar will brief us on progress for the new Old Town Surgery in the former Ice House in Rock a Nore Road.

**Very Special Guest Speaker** Michael Foster DL High Sheriff of East Sussex

This is a Royal appointment to a position dating back nearly 1,000 years. Michael will explain the post of High Sheriff and tell us his plans for 2016. He will be wearing his best 'traditional' outfit.

**Chairmans report for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016**

**Fire Safety**

The 2014 fire in Marine Parade continues to reverberate. None of the 7 houses or

4 businesses have yet been returned to use. Following the fire HOTRA have had a series of meetings with the Borough Fire Commander, Nigel Cusack. With his team there have been several visits to the Old Town to consider the challenges. Their response has been helpful. Many properties in George Street and the High Street are not accessible. The large fire appliances cannot get into Hill Street and get to Exmouth Place. Cobourg Place has similar challenges.

The 2 good outcomes are a commitment to frequently familiarise fire fighters with all the twittens and hidden homes, and to consider the purchase of 2 smaller size fire appliances. [Kent has over 30 !]. Hopefully the ESFRS review will soon conclude that this investment is needed urgently.

### **Rocklands Caravan Park**

This has been a continuing cause of much unhappiness. The Planning Inspectorate are examining the issues in late April. For HOTRA the bigger question is the Public Right of Way through Ecclesbourne Glen. This has been inaccessible for 3 years. It prevents the peaceful enjoyment of this popular part of the Country Park. This is simply not acceptable and needs to be changed.

### **Sir Quentin Blake**

Our Honorary Vice President held a successful exhibition at the Jerwood Gallery in July. He generously gave the proceeds of any sales to help fund Art work with local schools.

In November he personally invited Michael Morpurgo and David Walliams to take part in the Storytelling Festival. Both events were a huge success.

Quentin has kindly offered to provide an Art work for the newly refurbished Hastings Children's Library.

### **Cllr John Hodges**

The sudden death of John Hodges at the start of 2016 was a huge blow to the best interests of local residents - and to his family. John was the most diligent hard working and modest Councillor the Old Town has had for a generation. His additional work as a County Councillor and Chair of the Foreshore Trust reached into many homes. Our debt to John is shown by the legacy of improvements he secured.

### **Flamingo Park**

This long lease is shortly to be renewed. Early plans were discussed at a HOTRA open meeting. Improvements to the boating Lake, the fairground rides and the miniature railway stations are all part of the plan. HOTRA hopes that details will be shared soon. This is the last remaining part of our seafront to be upgraded from the pier in the west to the Winch Huts in the east. **The High Street**

### **New pavement**

Over 6 years ago HOTRA organised a petition which was signed by more than 620 local people. It asked East Sussex County Council to provide a pavement at the start of the High Street from Fagins to John the Cobblers. The pavement on the east side of the street is narrow and slopes steeply to the kerb making it unsafe for buggies or wheelchairs.

Eventually the work has been done and to a very high standard. Everybody has been very complementary about the standard of workmanship and the pleasant workforce. HOTRA have written to thank ESCC for all of this.

### **Old Town Hall**

When Hastings Council decided to close the museum there was a fear that this historically important building would simply become another shop like Starbucks. Obviously HBC hoped to find a tenant to help their finances. No clear solid offers appeared initially so Anne Scott asked that the building be registered as a Community Asset to give this community a chance to find a good future use. At this point in writing weekly meetings are being held in the History House to try to create a community hub. This would be expected to open through the week and throughout the year. A wide range of ideas have been put forward which could benefit residents, visitors and traders. HOTRA is hoping that the many hurdles can be overcome to bring a new vibrancy to this precious asset. Let's hope that Hastings Council have the vision to at least allow a 6 month trial.

### **Old Town Surgery**

Dr Craig Namvar draw a large audience to our October meeting. He outlined the many aspects in his plans which would provide a significant enhancement to front line Health Services. The new premises in the former Ice House in Rock a Nore Road will be structured to meet a wide variety of needs. { Dr Namvar will be at the AGM to share the latest information }.

### **Parking throughout the Old Town**

The unrelenting increase in demand for more parking is not exclusive to the Old Town. HOTRA has had a series of positive discussions with ESCC Highways officers. Using walkabouts every extra space and even half space has been added. Over 20 additional spaces have been gained. In the pipeline are more changes to existing spaces to give greater flexibility. It is true to say that there will still be insufficient parking, especially overnight. A possible mechanism to allow use of Rock a Nore car park overnight is being looked at.

### **Broadband speeds**

The owners of Laindons have invested heavily in their business. They have found that many who want to stay there use the internet. But the speeds are so slow that business is being lost. With support from HBC and Amber Rudd BT have agreed to look at what can be done. It might take 9 months mind you !

**Urbanism Award** a wonderful compliment to Hastings Old Town

For 10 years the Academy of Urbanism have looked at places where people live. They identify good practice and select places that provide a high quality of living. There 18 criteria.

These include collective vision, culture, the human scale, identity and diversity, vibrancy and interaction, pedestrian priority with a good choice of transport, social+ cultural + economic needs of all inhabitants, the public realm and management of the urban fabric, new buildings and existing

buildings must respect and enhance local topography, parks and spaces for recreation and many more.

They select 3 winners in each of these categories -

- international cities
- towns
- neighbourhoods
- streets
- places.

It is wonderful that Hastings Old Town was 1 of the 3 Best Neighbourhoods in the U.K. We were especially honoured to have a poem written by Ian McMilan dedicated to mark our award.

*Here, listen to the song of the Old Town,  
As the tide comes in and the tide goes out  
A town that was built by the sea, no doubt  
Is changing, has changed, turns itself around  
Stand by the Jerwood window and look  
And see what the Old Town is all about;  
Shopping with variety, eating with clout  
You can read the old town just like a book;  
Old Town on a moonlit Friday night  
As the tide goes out and tide comes in  
And we buy and drink and look and stroll  
And the Old Town shines like a lighthouse light;  
Bottle the Old Town, put it in a tin;  
Hastings has spirit, Old Town is the soul.*

The other 2 winners in the Neighbourhood category were the Devonshire Quarter in Sheffield and Hulme in Manchester,

Sincere thanks to the Academy of Urbanism for giving a new sense of pride to us who live and work here. And for permission to print the poem.

Dick Edwards