

VENTNOR TOWN COUNCIL

CLERK'S COLUMN

A FAREWELL

5 JUNE 2023

So after 571 editions over 13 years its time for me to say farewell to the Clerk's column and, most importantly, to those who have taken time to read it either on its digital Residents Forum list of 490 members or its weekly appearance on the South Wight Chronicle.

As my last working day as Town Clerk is this coming Friday I wanted to celebrate what had become 2 to 3 hours of my every weekend and, I hope, provided many of the town's residents with an insight into the Town Council's work. Edition 158 of the electronic version turned out to be its last but as my last working day as Town Clerk is this coming Friday I wanted to celebrate what had become 2 to 3 hours of my every weekend

HISTORY

The Clerk's Column began with the publication of its first edition, literally a single column in the Chronicle, on 29 September 2011 courtesy of its then editor Anne Munt. Its subjects were: Putting Green, Beach Safety, That Smell, Natwest Bank and Outdoor Fitness Area: the actual text is available [here](#).

That version of the Column ran for 425 editions: 50 weeks a year following the Chronicle's two-week Christmas closure.

The first edition of the digital version was circulated on 6 April 2020 in response to the temporary closure of the Chronicle due to Covid-19. Its news stories were: Working from Home, Virtual Meetings, Support for Vulnerable Residents, 31 Bus, new Public Toilet. Assets & Services Working Group and Next Town Council Meeting and the introduction of two tweets from my Twitter feed. The Chronicle's then and current Editor, Andy Porter helpfully offered to include the whole of the digital edition in his weekly editions. That edition is available [here](#).

And so it continued its weekly Monday publication until what turned out to be its final edition - no. 158 of the digital version - with subjects: the Town Meeting 2033, the resignation of James Toogood, the Annual Town Council Meeting, the HR Committee Meeting and Traffic Orders.

Edition 159 had been drafted ready for Monday 22 May but the Town Council meeting that evening resolved that future editions should not be published before being considered by Councillors. That discussion can be viewed at 24 mins 5 seconds into the live stream of the meeting available [here](#).

PURPOSE

The launch edition of 29 September 2011 opened with the statement:

This new column, from the Town Clerk – with thanks to the Chronicle – offers regular updates on the Town Council's activities and concerns.

It was initially a response to the constantly bad publicity the Town Council was regularly receiving from the Chronicle and its readers following the Council's chaotic life of the time that flowed from the Parish Meeting of 450 residents in St Catherines Church in March 2010 that passed six votes of No Confidence in it. With the Council's recovery over the next 18 months the Clerk's Column was my contribution to the all important requirement for transparency: the regular sharing with as many residents as possible of the Town Council's developing work and projects.

That commitment was shared by the Town Council's I've worked for and the staff teams I've worked with. The commitment also headed the first of the digital editions with: *Its contribution to the Council's commitment to transparency has been so important that, until the Chronicle returns, here's the first edition of its digital alternative.*

That transparency remained central to the Council's development: all the major projects and services it has taken on and developed were agreed by large meetings (over 100) of residents in our annual January consultation events that positively endorsed the developments and the associated costs.

THANKS

My thanks to the Chronicle's two Editors – Anne Munt and Andy Porter - that made its wider circulation possible and to Marion Best and Jeremy McLaren for their letters in last week's edition. Thanks also to my excellent colleagues that have provided some of the information and images that have filled the page. Finally, thanks to all those who have taken the time to read the Column over its many editions. Farewell all, and thanks for my time with you.

