

Message from the Mayor – 11 November 2005

Three weeks ago today I was sworn in as Torbay's first directly elected Mayor. On day one I made it clear that I intended to work with all 36 councillors, regardless of their priorities, for the good of the Bay.

I invited the outgoing Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, also the Leader of the Conservatives, to form a Cabinet with me.

Let us hope that their response will be positive and that we can all work together constructively for a clean, safe and prosperous 'Bay.

This will be a strange marriage: the honeymoon is over even before we walk down the aisle. That happened when we sat down together and looked at the Budget figures for '06/'07.

These figures are not for the squeamish. I had hoped that it would be possible to present a "make do and mend" Budget next Spring and leave a fundamental review of the Council's finances for later. By then, frankly, I would have acquired a better understanding of the Council's structures.

We all know that tough decisions need to be made. Torbay Council has all sorts of commitments that we simply cannot continue to fund indefinitely. At present we are doing too many things. We need to concentrate our scarce resources on fewer services and provide these to a higher standard.

Tough decisions will be made sooner rather than later. Oh well, it was fun being popular for a few days.

One of my manifesto pledges was to maintain my links with community, voluntary and cultural organisations. It is so easy, once elected, to get bogged down in the Town Hall attending endless meetings and lose touch with the people you are serving.

In my first fortnight I have met Friends of Ansteys Cove, Brixham Soroptimists, Galmpton and Churston W.I. Residential Landlords and the Brunel Anniversary Heritage Group. I have also attended a TOADS production of "Chorus Line", planted bulbs with the Groundwork Trust at Queen Elizabeth Drive and visited Torquay's Mosque.

You would be amazed at what goes on in Torbay! Whatever else we may lack, we make up for through a tremendous wealth of community activity.

I must put my thinking cap on and consider how we can harness this in order to plug the shortage of School Governors and encourage people from a much wider range of backgrounds to put themselves forward for Council elections.

Just a thought. It will soon be time to fix the parking charges for next year. However popular it might be it simply isn't possible to reduce these unilaterally without making a big hole in the accounts. But it may be possible to stop annoying people with all the odd figures that involve scratching around in our purses for 5p and 10p coins.

How would you feel about paying £1 (and being done with it) for, say, 75 minutes rather than the present 85p for 1 hour?

(Polite) answers on a postcard, please to Yours Truly at the Town Hall, before I'm evicted into the Dog House.

Nick Bye

Mayor of Torbay