

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR : CHRISTINE FORD

November 29: Cemetery User Groups.

Attended a meeting at which members of the public with an interest in cemeteries, for which the New Forest District Council is responsible, were invited to form liaison groups through which information regarding regulations and general maintenance could be discussed. There was particular interest from people at New Milton and Eling where there have been problems with unauthorised monuments in lawned areas. This is a sensitive and sometimes contentious subject and NFDC felt that dialogue would be helpful to all concerned.

Wednesday 5 December:

Meeting of the NFDC Green Audit Board at Lyndhurst.

General discussions regarding the themes to be addressed. Including operating council vehicles; operating council offices and buildings; procurement of eco goods and services; community engagement; sustainable homes; sustainable tourism.

NFDC/Test Valley BC Commercial Services Partnership- Romsey

Was present as an observer at this meeting at which the financial consequences of new government legislation requires that all commercial vehicles involved in door-to-door visits to be fitted with a tachograph. Refuse collection freighters already have them but green waste, commercial waste and bring site (bottle and paper) collection vehicles do not at present. Each tachograph costs approx £1,500 per vehicle which for the NFDC would, with training for drivers, come to approx £46,260 in total. Clarification of this legislation is being sought from the Freight Transport Association.

Thursday 6 December:

Refuse and Recycling Working Party

We held a review of the Bring Sites, their numbers and frequency of their clearance. Gaps in their sitings were identified while acknowledging that it is not easy to gain permission for their installation from land owners. It was also queried whether the paper/cardboard bins were still needed now that there is a district wide clear sack collection. I asked that this should be brought to the Environment Review Panel for further discussion. The work done by some schools regarding recycling was praised, that of Ringwood School in particular, under the leadership of Mrs Hickman the school had won a gold national award. Some other schools were regrettably very poor in this area of education, and some were indeed 'not very interested' stating various reasons. Members were urged to liaise with schools in their wards if a visit from the recycling education officer at NFDC would be considered useful and be welcomed.

Saturday 8 December

Monthly surgery at Stillwater Park

Most visitors were deeply concerned about the Furlong Car Park proposals and the ending of the Wilts and Dorset Town Bus route. I have to say that I agreed with most of their comments.

Sunday 9 December

Attended the Chairman (Cllr Bill Dow) of NFDC's Charity Christmas Fayre and lunch at the Lyndhurst Park Hotel. His charities are the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance and the Oakhaven Hospice.

Tues 11 December

Green Audit Meeting – Council Transport

The first of the in depth meetings examining specific areas. All officers with responsibilities for transport eg procurement, leasing, running, maintenance etc. were present to examine types of fuel, driver training, types of vehicle, members and officers car sharing, travel allowances etc.

Wed 12 December

Attended the Commercial Services Exhibition at Marsh Lane Lymington. This was an excellent exhibition depicting all the ranges of the department's responsibilities from coastal and flood issues to fly tipping, recycling, grass cutting etc. I suggested that this should be repeated in a wider forum for members of the public to see it in the new year.

Thurs 13 December

Conservative group meeting

Discussions on the budget and the expected grant from Central Government, and the impact of the additional services we are required to provide without any extra funding. Also examined was the concessionary travel nationwide for the over 60s. This could be very severe financially, final figures will not be available from Government until March.

Friday 14 December

Environment Portfolio Briefing

Under consideration were abandoned vehicles collections which HCC is now to administer, and public toilets at Milford on Sea, Calshot, Fordingbridge and Ringwood.

Monday 17 December

Full Council Meeting

After a presentation and farewell ceremony to retiring Director Nick Gibbs, the council settled down to the ratification of recommendations from the various committees. The minutes of all committees are available on the New Forest Web site but if you ever wish to see a hard copy of them I would be happy to lend my copy at any time on request. I'll always try to bring to your notice anything that has a noticeable relevance to Ringwood in particular.

Tuesday 18 December

Cabinet Briefing

I was present at the confidential cabinet briefing of items to be discussed on **Wednesday 2 January 2008**.