

NFDC REPORT FOR RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL FROM

CHRISTINE FORD

SEPTEMBER 2008

Monday 1 September

My briefing by Council Officers on rationale behind reports and recommendations to be discussed at the upcoming Environment Review Panel.

Wed 3 Sept

Attended Cabinet meeting

Attended the Green Audit Board, at which the question of 'how we run our offices' was examined. This is part of an ongoing investigation on how the NFDC can save natural resources and be more environmentally efficient in the council's own methods of operation.

Thurs 4 September

With the Director of Environmental Services, the Portfolio holder for the Environment, and a representative of Test Valley BC (our partners in some areas), visited the Saltex Exhibition at Windsor Race Course to view demonstrations of equipment and safety products needed for grounds maintenance.

Tues 9 Sept

Attended the NFDC/TV joint committee in its present form final meeting.

Thurs 11 Sept

Chaired the Environment Review Panel. This was a huge agenda and the meeting continued well into the afternoon. The main subjects being the success of the garden waste scheme which is now causing staffing/collection problems; GIS; and the seemingly stalled implementation of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act (2005): I can fill in details of all these at full Council meeting or else this report would run into several pages!

The same evening I was present at the Conservative Group meeting, at which the main subjects were the mechanism for the succession of the Leader (Cllr Mel Kendal) who is retiring next month and of the election of Deputy Leader, also a warning about the very tight funding from central government which could impact on council tax, unless cuts in all budgets can be found.

Sat 12 September

Surgery morning – the busiest yet, with about 12/14 people visiting, with a wide range of problems from planning, funding for projects, objections to building applications, ‘neighbours from hell’, weeds in gutters etc. A very busy morning with lots to follow up with council officers next week.

Mon 15 September

Full Council, at which Cllr Kendal formally announced his retirement as Leader.

Tues 16 September

Chaired the final meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel of the joint Test Valley Borough Council/NFDC partnership.

The partnership had stalled and did not seem to be progressing in any significant way. It was to be dissolved in its present form and a new agreement is being written. The member scrutiny function will be done by the appropriate Environment Panels in each authority in future.

Wed 17 September

Attended the New Forest Access Forum as representative of RTC. A good few groups with generations of forest access and experience laid out their views which I think must have been triggered by the policies of the National Park Authority.

My particular group concentrated on the area from Ringwood (Poulner Lakes) up to Frogham, though mainly the Linford/Highwood/Moyles Court accesses, to include car parking and disabled access etc.

Thurs 18 Sep

As a member of the Corporate Overview Panel I presented a paper on the Geographic Information System (GIS), its present shortcomings and the steps that are being taken to solve them. Mr Ken Conolly, head of IT, was present to answer any technical questions, and has agreed to provide me with an update on progress in January/February 2009.

A tidy up of council member representation on outside bodies was accepted which will cut by nearly half the meetings (or not!) that members will be obliged to attend. Some organisations have not been meeting for years, some defunct and some not bothered about NFDC presence at all. A waste of time and travel expenses !!

Attended, that afternoon, a confidential briefing of the Cabinet.

Fri 19 September

Attended the Environment Portfolio holder's briefing. At which I brought up the weeds in the gutters problem. Fording bridge and most of the West of the Forest has the same problem. A mixture of rain and wind has prevented the safe spraying of the weeds which have just gone on growing and growing. Similarly the grass and land has been too wet for the machinery to tackle it.

Sat 20 September

Carnival night, first time I've missed the evening procession for years, but with excellent cause. As RTC representative on the Civilian Committee I attended the inaugural annual formal dinner of the 2515 Sqn Air Training Corps. It was held at the Town and Country Experience museum which did the occasion proud. The Cadets (quite a number from Ringwood) were splendid and a real credit to their officers and training instructors. I hope to bring a stronger focus on the good work being done by this youth group in the future.