

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL – DECEMBER 2008

Report by County Councillor Nigel Clarke

Introduction:

A less busy month, therefore, I have only attended the following commitments since my last report:

New Forest Access Forum where next year's programme & capital bids were discussed & agreed – a long list of nice things to do but the financial climate is & will not be very supportive.

A briefing on Adults Services budgets outturn for 08/09 & forecasts for 09/10 & 10/11. A 2% under spend planned for 08/09, due to smarter working & procuring, is to be carried forward to support additional expenditure in the next two years as the Hampshire Model of Personalisation is rolled out;

A Group Away day that debated the concerns that the Cabinet model disengaged the average back bencher; too me it was touch of nostalgia but also a recognition that there is a major disconnect between the local concerns of a member & judgements that affect everyone in the County. Not resolved, therefore, a further look will be taken after the June election assuming there is no change of control.

A Cabinet briefing on the next steps by the County following its Sustainability Commission: take stock of our own carbon footprint & energy practices, & set in progress reduction measures. A slight problem is that the largest group, partially within our control, are schools with their devolved budgets which under current proposals for Extended Schools will be use for energy!

A Group meeting at which the major concerns were the impact that some £7m is at risk out of the £2.4bn County Pension Fund following the collapse of Hedge funds run by Bernard Madoff – an interesting example of high return investment strategies always have high risks that are often not understood. And a shuffling of the chairs in Regional government – SEERA is dead, long live (from 1 April 2009) South East England Council (SEEC) which consists of the 74 first & second tier authorities, plus a limited number of non government bodies. This meant to be a good thing but at our level we will probably hardly notice any difference.

A Business Transformation Review for the Environment Department – 3 wise men & 1 wise woman: conclusion (IT systems strike again) that the County call centre can't talk to the Environment system that well & accordingly information &

feedback gets lost or very delayed. Apparently, the system was grafted on top of other systems with a thin layer linking the public system with the internal technical systems – more work & urgently needs to be done!

Chaired my last HAT meeting for 2008 where the topic was the selection & appointment of School Governors – public, parent & community. An important role that supports the effective governance & delivery of educational standards, even more so as the role of schooling seems to grow to include making fine citizens & remedy the lack of good parenting – mission creep! If anyone is interested in becoming a School Governor do step forward & I will help.

Other activities:

Attended the GIS presentation given by NFDC along with Christine which I thought sold the merits & potential of GIS very well – bit of a Rolls Royce for the smaller parishes;

A pleasant duty, including a free lunch, when I hosted the annual ‘thank you’ for volunteer drivers who staff up the service overseen by Community First new Forest. They were all very enthusiastic saying how rewarding it was for them & their passengers, with some of them having done it for over 15 years.

Nigel Clarke