

1. District Council Finances and Budget-setting for next year.

Residents will be reassured that no Council monies were on deposit with the failed Icelandic banks (same for Hampshire County Council). The effects of recession are already apparent in the Council's income – for example considerable decrease in Central Government grants, downturn in housing means fewer planning applications & Land Registry searches, reduced interest received on cash balances etc. Present budgeting work is very much targeted at keeping within our means whilst aiming to keep Council Tax rises at no more than 3% but still maintaining front line services. Desirable but optional projects may have to be re-phased.

2. Fluoridation of water supply in the Southampton area.

Cabinet will consider on 3rd December opposing the fluoridation proposals of Southampton City Health Authority on the grounds that the evidence of benefit/harm is mixed and the 'precautionary principle' should therefore apply. The area that would be immediately affected include parts of Totton and the Waterside, and there is a fear that once one Authority gives the go-ahead, other areas including our own might be under pressure to follow.

3. A31 Traffic Management.

NFDC Planning and Transportation Review Panel considered last week the Motion put to Council to request the Highways Agency ('HA') to introduce a 50mph speed limit along the A31 through Ringwood. The Panel Vice-Chairman Cllr. Steve Rippon-Swaine can give more details of the discussion and the outcome. Cabinet will be considering the response on Wednesday 3rd December, which is currently framed at supporting the speed limit as part of a number of recommended measures to reduce both accidents and congestion. The likely HA proposal to close the West Street access to the A31 will need careful consideration within our Town community.

4. NFDC Core Strategy – planning policies 2006-26, outside the National Park.

The public representation period closes on 19th December. Unless it turns out that a major issue has not been addressed or is inconsistent with other statutory requirements, the published Strategy will go forward in its present form to the Inspector for Examination-in-Public next year. Representation/objections made by individuals and organisations (including any from Town/Parish Councils) will be forwarded to the Inspector with the Strategy for his or her consideration. Whilst the final result will be binding, this does not mean the Strategy will never be revised during the next 18 years – indeed it probably will in the light of experience, particularly if it is failing to deliver what is currently envisaged.

5. Paying for Council Services on-line.

The new NFDC website will allow residents to make many of the usual payments/requests (Council Tax, parking clocks, garden waste collections etc.) on-line. A spoken version is available for those with sight difficulties.

(CRT 26th November 2008)