

Ringwood Town Council Meeting 29th October 2008
– a Report from District Councillor Chris Treleaven

1) NFDC Core Strategy – submission (to Government) document

Full Council approved on Monday (Oct. 27th) the publication of the Strategy intended for submission to the Examination-in-Public in Spring 2009. Public representations on this important, over-arching policy document may be made between Nov.7th and Dec.11th.

Unless any representations suggest the Strategy is in any way 'unsound' (i.e. does not comply with other agreed strategies such as the SEPlan or ignores the considerable evidence base on which it has been formulated), the Strategy in its present form will go forward – along with all representations – to the Government appointed Inspector next year.

2) National Park Core Strategy (plus Management Plan+ Recreation Strategy)

Our request to extend the consultation period beyond the (new) date of Nov. 14th has been declined by the NPA.

Cabinet-agreed responses to the NPA Strategies have been published today (see NFDC website, Cabinet papers Nov.5th). In essence, our view is that, in pursuing their perceived over-riding need to subject all policies to the conservation objective, insufficient attention has been paid to the social and economic well-being of the 34,000 residents who live in the Park and of those businesses that provide employment within it.

3) A31 Traffic Management

The Motion to request the Highways Agency to impose a 50mph speed limit between Picket Post and St. Leonards has been passed to our Planning and Transportation Review Panel for further consideration. The views of the Police, your Town Council, other public authorities and residents will be able to be taken into account in making a recommendation. I hope to be able to report on the Highways Agency intended feasibility programme for traffic management on the A31 following a long-postponed meeting held with them today.

4) Events involving Road Closures

The very successful and well-managed Ringwood School charity walk on Friday last prompts me to correct some misunderstandings about road closures:-.

Firstly, the responsibility for public safety rests with the organisers (and always has). Secondly, NFDC has no power to insist on a Road Closure Order being made. Thirdly, NFDC does not and cannot issue a 'licence' to hold an event on the public highway.

When and if notified by organisers, NFDC will recommend and offer access to Home Office guidance on holding street events, which includes organisers undertaking a risk assessment, consulting with the Police and with the Highway Authority (HCC), formulating a traffic management plan, obtaining public liability insurance and deciding whether to apply to NFDC for a Road Closure Order.

Subject to fulfilling these necessary and other published conditions such as the signage/diversion routings – the planning of which NFDC will assist – a requested Closure Order is made for the event.

5) Current Pedlars Walk repairs – the steep slope problem.

Regrettably, and using every aspect of the disability legislation available, NFDC Officers were unable to persuade Sainsbury's agents that re-aligning this difficult slope was part of their repairing lease arrangements. Perhaps the Town Access Plan/County Town Initiative group might consider this problem as part of a capital programme bid?

6) Council Leadership

Following elections on Oct.27th, the new Leader is Cllr Barry Rickman. The proposed new Deputy Leader is Cllr Edward Heron.

(CRT Oct 28th)