

REPORT – HAMPSHIRE & TOWN COUNCILLOR – NIGEL CLARKE

NEW FOREST CONSULTATIVE PANEL – 7TH MAY 2009

Attended where the salient issues discussed were 4 No presentations by Mike Seddon, Deputy Surveyor, Forestry Commission:

Open Habitats In England Consultation – a national consultation closing in early June on forming a policy on the restoration & expansion of open habitats from woods & forests. See website www.forestry.gov.uk/england-openhabitats . A scan of the options up to 2026 seem reasonable, subject to the unknown consequences of the current recession & the possible impact of cumulative climate change;

Crown Lands Management Plan – a refresh of the existing MP to 2012, see www.forestry.gov.uk/newforest Tends to complement, in the short term, the options outlined in the above Consultation;

Forestry Commission Finance – a few facts & figures, including elements in Dorset (Moors Valley) & Dorset (Cranbourne Chase) shows that it costs about £6.5m to manage about 36,000 Ha, which is about 14% of the English FC Estate but is about 25% of the English deficit. The shortfall in funding is net funded via DEFRA. The only element that makes a profit is the commercial timber operation, but that could be compromised by the options outlined in the national Consultation;

Mobile shops & camp sites – there are 10 No camp sites run as a JV with Forest Holidays providing in the peak season about 3,300 pitches for about 12,000 visitors per night. The JV wishes to extend a mobile shop facility to 3 No other major sites, other than Holmsley, which is long established, promoting Forest Marque & local produce. The proposal will be considered by the Verder's Court in June.

Presentation by Jonathan Gerrelli, Head Agister, on the progress on reducing animal accidents (RTAs). A focussed group using data mapping techniques & targeted intervention has been very successful. A decline of 34 No RTAs in 2008 in comparison with 2007; an interesting set of facts – peak time for accidents is between 1700 – 1900 on a Friday, mainly by locals, lowest is Sunday afternoons!

No other business of merit.

LSP EVENT – DUTY TO INVOLVE SEMINAR – 20TH MAY

Effective presentation & discussion of the problems & opportunities available in the Duty to Involve with the electorate & other key partners – Police, Fire & Rescue, Primary Care Trust etc which is mandated by current & imminent legislation.

The two most important are probably the Sustainable Communities Act & the Local Democracy, Economic Development & Construction Bill, which will become operational late 2009, early 2010. Issues that all tiers of local government will have to grapple with are: duty to respond to petitions, the involvement of local persons who must include all, not just the established & articulate. And the possibility of Participatory Budgeting was also mentioned, though at this stage there was little detail or enthusiasm.

Overall, the event was a taster for the changing landscape of local democracy with the greater emphasis on Citizen engagement & involvement in decision making. My conclusion was that the greatest problem was that in a three tier organisation, which also worked with many

partners, the average citizen was totally confused as to who did what & why? The central government model was as usual based on an urban unitary authority & does not map that well on to a Shire County. All in all, one of the more interesting events & a copy of the presentation is available.

HEALTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 26TH MAY

Attended my last HOSC, which as usual covered a diverse range of NHS issues:

Mental Health Services at Andover War Memorial Hospital;

South East Capacity Plan – the key in Hampshire is the completion & mobilisation (a massive planning exercise to move over a 100 specialisms in 4 weeks) of the QE II hospital at Portsdown;

South Central Ambulance Trust Performance – response times are an issue in the rural areas;

Access to Health Services for People who are Homeless – data collection stage;

Swine Flu – State of Readiness in Hampshire – we are up amongst the best organised in the country;

LINK work programme – the successor to the Patient & Public Forum where there is a need to work together with the HOSC;

Fluoridisation of Drinking Water in Southampton & SW Hampshire – a very divisive topic;

Care at the End of Life – work started by the HOSC, carried forward by the PCT & Adult Services, which is now considered to be a National Model

And, lastly but possibly the most important the first hint that future funding for the South Central PCT is & will be increasingly more constrained & that some very hard choices will have to be made. The balance in FY09/10 is very tight but for future years there will be no growth in funding but demand will increase – demographics, wages, input costs & other contractual commitments. Efficiency savings & rationalisations will not balance the books, so expect a protracted & heated public debate.

Cllr Nigel Clarke

26th May 2009