

REPORT FOR RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2010

14 January

Chaired the Environment Review Panel.

The main item on the agenda was a scrutiny of the progress of the aspirations agreed during the NFDCs Green Audit. **Part one 'How we operate our vehicles'**

This is stage one of the NFDC putting its own house in order. Particularly dealing with how the NFDC operates its vehicles, subsequent to all commercial services drivers completing an eco-driving training course, indications are for a saving of 6% in commercial fleet mileage (100,000 miles saved) MPG savings resulting from eco-driving are being monitored. Among other initiatives include a review of officer and members' travel allowances, 'green' pool car purchases, car share, alternatives to face-to-face meetings and flexible working arrangements.

Even for those who are somewhat sceptical about CO2 emissions and global warming, the facts emerging from these initiatives show that they result in fuel and mileage savings and in better driving.

Stage two will be examining '**How we operate our offices and buildings'**

2 February

Attended a meeting of the **Joint Litter Pick Group** held at the National Park HQ. The group comprises representatives from NFDC, NPA, Forestry Commission and the National Trust. A Ringwood resident Mr Terry Aldridge and friends were identified as outstanding in their commitment to keeping the streets and grass verges free from litter. The annual Forest Litter Pick is due to take place in the week 6-14 March. Equipment is supplied to all volunteers and the localities are identified logically so as to be reasonably close to home.

13 February

At my joint surgery attended by Desmond Swayne MP, and Cllrs Michael Thierry and Steve Rippon-Swaine, we had a large number of residents with issues as wide ranging as housing problems to summer flooding of farmland in the Avon Valley. There was a 6 strong delegation from the farming community who explained how a change of Environment Agency/Natural England policy over weed cutting in the River had severely affected the grazing, flora and fauna and hay crops in the valley from Bicton via Ringwood to Sopley.

Mr Swayne, very fortuitously, has a scheduled meeting with the Minister for the Environment Mr Hilary Benn MP on 2 March in Westminster, at which he will raise this problem.

16 February

A follow up meeting was held with the Farming representatives from Saturday's surgery, Mr Swayne and a representative of Natural England from London. We all explained the problem, including the lack of essential 'haylege' available to feed the stock brought in off the Forest for the Winter season, the flooding out of fauns and ground nesting birds and chicks, and not least the loss of income for the farmers themselves.

18th February.

I attended the **NFDC Cabinet Briefing** then the **Conservative Group Meeting** in the evening, both of which, not surprisingly in this budget season, debated financial matters and the Council Tax.

19th February

NFDC Full Council

A full council chamber where the Council Budget/Council Tax was presented and discussed, an Opposition budget was also presented, and on a vote the Ruling Group's budget was accepted by a large majority: Which will result in raising the Council Tax by the District Council by 2% and without cutting any services, but having made savings elsewhere.

Councillors unanimously agreed to freeze their allowance for the second year running, due to the economic climate and in consideration of the modest pay offer on the table for Council employees.

Christine Ford. District Councillor

Ringwood North Ward

23 February 2010