

Ringwood Town Council Meeting 26th May 2010

– a Report from District Councillor Chris Treleaven

1) **Ringwood "Gateway" project – value for local taxpayers!**

The many public consultations we have enjoyed over recent years concerning the SW corner of the Furlong car park have sent clear messages:-

- i) The present public conveniences need urgent renewal
- ii) The Visitor Information Centre needs renovation and longer opening times
- iii) Savings should be made in locally raised Council Tax
- iv) More 'joined-up' local access to the different tiers of local Government services
- v) Any development at this location should not involve multi-storey car parking but should retain the existing trees.

The proposed solution to these needs is a modestly sized new building, incorporating all the local public services currently conducted in three different buildings, offering a "one-stop" facility to residents and visitors. Increased efficiency will yield financial savings. This corner site will have a much improved pedestrian environment – indeed a fitting backdrop for wedding ceremonies conducted at the proposed re-location of the Registry Office!

An exhibition display of the proposal will be made available this summer, and public consultation will be part of the necessary planning application for this project.

The risk to this project not proceeding arises from whether Councils have been sufficiently realistic in the assessment of the commercial value of their existing premises. Best professional advice has been used to make very modest assumptions!.

2) **Lymington Town Hall – further value for local taxpayers!**

In a similar vein to the above, but on a much larger financial scale, it is proposed to re-locate the current temporary HQ of the New Forest National Park to Lymington Town Hall, whilst at the same time rationalising the use of NFDC offices between there and Lyndhurst. Considerable public expenditure savings will be achieved by the same functions being carried out in two buildings rather than in three as now. There is potential for joint working for some public services, which would also save money.

The risk to this cost-saving project not proceeding arises from the possibility of Central Government (DEFRA) cancelling their part of their proposed capital funding to the National Park Authority for the up-front costs.

3) **Local Development Framework – Sites and Development Management**

As a consequence of the publicly adopted Core Strategy, work is proceeding as to which sites – in terms of lines on maps – should fulfil the overall requirements for housing, employment, open space, transport improvements, retail development, environmental protection and enhancement.

All Town and Parish Councils in the District (outside the national Park) have, in past months, put forward suggestions for such site allocation, as indeed have private and commercial organisations including developers.

The first stab at assessing the suitability of the suggested sites for their claimed purpose, on a rationalised basis, has been completed, with many choices left open. Local District Councillors will have had the opportunity to discuss/criticise/add to what is meant by a "rational basis" today (26th), and the specific sites for the Western area of the District including Ringwood will be further explored at an informal (but not open or binding) meeting for local District Councillors on June 24th. Of course, there will be further, open opportunities

for consultation on these site proposals, both before and during the public submission of the eventual final plans next year. Reasons why some sites have been selected and some not will be transparently presented.

4) Local Transport/Access Schemes for Ringwood (an overload of consultation???)

At the present time, your Council is being consulted on – and more importantly, participating in - a number of locally important transport/highway development schemes:-

- i) Cycle route improvements
- ii) Walking and traffic management schemes
- iii) Town Access Plan
- iv) Southampton Road Improvement

This work is partly prompted by the Sites and Development Management framework referred to above, and partly by the new requirement to identify specific schemes for which Developers' Contributions can appropriately required. Although it is good to have County/District/Town partnership working on these matters important to local people, the proof of all this hard worked pudding will come in actual deliverability. Which means money. Whilst there are funds now for some of the above, inevitably in future years of restraint in public finance, priorities will have to be drawn up. More consultation!!

(crt 25.05.10).