

Annual Report of Activities 2016-2017: Cllr Frank Pearson.  
March 2017

The political year 2016 started in May with Cllr Stephen Godfrey as Leader of Council. I was fortunate to be granted the Environment, Health & Wellbeing Portfolio.

This is an extensive one covering as it does not only Environmental Health and Protection, but also Landscape and Open Spaces, Sport and Physical Activities, Licensing of Events, Waste Collection, Health & Wellbeing, and Community Safety.

Four important aspects covered are

- The Boomtown Festival at Matterley Bowl to the east of Winchester Town. As Portfolio Holder, I spent Saturday night going around with Officers visiting various sites to do sound checks to ensure that the music noise levels did not exceed permitted levels. There were eight 'breaches'!
- Air Quality Action Plan. As some of you will have read, Winchester Town area has three roads where the air quality is deemed to be above safe levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) and particulates (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). Much of this is produced by diesel vehicles (buses, lorries and cars). CleanEarth took the Government to the Supreme Court to establish that Government promises made to the EU in 2010 regarding clean air were unlikely to be fulfilled and the situation should be remedied. The Court found in favour of CleanEarth. Allied to this was the knowledge that testing in Winchester indicated that things were 'not good' along three roads – Chesil Street, St George's Street and the 'bottom' end of Romsey Road. The year was spent, with Officers and community representatives debating possible actions that should be taken. Some depend upon actions of Hampshire Highways, some are actions e.g. changes in parking charges that are to be, and are being taken by the City Council. The media suggests that the highest pollution vehicles – both diesel and petrol should be discouraged from entering town centres. This could involve Government legislation. The Report is 'out for consultation' via the City Council website.
- The third 'project' was that of a replacement for the 'very tired' River Park Leisure Centre. It is clear now that the 'best' solution is to rebuild a new replacement on the Bar End Sports area. Consultants have been employed to direct the project's progress alongside City Officers. It is too early to describe the detailed plans but the building is likely to contain a 50-metre swimming pool alongside pools required for hydrotherapy. An 8-badminton court sports hall and weight training are will also be included. Hopefully it will be a facility that will become a Hampshire Centre of Sporting Excellence used by both the community and the University of Winchester.
- Finally, the corporate Strategy for 2016-17 – Feet First. Its aim is to encourage people not to use cars/buses, but to walk, cycle or ride for pleasure and health. The 'Active Community Team', the 'Health and Wellbeing Team' and the 'Outdoor Recreation elements of the Open Spaces Team, along with Community Groups are all involved. New walks are being sign-posted e.g. The Wonky Walks, especially in the urban areas.

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Locally we have been concerned with housing developments, not only along the Lakes but also those emerging in the Local Gap between Waltham Chase and Swanmore. These developments are Sites in LPP2 and are part of the two Villages allocations of 250 houses (each) so they are 'impossible to deny'. Nonetheless we are watching in the hope that their impact will be minimised.

These new developments bring more affordable housing, as do exception sites and the new Council House that have, or are being, built. The City Council Housing is constantly looking out to the Parishes for more 'exception' sites.

There have been several meetings of the Police and Community Together (PACT) groups. These enable interested members of the community to raise matters of concern with the local police who still operate of Bishop's Waltham's Meon Valley Police Station.

Matters raised include: -

- Speed along the straight country lanes and the A32;
- The Increased number of Cycling Groups who ride at pace through some of our Ward Villages;
- Noise from motor cycles using the A32;
- Speed Zones;
- Mini crime wave in the local villages.

Litter and fly tipping continue to be of concern. The City Council has a zero-tolerance attitude regarding fly tipping and there have been several successful prosecutions gained by the Community Neighbourhood Officers and the Police. Litter is another matter. Swanmore Litter Pickers do a great job within the village but there is a growing amount of litter along the verges especially of the commuter lanes. I am beginning to suspect that much of this is blown off the back of the waste collection freighters and open load lorries. A great deal of this litter seems to be builder's plastic!

Other issues raised within the villages is that of defunct street lighting. If, when these are reported, residents can give us the 'pole number' and location it will help us to identify who owns the light – parish, County or Developer?

We have also been able to support the College's demand that dead planting around the new all-weather pitch be replaced. I am glad to report that planting should take place shortly.

Over the year there have been reports of barking dogs being a nuisance especially in the early hours of the morning. Unfortunately, investigations by the City Officers and the Police have not been able to gather enough evidence to support legal actions. Nonetheless the situation continues to be monitored.

Almost finally, while the LPP2 has been recognised as 'sound' by the Planning Inspector, there is still the need to allocate sites for the Gypsy and Traveller communities. Many of the sites originally proposed by landowners have been withdrawn leaving mostly those owned by the two communities themselves. It follows that these sites are likely to become permanent ones!

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January brought a new Conservative Group Leader of Council. A new Leader and a new Cabinet of eight.

Personally I stepped down and as a backbencher am a deputy on the Planning Cttee, and an ISG Chairman within the Overview and Scrutiny Cttee.