

Annual Parish Assembly – 2008

*Denmead – 15 April 2008*

## **County Council Report**

### **Priorities**

Hampshire County Council has three main priorities which are:

- Making Hampshire safer and more secure for all
- Maximising well-being
- Enhancing our quality of place.

Among activities to make the county safer, we have a team of Community Safety Officers to combat low-level anti-social behaviour. We are working with 350 schools on safer routes to school. We are promoting assessments of older drivers and we are working with retailers to reduce under-age sales of alcohol and other age-restricted sales. We are helping to finance the 101 service which has proved very successful to date.

To maximise well-being we are providing a new type of supported housing for the elderly to give them the help they need while preserving their independence. We manage country parks to encourage people to be active and encourage our community centres to offer courses on Silver Surfing – to help the elderly to use the resources of the Internet.

To enhance the quality of place we invest in recycling facilities so that less and less rubbish goes to landfill and we are monitoring proposals for future housing growth in the county by the Government.

### **Local Area Agreement**

The county is working with district councils, the police and health authorities to deliver a Local Area Agreement that is concerned with support for children and young people, business, developing better transport and housing, tackling crime, improving the health of our residents, and empowering local people to become involved in decision-making.

*Among other important matters before the County Council in the last 12 months were:*

### **Climate Change**

We set up a Commission on Climate Change to see what the county can do to reduce its carbon footprint and protect the county from the effects of a change in the climate. This Commission has reported its findings and is working hard to put them into practice. The biggest danger to the county lies in coastal areas that could become swamped by a substantial rise in the level of the ocean. Hampshire has been hailed by the Government as a model for its approach to this important matter.

### **Speeding in Villages**

A large number of residents are concerned about the speed of traffic, particularly in rural areas and in the middle of villages. The county has introduced the Village 30 initiative to lower the speed in those villages that request such action. Eight villages in the district have been included in the first tranche, including Boarhunt and parts of Wickham. It has been agreed that Denmead will be included in the second tranche and more will be selected for the third tranche next year. I have asked our contractors, Mott Gifford, to contact the parish council to seek their views on where lower speed limits need to be applied in and around Forest Road

It has taken a long time to get the programme completed, mainly because of extensive negotiations with the police. We have recently advertised the Boarhunt speed reduction project and received no objections so this is ready to be implemented. We have decided that it is better to put all the new speed limits in Hampshire – some 30 altogether – in place at the same time and give them a big boost of publicity with posters, leaflets and advertising on TV and radio. So the new speed limits come into operation in September. This will no doubt disappoint some people, but my experience in Wickham tells me that if you introduce new speed limits without publicity, they are largely ignored.

In addition to this programme the county will be reviewing the speed limits on all A and B roads over the next three years. Where there is a fatal accident on the highway, immediate attention is given to the factors involved, including the speed limit. This is the case on the B2150 between Denmead and Waterlooville where a 40 mph speed limit has been agreed. There have been objections to the plans and trying to overcome these objections is the reason for the delay in implementation.

### **South East Plan**

The county is playing an important role in the creation of a South East of England Plan which envisages 128,000 houses in the county between now and 2026. The largest number will be in the south of Hampshire where a new formal organisation, PUSH – the Partnership for South Hampshire - has been created. This body, consisting of all councils in the area, will be fighting for the right kind of infrastructure of roads, schools and hospitals to support any additional housing. The Government is still considering the Plan and has announced that it will make a decision on housing numbers for the area in July. This decision will be of great importance to Southwick and Denmead. If, as expected, the Government decides to increase the housing targets for Hampshire, the West of Waterlooville development could be expanded still further as well as Whiteley and possibly Knowle.

### **Children's Centres**

The county is investing in 50 Children's Centres that will offer parents a wide range of services under one roof. One of these is being constructed in Wickham. It will be a useful resource for this area.

### **Youth Services**

The county is preparing for a reorganisation of youth services in April following the decision of the Government to transfer management of the Connexions service to county councils. The Connexions operations will be brought in house and be integrated with other services for young people to offer a wider and more comprehensive service.

### **Discovery Centres**

A new Discovery Centre has been opened in Winchester as part of the drive to improve our libraries so they offer more services for the public. It is a huge success with a significant increase in users, particularly in those borrowing books. The exhibition space has been acclaimed. The current exhibit on Alfred the Great is attracting substantial numbers of visitors. There will also be exciting new developments at the Waterlooville library.

### **Highways Contract**

A new highways maintenance contract has been awarded to Amey who start work on this in May. We are currently discussing with the contractor changes to maintenance with more emphasis on matters that affect the public such as cleaner signs, faster action on pothole repairs and cutting back on shrubs that obscure road signs.

### **School Admissions**

A new system of handling school admissions has come into effect. This is called an equal preference system, replacing the first preference system of previously. The idea is that parents can nominate three schools of their choice and their application will be sent to all three schools for consideration. Previously their application was sent to the first choice and if this school was full, the application was sent to the second choice and then if necessary to the third.

Well over 90 percent of parents have received their preferred choice.

### **Fort Nelson**

I am very pleased that Fort Nelson will be receiving a massive infusion of cash to improve facilities there. I plan to visit in three weeks to meet the senior managers and hear what is planned. I was recently involved in an application for a new explosives

licence so that Fort Nelson will comply with new regulations that have come into operation.

### **HATs**

The Winchester Hampshire Action team has been busy in the last 12 months reviewing the services provided by the county in the Winchester district. Its main success concerns the Tower Arts Centre in Winchester which is being transferred to King's School to manage. The HAT wanted to ensure that the Tower's valuable programme for the public will continue and this has been achieved with financial support from both the county and the district councils.

### **Devolved Budgets**

A new system of devolved community budgets has been in place this year. Each councillor is able to make grants to local community projects. In the last 12 months I have been able to assist several local causes and look forward to doing more in 2008-09. I gave a grant to the Denmead Community Association to help them create an eco-garden and grant for a new cooker. I have also assisted Denmead Village Association with a grant to help produce a new booklet and a grant for the Denmead Choral Society.

### **Four Stars**

Finally I am pleased to report that Hampshire has been awarded the maximum of four stars by the Audit Commission – the fifth year in succession we have been rated the top category of Excellent.

***F G Allgood***  
***County Councillor***