

Report to Whitchurch Town Council 7 June 2010 – Keith Watts

I was re-elected as Borough Councillor for Whitchurch on 6th May.

Highways

The draft Order for permanent parking controls around the Station was published last Thursday. This Order also includes the correction of two mistakes made in the Whitchurch Phase 2 Order affecting London Street and Newbury Street.

Planning

Public consultation on Draft Version 4 of the SHLAA is now in progress and is on your Agenda this evening. I would like to draw attention now to the final paragraph of the comments made by Cluttons on behalf of Zurich Insurance about site WHIT007: "The Core Strategy should allocate site in those settlements outside of the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley sub-region in order to meet the demands of an ageing population. Just meeting the population housing needs would result in not enough residents of working age in the towns of Whitchurch to meet local employment requirements." Zurich are also owners of sites WHIT008, WHIT009 and the land north of the railway up to the Harroway on both sides of Newbury Road. Now that the South East Plan has been withdrawn, we need to be aware of the possibility of the Borough Council adopting a policy of dispersal of development from Basingstoke to smaller settlements like Whitchurch. More helpfully, the comments of the North Wessex Downs AONB end as follows:

"Development in the Whitchurch and Overton area should be limited to only meeting local need. Both settlements are rural in nature and are either close or partly within the North Wessex Downs AONB. As suggested above, there needs to be a Landscape Capacity Study of these settlements and a restriction to local provision with a suitable level of affordable homes."

I attended the Development Control Committee on 12th May to speak in favour of a Planning Application for an extension of West Cottage in London Street. This was deferred for a site visit which occurred last Friday.

I have been informed that the Car Park on the former Railway site reopened today without the benefit of planning permission for change of use. I have notified Planning Enforcement.

Parks and Facilities

The final plan for landscaping the surrounds of The Gill Nethercott Centre is now available on the Borough Council website with links from both local web forums and from www.keithwatts.org.uk. Eric Dunlop and I had a meeting with the management hierarchy for this work in the Council and were assured that information on progress will be provided to us and the Whitchurch Association.

Royal Mail

In recent months I have received two complaints that Royal Mail are not honouring the commitment for undelivered mail to be picked up free of charge at Whitchurch Post Office. On 24 May I emailed the Delivery Office Manager in Basingstoke and a member of the Chairman's staff in Royal Mail asking if the agreement has now been confirmed with Whitchurch Post Office. I have received no reply. It is disappointing to find that this publicly owned Company has so little regard for commitments made by its Senior Management.

The Mayoralty of Basingstoke & Deane

After much dissension, Councillor Keith Chapman is now the Worshipful, the Mayor of the Borough of Basingstoke & Deane.