

COPYTHORNE PARISH MEETING – NOVEMBER 25th 2021

Item 4 – District Councillors Reports

District Councillor Derek Tipp – Representing Ashurst & Colbury, Copythorne South & Netley Marsh Ward

(Councillor Tipp began his report – detailed below – by advising the meeting of the recent death of his former District Council colleague, Les Puttock, who had served as a Ward Councillor for Copythorne South from 2003 to 2019.)

“This has been a year of enforced change for all of us. During the pandemic lockdowns the Council provided help for vulnerable individuals who needed food delivered and help for businesses who needed financial support provided by £82 million from the government. The funds were dispersed quickly and efficiently. 130 homeless households were housed with £800,000 of government funding.

The Council was well prepared to use computer technology to replace face-to-face meetings, for members of the public, for staff and for council meetings, as they had made significant investments during the previous years in their communication network. Throughout the lockdowns frontline services were maintained, and many staff worked from home.

Although the Council suffered financially as a result of the lockdowns and the resultant closure of our five leisure centres, it is still in a sound financial position, though we need to make savings of £2.5 million over the next three years. Some of this will come about with new ways of service delivery, such as the new partnership with Freedom Leisure which is set to save the Council £7.5 million over the next decade, while giving customers an improved service.

In housing the Council has a target of acquiring 600 homes by 2026 at a cost of £53 million. By this April, 200 had been added.

During the past year there has been a 59% increase in fly-tipping incidents across the district. This has resulted in an increase in cost of 66% to £100,000.

Emergency repairs to stabilise the Milford Sea Wall have been carried out using 15,000 tons of imported rock. These works cost around £1.5 million, most of which is expected to be funded by the Environment Agency. Following this the Council will bid for funding for more substantial work costing around £3 million.

The Council’s new waste strategy is still being considered and a final draft is expected early next year when the government’s Environment Bill is passed into law. The controversial introduction of wheelie bins is an option that has not been ruled out as it is a way of directly linking the waste to each individual house and so ensuring that they comply with what the Council requires. A weekly food waste collection is also on the cards in a sealed caddy. Whatever the final decision, it is not likely to be introduced before 2023, as a lot of planning needs to be done to make the new scheme work smoothly. The new scheme is likely to be more expensive and is being driven by the requirement to increase the recycling rate.

The newly designated Solent Freeport is progressing well, though it will not receive final approval until a full business case is submitted to the government next March. This should be a formality. It has been estimated that this could create 50,000 new jobs and £2 billion in economic growth.

The Council has joined with Test Valley, Eastleigh and Winchester to create an employment hub. This will focus on getting 18 to 24 year olds into work by dealing with them on a one-to-one basis. The two centres in the New Forest will be in Brockenhurst and Totton.

This year it has been my great pleasure to become chairman of the District Council. This has enabled me to visit other districts and boroughs as well as many parts of the New Forest where I have seen at first hand the vital role played by volunteers. The last year has shown just how vital they are.”

District Councillor Diane Andrews – Representing Bramshaw, Copythorne North & Minstead Ward

“I was elected in May 2011 to represent Bramshaw, Copythorne North and Minstead. Originally on the Planning Committee and Environment Panel I became a Cabinet member in 2017 with Portfolio for Community Affairs. This was the portfolio which oversaw the delivery of food parcels during lock down.

More recently after a Cabinet reshuffle in April, I have the Portfolio for Planning, Regeneration and Infrastructure which is very varied and includes new development in the NFDC area, also land already agreed for development in the Local Plan like Fordingbridge, Ringwood Waterside and Totton to name a few. The possibility of a new Waterside railway line is progressing and faster routes for buses from the Waterside into Southampton this will help to kick start the regeneration of Totton for the future.

I liaise with our partners, one of which is the New Forest National Park Authority (“NPA”). In the last few years the National Park has had an increase in visitors, not all of those are familiar with how to behave in the Forest and there are other who choose not to follow the New Forest Code. Because of this the NPA has requested NFDC to put in place 4 Public Space Protection Orders (“PSPO”).

PSPO’s put conditions or restrictions on an area in this case the National Park, these orders will apply to everyone. They can be enforced by the police, council enforcement officers or any other authorised officers. We are considering the four requested by the Chair of the Recreation Management Steering Group. They are to stop the feeding of animals and stock; stop fires and BBQ; stop out of control dogs; and stop wild camping. In no way does this mean banning dog walking, the aim is to make the Forest safe for everyone and to reduce damage to the land. A decision will be made in the New Year.

It is not always serious stuff! Last week I visited the Brownies who were preparing for their Zero Waste badge. We had an excellent evening talking about recycling and understanding how important it is to put the right things into the clear recycling bags. Before I finish, I would like to ask you a question, which I put to the Brownies.

The UK uses 12 billion cans a year, if these were put end to end would they circle the equator?

The answer is they would actually go to the moon and back twice! I leave you with that interesting thought.”

Cllr. Andrews was asked if there was a counter pressure between development and the environment and how would NFDC try to influence developers. She responded by saying that Plans are already underway for future developments to reflect environmental needs. Cllr. Edward Heron supported this response by stating that the NFDC Local Plan included the need to consider electric charging points and that Building Regulations took into account “passive homes” .