

## ANNUAL TOWNS MEETING 2017

### Planning Committee – Cllr S J Clarke

Planning Committee meet on alternate Thursday evenings to give recommendations on all planning applications and works to legally protected trees in the town, and this influences how the deciding authority (New Forest District Council or National Park Authority) resolves the application. Utilities, infrastructure and proposed planning policy document consultations are among other subjects within remit. New Forest District Council applications level was 253 (a marginal increase on last year), National Park Authority at 19 and tree applications at 105 (both similar to last year). The applications level does not include those for 'Requirement of Lawful Use' or 'Prior Notification' as the Town Council has no part in these processes.

This last civic year has seen some very contentious applications. Firstly, the approval of a new and rather serene development on Green Belt land in Stem Lane. Meyrick Estates have received permission for a new Crematorium, using state of the art technology which removes most environmental concerns for residents and will surround the site with open landscaped grounds, both fitting for the location and its use. Secondly, Pennyfarthing had permission to build 28 new houses just south of Gore Road. Although 14 of them will be affordable, Committee objected as the number offered was lower than policy, that additions in the area could exacerbate existing drainage issues and that there was not enough car parking. Thirdly, the County Council applied for a new residential home to be built on their land north of the Fernmount Centre. This application was specifically for use of adults with disabilities that live independently, whose current home within the County is restrictive in some way. The development, now permitted, will provide 18 one bedroom flats with access to on-site support, and will greatly improve the quality of life for those adults. The units are designed in such a way to be fully adaptable and therefore supportive for a lifetime.

Other important applications for the town were the drug rehabilitation service move from Whitefield Road to Parkland Place, which heard the NHS staff applicant state that the main service in use was for prescription drug addiction; the Phoenix Centre extensions to provide educational facilities for the most vulnerable youngsters; and a Micropub to be opened in the old video shop near the railway. Having a 'New Forest' branded shop at the entrance to the town is a very positive move indeed, for residents and visitors alike.

The Neighbourhood Planning team have been hard at work this year, which started with the District Council consulting on 4 main housing sites which would provide up to 930 homes, all on Green Belt land. The team have split into smaller focus groups to look at specific issues such as infrastructure and leisure facilities, as they need to plan for the outcome of the process rather than be a barrier to it. Neighbourhood Planning is a positive community process and has a duty to consult with the public repeatedly throughout. It is guided by a specialist company which is funded by Government grant. One large focus of the team is the prediction that over the next 20 years, a demographic shift will increase the over 65s age group. This alters the needs of the town dramatically so questions around this point were recently put to consultation, which prompted over 1500 replies.

I thank my fellow Committee members, officers Theresa Elliott and Claire Lambert for their support. And big thanks to the Neighbourhood Planning team, who are volunteering their own time to shape the future of New Milton.