

## Tory 'hat-trick' puts Fareham at top of lowest tax league...

**CONSERVATIVES** have scored a hat-trick of successes by keeping Fareham's council tax at another national record low level – despite receiving one of the meanest grants from the Government.

It comes at a time when every neighbouring council is announcing cuts in services, redundancies and increases in charges along with record council tax rises.

And they managed to do it despite a big shortfall in the Government's grant towards concessionary bus fares.

"We have been able to do all this whilst still keeping the council tax rate at the lowest in Hampshire, which is good news for everyone," said Council Executive Leader Councillor Seán Woodward.

Fareham's Band D property owners will have to pay only £2.43 more a year – a rise of less than 5p a week – and for Band C taxpayers it will be even lower.

Councillor Woodward commented: "As most Fareham properties are in Band C, the council tax rate for two adults will be £114.40 – an increase of just 4p a week.

"I am delighted we have been able to keep the increase to a minimum and that for the third year in a row we have kept the council tax increase below the rate of inflation - an impressive hat-trick!"

As an extra bonus the Council has also

frozen pay and display and pay on foot parking charges, having raised the prices only once in the last 5 years.

Announcing overall net expenditure for 2006-07 of £11,106,350, Councillor Woodward said the most significant issue the council had to face was the Government's free travel scheme for over 60s..

Costs for implementing electoral reforms, mainly to prevent recurrences of last year's Labour postal vote factories scandal, had to be added.

Although the Government made extra money available for the concessionary fares, the council's fears that the extra costs would not be covered by the annual Local Government Finance Settlement proved well founded.

"At first glance it appeared to be a generous settlement. But only at first glance!" he said.

The Government changed the method of distribution which made it impossible to identify how much extra grant had been received to cover the new responsibilities –



**Top billing:** Ferneham Hall has been selected as one of the top five entertainment venues from 189 British towns – thanks to hard-working staff and good management of council taxpayers' money.

a fact freely admitted by John Prescott's office.

Fareham will receive an extra £624,000 in what appeared to be a generous 12% increase.

When the figures were broken down and the shortfall in funding the concessionary fares plus the electoral administration costs taken into account, Fareham received only £57,000 (1%) in extra Government support for ALL other services.

"A paltry sum by any standards," added Councillor Woodward.

## Midwife crisis may be solved, but will Blackbrook be re-born?



**BLACKBROOK** birthing centre was closed last year because of 'staffing' difficulties caused by sickness and maternity leave among the staff.

Although the Blackbrook and Grange (Petersfield) units were not directly affected, it was decided to maintain

staffing levels at Blake (Gosport) and the Mary Rose unit (Portsmouth).

A public meeting at Ferneham Hall recently heard the Head of Midwifery confirm that staffing levels should be adequate by the

autumn.

However, the Chief Executive of the Fareham and Gosport Primary Care Trust gave a strong indication that the £700,000 cost of upgrading Blackbrook might make this impossible.

Also, a plan for future midwifery services is being prepared that might concentrate all services at Queen Alexandra Hospital or at best, provide 2 or 3 peripheral, low technology units. This plan is being prepared and with a consultation in the late 2006 early 2007.

Executive Member for Health Councillor Brian Bayford stated: "If Fareham's long awaited Community Hospital was being now being built as promised in 2004, the problem of funding improvements to Blackbrook would not now be a consideration."

Since St Christopher's Hospital and Blackbrook closed, Fareham (population 108,000) has no major health facilities.



# WARD NEWS BRIEFS

## Safer for kids

Wallisdean school children should be safer now that new warning lights are in position in Bishopsfield Road.

Councillor Trevor Howard commented: "I'm glad the County Council acted swiftly when the problem was given to them. I hope drivers will take note."

To improve safety even further, the head teacher, staff and governors at the infants' and junior schools are now drafting their travel plan to submit to the County Council.

## Help the police

Police urged people to report anything worrying or suspicious when they met residents at St Anne's Road chapel on February 28.

Councillor Trevor Howard said although police might be unable to respond immediately, they still wanted to know what was happening.

On non-urgent matters phone 0845 045 4545.

## Warden missed

Trafalgar Court sheltered accommodation is without a full-time warden due to reorganisation.

Councillor Dennis Steadman was asked by Nellie Dean, an over 80s resident, to ask the housing meeting to re-instate the warden.

"I did, but sadly I was out-voted. The reorganisation is mainly due to insufficient funding from the government to enable the quality of care that the elderly and more vulnerable deserve," he said.

# Your litter is degrading – for a million years or ever more

**A LAGER can tossed carelessly on to the verge could still be lying there 80 years from now – long after the litter lout who threw it has been 6ft under the grass.**

If the amber nectar was in a glass bottle, expect it to spoil the countryside for the next million years.

You could still slip up on your own discarded banana skin two years after you chucked it.

These are just some examples of long-lasting memorials to the present throw-away society – and it's getting worse every day.

Councillor Dennis Steadman, who crusades relentlessly against litter, said it was not now confined to one section of society, but was done by all age groups.

He said litter was now a major topic of concern for us all, not only in Fareham, but also nationwide and costs of disposing of it were spiralling upward.

"Litter is bad for the environment because the rubbish we throw away on the land or in the sea causes many types of problems to our ecosystem.

"Plastic bottles, plastic bags, tin cans and glass and such products take a long time to break down



**Setting an example:** Dennis Steadman gets down on hands and knees to remove a pile of litter tossed thoughtlessly on to the roadside.

because they are not made from natural materials.

"Because these materials do not degrade quickly we must make sure that we do not leave them in a place where they could get blown about, spoiling our footpaths, roads, parks etc. Wherever possible, take it home," he said.

Financial incentive should come

from central government and could involve schools, youth clubs, local authorities, but it should mainly start at home.

"It really does not take much time to put an item of litter into your pocket, pick a tin can, bottle, sweet packets etc from outside our houses and grass verges and place in the appropriate bin.

"Children could put it into the school bins; it really is so easy.

"We all complain about the ever rising cost of services, but we cannot expect Fareham Council's hard pressed Waste Management Section to be able to keep every area as clean as we would like it," he added.

### TIMESCALE TO BREAKDOWN

Orange/banana peel etc	up to 2 years
Cigarette butts	1 - 5 years
Plastic coated paper	5 years
Plastic bags	20 - 1000 years
Batteries	100 years
Tin cans	50 years
Aluminium cans	50 - 80 years
Glass bottles	1,000,000 years
Plastic bottles	to the apocalypse

## Council must act on Gosport Road air pollution

**TRAFFIC pollution in one part of Fareham is causing so much concern that the Council has set up a special monitoring unit.**

Councillor Dennis Steadman said a section of Gosport Road at its junction with Redlands Lane and Newgate Lane was so bad it could exceed the standard set by the 1995 Environment Act.

It is one of three designated parts of the town centre where traffic emissions are monitored and is subject to an Air Quality Management Area Order, due to come into force on April 1.

The Council must now assess air quality for the next 12 months and produce a written action plan after 18 months to reduce pollution.

Councils have a statutory duty to ensure that air quality (Nitrogen Dioxide) does not fall below that set by the Act and must carry out regular reviews and assessments against standards and objectives in the national Air Quality Strategy.

If these are not met, authorities must designate Air Quality Management Areas

and prepare and implement remedial plans.

In response to an air quality progress report produced in 2004, Fareham undertook a further detailed assessment in three areas of the town centre that had come under investigation for air quality due to exhaust fumes. It was then clear that the annual objective of 40ug/m3 might be breached.

## Barbara sets a fine example of community service

### THEY don't come much more dedicated or resilient than Barbara Granger.

Barbara, who lives in Holbrook Road, suffered a stroke in 1999, which severely restricted her movement.

But it did not prevent her from remaining active and taking on a demanding job to serve her community.

The prospect of standing around in all weathers and inconvenient times would deter even the fittest.

Not Barbara, who took on the challenge of becoming a school lollypop lady.

She has helped to conduct schoolchildren from Redlands School and the others on the nearby campus safely across

busy Mill Road for the past four years and has made many friends among the youngsters and their mums.

She had to comfort one little boy who came to her in tears and said his mum had "told him off".

Born in Leicester, she moved to Southampton aged three and she and her husband,

David, have lived in Holbrook Road for the past seven years.

David also suffered a slight stroke in February, adding to the family's difficulties, but they remain undaunted.

Councillor Dennis Steadman said: "She's a quiet, unassuming lady who serves the public and helps to keep the community spirit alive."

## Watch out for your neighbours and help fight crime

### LAW abiding citizens can help the police to fight crime and disorder.

One way is to form a Neighbourhood Watch.

Another is to persuade youngsters – the main offenders – that there are more interesting things to do within a short walk of their homes.

Councillor Dennis Steadman, who maintains close contact with the police, said residents had to contend with varying degrees of misbehaviour.

He said: "It has now unfortunately become a part of our daily lives.

"It ranges from hooliganism, graffiti and noise pollution to theft, burglary and to physical violence and sometimes worse.

"One way of helping to combat crime would be for residents to form their own Neighbourhood Watch, even if it is only for a few houses.

"My wife, Carole, has run one for the past

13 years and we feel that we have contributed to keeping crime down by getting people to look out for one another and at the same time being able to give police feedback."

He attends meetings to discuss problems such as speeding vehicles along Redlands Lane/ Bishopsfield Road/ St Michael's Grove/ Longfield Avenue/ Mill Road and others.

Vandalism and anti-social behaviour is another problem.

"The police do not appear to have sufficient manpower to be able to tackle it as they would like, but that is a Central Government issue.

"People tell me that there is not a lot for the younger generation to do these days," said Councillor Steadman.

But there are leisure opportunities available for young people to use, all within a short distance of the town centre. He listed

them as follows:

**Neville Lovett School** – after school activities

**Henry Cort College** – sports facilities

**Cams Hill School** – sports hall

**X-Perience youth centre** – run by HCC Youth Service with evening sessions

**Ferneham Hall** – SNAP disco

**The Leisure Centre** – for many sports, swimming, keep fit etc

**Fareham Methodist Church (Queens Road)** – Church youth groups

**Uniformed Groups** – Guides and Brownies

There are others and information is always available at Fareham Borough Council Department of Leisure and Environment.

•Anyone interested in forming a Neighbourhood Watch should contact Rosemary Billet on 0845 045 4545 extension 641267.

## FAREHAM SOUTH CONSERVATIVES

We are very active with social and political events and membership drives. If you would like further details, to join us, or to help in any way such as distribution of *In Touch* newsletters in your road, please contact your ward councillors.

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**Your man in Westminster**



By **Mark Hoban**  
MP for Fareham

I am a great believer in local people having a strong voice in matters that affect them and their community. It underpins my political beliefs.

That's why I want local people to have much more influence over housing and development. It was one of my reasons for opposing the merger of Hampshire Police with a neighbouring force.

Local organisations listen closely to the views of communities they serve. Unlike larger, more distant organisations, they set priorities to meet our needs. One reason why our Borough councillors set the lowest council tax increases in Hampshire is that, as well as running the Council, they know that you want good services at low cost and respond to that.

John Prescott's suggestions that councils should merge puts this at risk. Do we really want to merge Fareham with high spending councils? Do we want a council that does not reflect the needs of Fareham, but is dominated by the views of people from Portsmouth or Eastleigh?

It is part of a trend by this Government to take more and more matters out of the hands of local people and give them to larger organisations. For example, our local Primary Care Trust, which decides on our behalf what health care should be available to Fareham residents, will probably be scrapped in favour of either one body for the whole of Hampshire or become part of a Primary Care Trust covering the east of the county.

Decisions about our health will no longer be made by people living or working in Fareham, but by people from Alton or Petersfield. We must stand firm against this growing trend to take power out of our hands and start to turn the tide so we decide local issues in Fareham and not allow them to be taken elsewhere by people who are interested in our money but not our views.

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Councils can't get their act together, so ...

# It's chaos on the buses

**BUS PASS schemes across England are in utter chaos.**

Unlike councils in Wales and Scotland, councils have opted to do their own thing, often to the confusion of the over 60s and disabled they should be helping.

Hampshire is no exception and standards vary from district to district, depending on how much they receive from the Government.

Then Chancellor Gordon Brown came into the equation by promising free off-peak travel nationwide by 2008 in his Budget speech.

Fareham was put in an impossible position when the Government short-changed its grant, leaving the Council to find more than double the amount from its budget.

Had Fareham opted for free passes throughout Hampshire, it would have meant either increasing council tax by 10% or charging £60 for a bus pass.

"These options were unacceptable to the Council or to users we spoke to, so the difficult decision was taken to adopt a concession that far exceeds the statutory minimum, but regrettably does not offer free travel across the county," said Executive Leader Councillor Woodward.

People qualifying for concessionary bus passes will be able to travel free anytime (not just off-peak), anywhere in the Borough from April 1.

They will also be entitled to a half fare reduction when they cross the Fareham boundary into Hampshire.

"We are offering more than the government's requirement for free off-



**Free ticket to ride:** Provided you're over 60 or disabled you won't have to pay anytime, anywhere in the Borough.

peak local bus travel inside Fareham," said Councillor Woodward.

Those eligible can buy a 'First day' ticket which gives unlimited travel on 'First' bus services in Hampshire at any time on the date of purchase. A 'First day' ticket costs £4.40 which equates to £2.20 for pass holders.

The Council is spending £1.1m on travel concessions in 2006/7 and was granted £351,000 by the Government, leaving £745,000 to be met from its budget.

Almost two thirds of the 750,000 concessionary journeys funded by the Council are within the borough. Each bus pass costs the Council £107 (£214 for couples), which is more than any couple pays to Fareham in annual council tax.

Despite this, Fareham kept its council tax to a record low.

Current holders have been told when and where they can renew their travel passes.

Newcomers can collect their pass from the Civic Offices, Fareham from Monday, April 3.

Contact the Council's Customer Service Centre 01329 236100 for more information.

### IT'S NOT ALL FARES FAIR

**Portsmouth:** Off-peak travel in Hampshire. Travel tokens also offered.

**Southampton:** Off-peak travel in city only. No alternative concessions.

**Winchester:** Off-peak travel in Hampshire. No other concessions.

**Gosport:** Free all day travel in Hampshire. Tokens also offered.

**Havant:** Free off-peak travel in Hampshire. No alternative concessions.

## This Mosquito won't sting, but it will 'do your head in'

**PIERCED noses, pierced navels, piercing sounds from iPods ... they are all part of young persons' culture these days.**

But they won't want their eardrums pierced by high-pitched acoustics generated by a new weapon Fareham Council is trialing in the war against anti-social behaviour.

The Mosquito, costing £500 and the size of a garden pet scarer, can be mounted wherever potential hooligans congregate.

Coupled in some cases with CCTV, it can be switched on at random or immediately the first

spray can appears and vandals are spotted loitering with intent.

The high-pitched assault on their eardrums is harmless, but so unbearable that they flee.

Fortunately, it can be heard only by the 10-24 age group and older people are unaffected.

Councillor Brian Bayford said it was secretly tried in a room at the Civic Offices and the younger workers there quickly left their desks.

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