



In Touch

with our community

PORTCHESTER – AUTUMN 2008



Golden Mile of smiles: The Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Ernest Crouch and Enid Crouch, arrive in a vintage Rolls Royce (left) and are met by Council Leader Seán Woodward. Then they join the Batala Samba Band (centre) having led a parade of classic cars (right).

Congratulations and celebrations set Fareham's new 'West End' buzzing...

FAREHAM'S West Street was centre stage for two outdoor spectaculars that delighted thousands of shoppers.

First, on August 24 came celebrations to mark London taking over from Beijing to host the 2012 Olympics.

Then, the town centre came alive again a month later with a day of events signifying completion of the £1.3m revamp of the western section of its main thoroughfare.

Sports representatives from across the borough attended, including high-achievers from various Olympic sports.

Celebrations started with local band Spinnaker Brass entertaining spectators in the precinct and there was an acrobatic display from gymnastics club Kartwheels before the official hoisting of the Olympic flag.

Executive Leader Councillor Seán Woodward was delighted so many people turned out and that young Fareham Olympic hopefuls had joined in.

It was an even bigger street party on September 20 when the sparkling new 'West End' was thronged by people joining in a day

of fun and entertainment.

"Let's Celebrate Fareham Past and Present" was aimed at bringing together the two halves of West Street, which had for so many years been divided by an imbalance of visual appeal.

pendent traders, who have welcomed the new look, helped to host the day.

Fareham's Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Ernest Crouch and Enid Crouch, set the style by heading a parade of classic cars in a vintage Rolls Royce, with Batala Portsmouth Samba Band getting the entertainment off to a swinging start.

There were performances by Fareham Musical Society, Second 2 None, Mozy Dare, Stomping Mad Band and Miss Hayley Fisher & Guests. Titchfield Players staged performances from The Three Musketeers outside the Tourist Information Centre.

And there were free vintage bus trips along West Street, courtesy of First Hampshire and Dorset.

Councillor Woodward, who thanked traders for their support, said: "We are determined to get the Western end of West Street as much 'on the map' as a shopping destination as the highly successful eastern end.

"The £1.3m investment we have made will do just that and the huge crowds present on the day will now know what this end of town has to offer."



Flying high: The Olympic flag is hoisted in the precinct by (right to left) Council Leader Seán Woodward, Mayor Ernest Crouch, Ian Pike (Badminton) and Rebecca Gough (Athletics).

The refurbished end of the Golden Mile now boasts speciality shopping in a continental atmosphere and most of the inde-

...then it shares in town's honours at floral display awards ceremony



FAREHAM'S spruced-up West Street won the Best New Commercial Landscape award in the South and South East in Bloom competition.

It capped a day when the borough scooped the overall winners prize for the fifth year running and a gold medal in the Large Town/Small City category at the regional awards ceremony at Crawley.

The sensory garden in Osborn Road won the

Best Small Park category and a gold medal.

And the Fareham in Bloom team won the Community Involvement Award for their outstanding work over the past 13 years.

•Pictured (left to right) volunteers Heather Othen and Jean Kingdom, TV gardener Chris Collins (presented all awards), volunteers Bridget and Geoff Thickett, Matt Wakefield (Horticultural Development Officer) Councillor Connie Hockley and Heather Scott (Volunteer).

We keep *In Touch* throughout the year - not just at election time



WARD NEWS BRIEFS

Public to have a say

The public will be allowed to address meetings of Hampshire Police Authority, but not the sub-committees.

It brings the authority into line with councils who allow deputations to their main meetings.

Queen's Award

The County Council is asking for nominations of volunteers of all types for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Forms may be obtained from www.queensawardvoluntary.gov.uk or phone 020 7781 2397.

Accolade

Well done Northern Junior Community School, Portchester.

Pupils and volunteers were rewarded for their hard work by winning the School Grounds category in the South and South East in Bloom competition.

The school was given the accolade of 2008 Champion of Champions.

Outstanding

The Ofsted inspection of foster care in Hampshire has rated the service as "outstanding" and consistently good across the County.

It praises the good working arrangements with school nurses, mental health and other health specialists. It was good in taking into account the religious and cultural needs of young people and in the training of carers.

If you are interested in becoming a carer call 0845 6011895 or visit www.fostering.hampshire.gov.uk

Extending your home? You may not need permission

Government changes to planning rules will ease councils' workload

SWEEPING changes to existing planning regulations that govern what can be built without the need to obtain formal planning permission from the Council have been announced by the Government.

From October 1, 2008 the planning restrictions which control whether planning permission is required to alter, extend or carry out other works on your property, have changed.

Councillor Nick Walker, chairman of the Development Control Committee, said: "This could mean that where the works will not be harmful to the amenity of neighbours or to the character of the area, a greater level of work could be carried out without the need for planning permission.

"Residents may not need planning permission for extensions or house alterations under new government planning guidelines."

The changes have been the subject of previous consultation with councils. The Government's aims are to:

- 1 Simplify the way in which it is decided whether planning permission is needed or not.
- 2 Make the criteria for whether planning permission is required or not based more upon the impact of the proposal.

3 To remove the need for planning permission for more of the non contentious proposals.

4 Reduce the number of minor planning applications which need the formal permission of the Council.

Over the last ten years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of planning applications; to reduce this number the government is introducing new rules to provide a more logical approach to household developments.

Previously, there had been a limit on how much volume could be added to a property, now the new system looks at the implications of the extension or alteration from a public viewpoint or a neighbour's property.

In addition, any new hard surfacing, such as a drive way, to the front of a house which exceeds five square metres will need to be constructed of a porous material or ensure that rainwater collected on the driveway can drain away on the property; if not planning permission will be needed.

There are no changes to current development restrictions in conservation areas, where special controls are in place.

"It would still be advisable for residents, wishing to carry out building works, to contact the Planning Department at Fareham Borough Council to seek advice. Officers and members in planning still have concerns about some of the proposals," said Councillor Walker.

£2.8m investment sees big rise in bus travel

MORE PEOPLE in Hampshire are leaving their cars on the drive and travelling by bus.

Government figures show a rise of 4.5% in the past year, due to investment by Hampshire County Council and improvement of services by the bus operators.

In the last year, 29.8 million passengers travelled by bus compared with 28.5 million in the previous year.

During the last three years, the County Council has invested £2.8 million improving the bus network infrastructure including new bus and shelters, junction improvements and a new bus station.

Bus priority measures and information systems have also been introduced.

Bus operators have invested in new

and more modern buses, more and better training for bus drivers and wider promotion of services available.

Thirty bus operators provide 310 bus services in Hampshire, of which 200 are subsidised by the County Council at a cost of £6.4m a year because they are not commercially viable.



On the buses: Fareham bus interchange has shown a rise in travellers.

Extra £1m to repair the potholes in Hampshire's highways

GOOD NEWS for motorists.

The County Council has added an extra £1m to the £56m budgeted for road improvements this year.

The number of work gangs tackling road maintenance in Hampshire has doubled from 20 to 40.

Extra work on filling potholes, which are potentially dangerous, started in September and will continue until the end of the year.

The money is being spent on nearly 6,000 miles of road in the county.

Councillors say keeping roads in good condition is a top priority, but the bad weather and ever increasing volumes of traffic have resulted in potholes forming faster than usual.

Each year HCC conducts a systematic highways inspection and surveys of road conditions, which helps to decide priorities for repair. Residents may report road pothole conditions directly to 0845 6035633 or on line at www.hants.gov.uk/highways.

Barking glad at walkies rule

DOG owners have praised the County Council for its policy on beach access.

The acclaim came at a recent Barking Dog Bonanza at Lepe beach for dog owners from all over Hampshire

The policy differs from many other local authorities in allowing dogs on certain areas and not having a blanket 'no dogs admitted to beach' rule.

Commercial vehicle permit scheme is extended

THE PERMIT scheme allowing residents with commercial vehicles to use recycling centres for household waste has been extended.

Controls on commercial vehicles at recycling centres were designed to eliminate trade waste.

Permit systems were introduced so that householders owning commercial vehicles could still use the sites.

It had unintentionally affected a minority of householders, although generally the scheme had been successful and deposits of trade waste noticeably reduced.

It was agreed to extend the permit scheme from October 1 to incorporate all householders who have access to a commercial vehicle for domestic purposes.

Council officers will closely monitor fly tipping and trade waste abuse.

All-clear for £7,000 over budget Portchester precinct facelift



On hold: The seat (above) is due to be replaced and the precinct's lampposts repainted.

A MAKEOVER for Portchester precinct, which had been put on hold because it went over budget, can now go ahead.

Fareham Council's Executive allocated £12,000 from the Neighbourhood Initiatives Fund to spruce up the area at the request of residents.

The brief was to replace existing circular tree seating and paint 12 lighting columns, but unforeseen technical difficulties arose in implementing the original project brief.

Councillor Nick Walker said: "These difficulties required the design of a new layout at additional cost."

"The original brief to replace the circular tree seating in the same location was not cost effective due to tree root damage destabilising the plinth on which they stand."

A request for a further £7,000 was

requested to meet the extra cost, but the Executive would not support this proposal which would have meant a single CAT bid of £19,000.

However, members agreed with Councillor Walker, who is the CAT chairman for Portchester, that the £12,000 should be held over until he and officers could work up a scheme within budget.

As a result, Council Director of Customer Services Martyn George reviewed the estimates for the project in consultation with Councillor Walker.

He said: "I am pleased to report that the estimates have been revised and that, subject to tendering, I am now hopeful the project can be delivered as originally proposed and within budget."

"I will be issuing instructions to the consultant to progress the works as soon as possible."

More people using Hants new-look libraries

NATIONAL figures show that visits to libraries have fallen by 34% in the last decade to about 2.8m but Hampshire is bucking the trend.

County visits are up by 400,000, giving a total of 7.1m during 2008/9, thanks to recent improvements.

A new generation of libraries, such as the Gosport discovery centre, has provided free internet access, exhibition and gallery space, performance areas for the arts etc.

Other measures include increasing the book purchase fund by £350,000 and providing an on-line facility so borrowers can browse the entire catalogue from home.

Opening hours have been increased and many libraries (including Fareham) have been refurbished.

PORTCHESTER 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.

ANY PROBLEMS? WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Please write the details here and give the exact location

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Your name

Address

..... Postcode.....

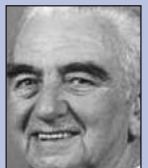
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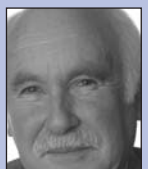
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Our man in Westminster



By Mark Hoban MP for Fareham

As part of the Conservative Treasury team, I spent much time over the summer thinking about how the Government got us in a mess.

During the good times rather than save for a rainy day, Gordon Brown continued to borrow to the point that he has, according to statisticians, breached his own borrowing rules, which were meant to control government finances and are now in tatters. Now we are in more difficult times, he can't help families and businesses to weather the storm.

How do we put our public finances back into good order and ensure governments stick to the rules? We will set up an Office for Budget Responsibility to keep politicians on the straight and narrow when it comes to tax and spending. It will be like the old fashioned bank managers, the ones who would let you know that you were overdrawn and rather than offering more credit, suggested you might like to reduce your overdraft and live within your means. That's what the office will do. When Gordon Brown was overdrawn, like Oliver Twist he asked for more credit.

Once we have the public finances back in order, we will be able to do what government is meant to do, which is to be on your side. So when the economy is not going so smoothly, the Government has the money to help businesses and families, rather than doing what has happened this year, raising taxes on families with big hikes on car tax or asking small companies to cough up more.

Government is not about flashy gimmicks and wheezes; it is about doing the dull, sensible things that make real differences to families when it matters. It is about reassuring people that you have got a firm grip on what is happening. Our Office for Budget Responsibility shows that we are serious about putting our economy right.

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Free swims for over 60s

But who pays for 10 Drowning Street's latest brainwave?

THEY ALWAYS look wonderful on paper...free bus travel nationwide for over 60s and now a new Government plan for free swimming for old and young.

But Labour's grandiose freebie schemes have one flaw. Who splashes the cash in the long run?

Concessionary bus passes are already forcing Fareham Council to swim against

a rising financial tide and Conservative councillors fear free swimming sessions for under 16s and over 60s will plunge finances into deep water.

Nationwide bus passes started in April, but the scheme was not funded properly, leaving several councils with huge problems.

"In most authorities, the gap will have to be met by the council taxpayer and the additional costs could be significant," said Councillor David Swanbrow, Executive Member for Planning and Transportation.

And that is the worry following the Government's approach to councils asking them if they are interested in a grant towards the introduction of free swimming sessions.

Funding has been promised for only the first two years for the over 60s; no details have been given for the under 16s group and nothing beyond.

Councillor Connie Hockley, Executive Member for Community, said: "On the surface, this seems a wonderful idea provided it is **fully funded** and applies only to local residents, BUT – and there is always a catch in many schemes proposed by this Government – what happens after the first two years?"

"Is the initial funding sufficient or will the local taxpayers end up by subsidising another Government initiative?"

It's the question that's already been answered in respect of the concessionary fares debacle, for the Government pays only 43% of the cost in Fareham.



At a stroke: Free-style may take on a new meaning for over 60s at Fareham swimming pool.

"The cost over the first four months suggests that by the end of the financial year the Council is likely to spend at least £280,000 on top of the £1.5m it budgeted for concessionary travel, with the possibility it could rise much further.

"This equates to a council tax rise for Fareham of 5%-6% on its own," said Councillor Swanbrow.

Councils have to pay for any pass holder's journey starting within their boundaries. For example, a Gosport resident travelling to Winchester will have to change at Fareham and it's Fareham Council which then pays for the rest of that traveller's journey.

"The Gosport resident gets the benefit of free travel, Winchester shops may well benefit, but all Fareham gets is the biggest slice of the cost – and the Fareham council taxpayer pays," said Councillor Swanbrow, who said the Council was asking the Government to re-assess a wholly unfair situation.

The Council has expressed interest to get funding for free swimming for over 60s, provided it is restricted to local residents..

Councillor Hockley said the Council was also interested in operating a scheme for free swimming sessions for under 16s which could be run during school holidays, but only for Borough residents and provided it was fully funded.

The Council also asked the Government for cash towards the cost of building a new swimming pool in the Western Wards.

She added: "We await the Government's decision with bated breath."

Borough crackdown on untaxed vehicles

THIRTY untaxed vehicles were clamped and impounded in a two-day crackdown across the Borough by Fareham Council, the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency and the police.

A further joint operation was planned for October.

The DVLA used a vehicle equipped with Automatic Number Plate Recognition equipment which identified

any untaxed and uninsured vehicle.

The vehicle was then clamped and a notice attached stating that it had been seized and would not be released until a valid tax disc was obtained.

If a valid tax disc could not be provided, the vehicle was towed away to a storage pound until the owner provided a valid tax disc

If no tax disc was provided,

the vehicle was crushed or, if of value, was sent to a further vehicle pound in the Midlands to be sold

Each day a vehicle is in the pound charges are incurred by the owner.

Vehicles shown by the ANPR camera to be uninsured were also removed.

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