Annual Report for Parish Councils from Cllr Frank Pearson

May 2022 - May 2023



Council Bodies
Council
Health and Environment Ctte
Planning Ctte
North Whiteley Development Forum
Joint West of Waterlooville Planning Ctte
Licensing and Regulation Ctte (Deputy)

Outside Bodies
River Hamble Harbour Management Ctte
Winchester District Board of the Council to Protect Rural England (CPRE)

The last three years must be the most extraordinary period that most of us can remember. Fortunately global pandemics rarely occur. The last, or so history records, was an Influenza Pandemic that followed the First World War. That killed millions of people world wide. Fortunately scientists discovered vaccines very quickly for Covid-19 and its variations. 'Lockdowns' were imposed in many countries – not always popular, but these along with the vaccines seemed to have contained its worse excesses, but it seems now to be endemic – like the common cold and so it is still with us! "Take care, avoid crowds, and test" is now the mantra.

Meetings, and other business went on-line, and the majority of the Council officers were directed to stay at home and use the internet for their work. Journeys from home to Winchester (and other venues) stopped! Some preferred that style of working, and still do, but it has its disadvantages as most homes do not have an extra room to set aside for an office. No doubt you had similar trials (pets and children?) in your day-to-day life.

The work of your local Councils continues although many meetings are now 'on-line' using Microsoft Teams, or Zoom, indeed some, like the "Briefing/Training" sessions, still are. The main committees mention above are now 'face-to-face'.

So, what does a Councillor do? Effectively we are a link between yourselves and the 'officers' in Winchester, indeed sometimes with local people and organizations within the Central Meon Valley Ward. In many ways we, in this Ward are fortunate with 'relatively easy access' to local shops for food and easy access to the countryside for healthy exercise.

My main Committee interests are listed above. You will see that all are linked, in some way, with the Environment. To me that means the countryside!
Even Planning which essentially involves houses or work places; the environment is an essential consideration. Are the houses and work places that we build suitable for the changes brought on by the "climate emergency". Declared by most back in 2019. In my other life I was a teacher/examiner of geography and history. We taught about the need for "green lungs" in our urban areas; and about "Spaceship Earth" with its closed environmental systems – not too different from our planet only with a very much bigger crew!
Advances in meteorology produced detailed data over the period from the 1960s taught us that certain gases, especially methane and carbon dioxide warm up quickly. Warm air evaporates water and cooling over land produces rainfall; warmer air equals more violent weather conditions, and a rapidly changing climate.

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It follows that flowers and plants generally, especially trees when they take in water and then transpire water vapour and oxygen (via photosynthesis) are an essential part of our environmental system. We argue that housing developments must have green plants, and open spaces – "the green lungs" that we all need.



We are very aware that we must insulate our buildings, reduce draughts, and reduce heat loss through our windows. We also plan for 'solar farms'. We have just granted planning permission for a 'farm' of over 53,000 solar panels close by Bishop's Waltham. Unfortunately this means a loss of farmland, usually pasture!

We need the electrical energy for 21st century life and the use of "fossil fuels" is not deemed to be a viable alternative. It has been Winchester's policy for several years that 'fracking' to extract methane gas not be permitted in Hampshire, and Winchester District even though we have been aware since the geophysical research in the 1990s that there are possible 'traps' containing water/oil/methane some two kilometers down!

Water supply and its disposal is another issue for the health and environment committee. Technically we use more water in Hampshire than rain provides. At present we draw water from rivers and the aquifers underground; but we have a growing population in South Hampshire and those supplies are increasingly being stretched. Much of the infrastructure for the supply of water, and its disposal is antiquated and so we have supply failures and burst sewerage piping. Sudden downpours of rain into the system is overwhelming hence leaks of 'fountains of sewerage'! Southern Water tell us that they haven't paid dividends to their shareholders since 2017. The money has all gone back into the infrastructure. Portsmouth are establishing a large reservoir north of Havant – Thickets Reservoir- because their wells are not as productive as in the past. Budd's Farm may see a water recycling plant to add to our water supply. All future housing (planning) must be able to use "grey water" in the cure. Why are we using fresh water to flush the 'loo'?

One of the issues that we pursue with the River Hamble Harbour Management Ctte is polluted water (especially nitrates and dissolved phosphorus) from farmland (fertilizer), and from sewerage outflows. Are our rivers and beaches to be safe for bathing etc and for fishing in the future?

Health and the Environment Ctte also considers Waste Collection and Recycling. Local Authorities collect the waste while Hampshire County Council, via Integra disposes of it by selling it to be recycled or dispose of it via incineration to produce electricity. Very little goes into landfill. The garden waste is turned into compost using "wind-rows". This is much better for food production than that from anaerobic digesters

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because compost from the latter may contain meat and this may contaminate the land even though the methane gas produced can be used for electricity generation.

The Winchester District Planning Policy Ctte of the C.P.R.E. is concerned with the preservation of our beautiful countryside from ill-considered development that damages our environment. They usually have an input into any debate about development - from housing to solar farms. They rightly argue that 'brownfield' land should be redeveloped before the countryside is "desecrated" by housing. They also, are in the "green lungs" lobby (my words!)

Alongside all of this I help, and sometimes, advise residents: problems with planning enforcement, drain overflows, highways issues e.g. potholes in our country lanes, the state of pavements in our villages and act as a liaison between residents and the officers up in Winchester – both City, and Hampshire!
Troubling issues relate to overgrown hedges and blocked drainage pipes, and swales. It is amazing what some put down their drain – nappies, toys, and fat!
This is a growing issue throughout the District with 'burst' sewers in Winchester (High Street), Colden Common, Brambridge, Hambledon, and Waltham Chase. Part of the problem in those areas that have

'older housing' is that storm water is directed into the sewer system. These sudden influxes of storm water burst out of the inspection covers carrying with it sewerage.

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