

Report of Linda Gemmell on 2018-19

Since we last met a year ago this has been a bit of a strange one..... Happily, it started with having a marvellous election and on a turnout of 39% of the electorate I had 64% of the vote and a majority of over 1000 (1083 actually!). This is due in no small part to the support people in this room as 'my' part of the ward, and those volunteers who don their jackets and get out in the cooler parts of the year in order to deliver leaflets, campaign letters, put up posters and generally campaign on my, Vicki and Frank's behalf for our local elections. For each of us that 'face forward' there are the unsung volunteers who stand behind us and without whom we could not function. From the election just passed I am pleased to say Vicki was re-elected and increased her majority as well.

Well, we got back in and whilst we again had the majority, it was cut to one! I was again appointed Group Manager by the Conservative Group with Caroline Horrill as our Leader and Rob Humby as her Deputy. After several years with a Conservative Administration it is extremely pleasing to see the projects started coming to fruition and I know you will have seen many of the achievements listed in Vicki's various reports.

The main points to note is that gradually the Government have withdrawn their support grants to local councils and in order to maintain the services we have to find the money somewhere. Winchester has done this by bringing forward projects that will bring an income to the Council so we are more and more self-supporting. So things like Station Approach and Saxon Gate the new name for the Silverhill area, have offices, shops and business space which when occupied, bring an income to the Council. Locally we have encouraged businesses to develop such as the depot at Bishops Waltham which is being redeveloped to provide small units at reasonable rates for small and startup businesses. We did not believe in borrowing when we knew that making the assets work for us was the best way to fill that increasing void, this is leaving us in an increasingly solid position with a good hedge against the vagaries of the markets.

Personally, I have again been a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee together with Standards and Standards Sub. O&S have met 13 times since the beginning of the municipal year – this is the most ever convened and carries an extremely heavy workload. It does, however, give a 360° view of the Council's work. This committee should be a backstop for unsound decisions, a spotlight on the less well-lit policies and basically the 'Conscience' of Council and work to ameliorate any item of contention but has unfortunately, ended up as a Political Grandstand for the opposition. This