

Hospital gets go ahead

Havant Council has cleared the way for a new local community hospital. The £38 million building will save residents having to travel to Portsmouth for some services.

A local Lib Dem county councillor fought to ensure that 24 elderly mental health beds and a minor injury unit were put back into the plan

Lib Dems also share the concerns of Age Concern and some Residents' Associations about the new hospital's bed capacity to cope with thousands of new homes planned for the area. The new hospital is due to open 2011 but financial uncertainties could mean a delay. There is further concern that despite the massive opposition the government may still go ahead with downgrading St Richards.



Schools re-build - but will it raise standards?



Hampshire County Council has just completed the second round of its consultation on the future of local schools.

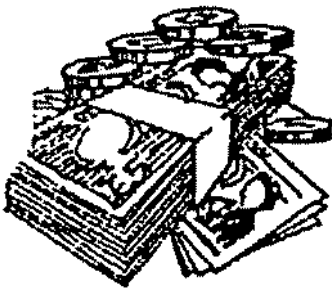
The government wants to rebuild every secondary school. Originally £120m was to be invested but this has been cut to £80m.

The first consultation got over 1200 replies with 84% against any school closures. Only improving standards will stem the flow of children to West Sussex. It's estimated that Warblington's roll will decrease from 977 now to 699 by 2018.

The second round of consultation has just ended - for more info:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/lbsf>

It's our money they're spending



How Conservative-run Hampshire County Council spend tax payers' money got picked up by the Daily Mail last year.

£141,000 was spent on bottled water, new designer taps at £2000 each and more than a million pounds on new furniture.

Research by the Taxpayers' Alliance showed that the County Council is the second highest spending authority in the country with 916 staff on annual salaries of over £50,000. Audit Commission figures for Hampshire put spending on children's services, adult social care and environment among the lowest anywhere in England.

Caring for our trees



Reports of trees and shrubs being cut down in Hordean Road reminds everybody of the importance of being alert about our local environment. Obviously issues such as public safety must come first. But in this case a routine culling to promote healthy growth looked more like a massacre. Emsworth has an enviable tree warden scheme throughout the town. Next time the council decides to carry out similar work perhaps a phone call to the people who care would help to ease any anxieties.

No cuts in local police



Assurances have been received that there will be no reduction in the number of local patrol officers. It was given in answer to a question at a Community Board meeting after Hampshire Police Authority made cuts of 200 jobs. The Authority has a budget shortfall of £8 million.

Emsworth play spaces review

Emsworth's few playgrounds could be even fewer after a council review has been completed. Havant council says it has not got the money to maintain every site and 14 of them may have to go. The three in Emsworth are located in Spencers Road, Dymoke St and Diana Close. If closed this would leave the main site in Horndean road for the town's children. Emsworth's Lib Dems say there's a need for play space south of the train station as well.

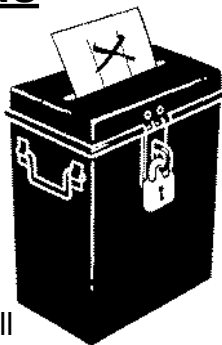


New Tesco back on

The 4- year saga over a new giant Tesco store on the edge of Havant town looks over. The existing store will close in April and the new Tesco Extra open in December, say the company. Local traders are worried that the new store will offer products already available in existing shops in Emsworth. The reaction among some local Havant councillors, not shared by Emsworth, has been one of unbridled enthusiasm for Tesco. Emsworth's Business and Residents' Associations opposed the giant store and were joined by a petition of almost 2000 names but it was approved seven votes to four.

2009 ELECTIONS

This year's county elections will be combined with the European Parliamentary election on June 4th. The Tories have announced that a St Faiths' Ward Borough Councillor will represent them.



The Lib Dems are expected to name their candidate in the next Focus. The traditional Emsworth hustings will be held on 18th May.

Saving energy benefits everybody

Havant council's decision to appoint a climate change and sustainability officer is welcome to all who care about the future of Emsworth's special environment. The dramatic increase in the cost of gas and electricity reminds everybody of our massive dependency on imported gas and oil. But free help from bodies such as the Energy Savings Trust can help a lot in understanding how significant savings can be made. For example over £300 a year from cavity wall filling, higher than standard loft insulation and low energy light bulbs. The added benefit is that the work involved creates jobs in a borough with the third highest unemployment in Hampshire.

Bid to save old signal box

New signalling systems in 2007 made Havant's original signal box redundant. The box sits at the junction of lines to Brighton and London near where the famous 'battle of Havant' took place between rival railway companies in the 19th Century. The building dates to 1876 and is a much loved memory of the Hayling Billy spur. Tell FOCUS what you think. Should it be a museum, be moved or demolished? Email www.havant-libdems.org/contact-us or call 01243 372887.

