

December 2015

Cllr. James Binns

Men's Community Cooking Classes

Members will be aware through previous updates I have given of the over 55's men's cooking classes that are funded by my Health and Leisure Department at NFDC. I am pleased to report that the second round of classes is now coming to an end, and once again the feedback from participants has been extremely positive. The service had previously been funded by Hampshire County Council, however when funding was cut the department managed to absorb the costs of the programme into our already small Public Health budget of £24,000. The classes costs around £3,000 to run, which given the larger benefit to our community and the people living within it, I consider this to be excellent value for money and I am immensely grateful to the volunteers who make this happen. Having attended the classes in Totton and New Milton, and having spoken to participants, it was interesting to note that not one person expressed dissatisfaction and indeed the majority expressed a willingness to pay for the classes as they felt it was so worthwhile. I have tried to keep this programme free for all to use, however given this feedback I now must consider if a charge may be the best way forward. By introducing payment for this service we would be able to expand it, and hopefully create new cooking classes throughout the New Forest, most importantly in areas such as Hythe. I may decide against it, however it is certainly something worth considering as we begin the second review process.

NFDC Restructure

New Forest District Council is currently undergoing an internal restructuring with interviews for the new Heads of Service being conducted. As I sit on the Cabinet I am one of six who will be on the interview panel. I will report back with further information regarding appointments when possible.

HCC Boundary Review

Members will likely be aware of the current boundary review taking place in Hampshire. The new review ensures that the New Forest loses one, in favour of Eastleigh. Councillor Ken Thornber OBE (former leader and chairman of HCC) has been good enough to go through the appropriate documentation with me and explain the reasons behind the revised boundary review. He and I both feel that the way forward is for the County Council to increase the number of seats from 78 to 79. Many County Councils, much smaller than ours in terms of population and hectares, already have well over 80 members. Cllr. Thornber is currently writing the Conservative response to the revised proposals and discussions are taking place within the ruling group on the County to decide if this is the best way forward.