

Cllr James Binns

Butts Ash and Dibden Purlieu Ward

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES: MARCH 2016

DEVOLUTION:

The Government's devolution plan for Hampshire could be split into two as part of plans to create a 'Southern Powerhouse'. The county and the Isle of Wight face the possibility of being divided between north and south as proposals for devolution move forward. I understand that the Government's representatives have been meeting with Council bosses from across the county to discuss Hampshire wide devolution, but also the possibility of a Solent combined authority between Southampton, Portsmouth and Eastleigh, led by an elected mayor. I can confirm that New Forest District Council will not join any talks with the aim of entering into a Solent Authority Devolution deal, although we have been approached to do so. Nevertheless, the content of the proposed Solent deal could as of yet change, and is very much dependent on the results of the Local Elections in May and whether or not Council administrations or authority leaders change.

Further, the leader of the County Council, Cllr Roy Perry, has written to MPs and the Government to warn against what would effectively be a dismantling of the County if proposals for a Solent Authority go ahead. The administration at NFDC firmly believe that a united approach is the best way forward for local residents, who are well served by Hampshire County and New Forest District Councils as part of a two tier authority structure. Currently NFDC does not support the Government's push for an elected Mayor, adding further unnecessary layers of local government rather than taking devolution directly to the people.

Although the Government's devolution agenda offers opportunity for local areas to take greater control of their future, I do have concerns that much of what is being proposed is about giving local authorities greater power but without the finances. NFDC will continue to be a constructive partner during discussions but will only agree to a deal if it is in the best interests of our local communities.

NEW FOREST HEALTHY WEIGHT STRATEGY:

The determinants of obesity and healthy weights are complex and multi faceted. Recent guidance recommends sustainable, community wide action to prevent overweight and obesity in adults and children and has a strong focus on local partnership working to deliver this. The aim of the Healthy Weight Strategy 2015 – 2019 is to increase the number of adults, children and young people who are a healthy weight in order to maximize their years of healthy life. The strategy is led by Public Health, Hampshire County Council, but is supported by my Health and Leisure Department at NFDC. It will be overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board, of which I am Chairman, with practical implementation driven by a steering group, and where required topic specific time limited task and finish groups. Progress will be reported on a six monthly basis.

The aims of the project are to:

1. Develop an understanding of local need within the New Forest and use it to inform the local priorities and where appropriate, the targeting of resources.
2. Map and promote local services and resources.
3. Review the local provision in the light of policy and guidance and the experiences of local services, users and practitioners.
4. Ensure that best use is made of existing services, mainstream funding and other funding sources to support local plans and objectives.
5. Provide a forum for developing effective local inter-agency working, communication and information sharing around the healthy weight agenda.

ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA REMINISCENCE GROUPS:

As I have previously stated, I am in discussions with our partners in the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board to establish alternative funding sources for the New Forest Reminiscence Groups which came to an end in September of 2015. These groups were set up to give sufferers of Alzheimers and Dementia a safe, secure and friendly environment where they would be looked after whilst members of their family (who often act as carers) could have a day of respite and talk to fellow carers. The Reminiscence groups were set up using a one off Hampshire County Council public grant which has since ceased. I am pleased to say that we have been successful in getting one group going in Lymington and another is due to start in Totton. I continue to work with our partners to ensure that more of these valuable groups can be recreated across the District, however, we do rely on volunteers to assist in this so if members of the public would like to be involved please do get in touch with me. It is my hope to get a group up and running in the Parish.