

October 2015

Councillor James Binns

Fit Fest which featured workshops offering advice on the importance of good mental health to secondary and college-aged students, was held at Brockenhurst College on Friday 16 October. Students from Oak Lodge and Applemore schools were in attendance, as well as some 300 students from other schools in the district. My Health and Leisure (H&L) service at New Forest District Council provided workshops on mindful yoga, Nordic walking and Zumba. There were sessions teaching mindfulness, managing anxiety, mental health-lived experience, coping in a crisis, and an expressive art workshop. Additionally, there were also 24 market stalls covering a wide range of health and wellbeing topics, such as healthy eating, volunteering, youth theatre, eating disorders and relaxation. All of these stalls were aimed at combatting many of the issues that young people face today, and these areas were targeted as part of the departments 'Future Matters' strategy.

As promised, after the review of the initial programme NFDC have successfully maintained the Mens Over 55s Cooking Classes despite the growing strain on our financial resources. This is a good result for the district and those who now find themselves alone in later years, having previously never needed to cook. The service has remained free at the point of use, as I promised.

NFDC is working with our partners to provide new Alzheimer's Society Reminiscence groups within the New Forest that will be run by volunteers. These groups will provide a calm, friendly and supportive environment for people suffering from dementia, as well as somewhere for family carers to go and speak with others in similar situations.

The Poverty Task and Finish Group from the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel at NFDC have conducted their report into child poverty. The report has been finalised and we are currently working through the detail to ascertain how we can implement some of the findings around increasing access and understanding to services and information. Further discussion will occur at the next Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

On Friday the 15th I was delighted to attend the New Forest Community First reception for outstanding volunteers. NFDC H&L service grant fund Community First and seeing what many of these groups do only illustrates that it is money well gifted. Age Concern from our own Parish were represented so my congratulations to the organisation and their local volunteers.

I was recently elected Chairman of the Parish Christmas Lights Working Group by my fellow Councillors. Together we have worked through all of the options for

maintaining what we hope will be a high quality display that will now incorporate the hubs within the Parish. Our report will come to Council next meeting and I would like to give my thanks to Cllr Short, Cllr McClean, and Cllr Poole, as well as our officers; Marcus, Sean and Helen, for their hard work.

Members of the public and Council Members might be aware of a small online survey that I undertook in respect of the proposal to build a Lidl Superstore in St Johns Car Park, Hythe. I conducted the survey in order to obtain an insight into the wishes of people within our Parish. I was delighted and somewhat surprised that 1,030 members of the public participated in the survey, a total of just over 5% of the population. The raw result was 71% in support, 29% against. After applying a quantitative methodology with an 85% confidence interval and a 15% margin of error the result was 58% in support and 42% against. Although not entirely representative of the entire Parish population I am pleased that so many people participated and that since our last meeting the Parish have now agreed to conduct their own proper public consultation.

As part of our ongoing programme to update the leisure centres, Health and Leisure at NFDC have now successfully completed the installation of the new gym equipment at the Applemore Leisure Centre. This includes a new wifi capability that allows for online tracking of customers' exercise progress. Customer feedback has been extremely positive since the upgrade in equipment and so far income within H&L is up £35,000. This is being driven by our gym upgrades, as well as increased numbers in casual swimming and increased personal memberships.

Finally Sports England are conducting a new 'commissioning support for local authorities' programme that Health and Leisure at NFDC have successfully been accepted on. The project will take place between October 2015 and April 2016 and during this time the Council will receive a total of 12 full days' support from an expert advisor. The advisor will work with our lead officer to:

- map the local commissioning landscape;
- identify the local priority outcomes and potential opportunities for sport and leisure;
- identify any constraints to engaging with commissioning locally and, where relevant, propose solutions to the challenges;
- use the intelligence gathered to prepare an influencing plan to approach commissioner; and
- provide support to help the service develop effective joint funding bids or submissions.

This will be a very positive step for our parish as we have one of the largest leisure centres and highest populations within the District, our Parish is a key target within this project. Further details are as of yet to be finalised.