

# Cllr Alex Wade

## Annual report 2016

Hythe West and Langdown District Councillor  
Liberal Democrat

This is my first report as a New Forest District Councillor, for Hythe West and Langdown. I would like to thank my predecessors Maureen McLean and Maureen Robinson for their amazing work over the many years they served the ward. These are big shoes to fill!

I was elected in May alongside Beverley Thorne, as one of two councillors for this ward. I was very proud and honoured to be elected to represent my community. On the council it has been an interesting experience, especially when part of an opposition of just two Lib Dem Councillors.

The council has gone through some very drastic changes, following the retirement of chief executive Dave Yates last year, he was replaced by Bob Jackson, an internal appointment. Many popular and long serving managers have left the council in a restructure brought in by the new Chief Executive. This has led to significant savings, but has also meant a loss of many hard working and knowledgeable officers.

It is a shame that in the budget any changes in number of councillors is again not being considered. My view is that with modern ways of contacting Councillors there is argument for a review on the number, which will bring savings to the council and taxpayer. If we have made cuts in Staff, we should ensure Councillors are sharing the burden.

On the subject of the budget, the Lib Dems did not offer an alternative version. We did offer suggestions such as a mental health champion, reduction in Councillors, committee to improve children's happiness, work on air pollution, support for our recycling centres, dog fouling, and a change from Cabinet to Committee system. With such a small opposition the focus has been on highlighting where the Council is not performing effectively, and making decisions that have a negative effect on residents.

A £2.60 a year rise in Council tax per household was agreed. The Council has had central funding cut dramatically, and this, alongside NFDC only now raising council tax after six years of a zero precept, has led to rises in service reviews and prices raised, such as for 60-65 year olds in our leisure centres. In fairness, the NFDC are having to make cuts because the current and previous Governments have destroyed local government budgets. It is a very tough time for all Councils.

This year, I seconded a 'call in' on car park charges that was unsurprisingly defeated, challenged the cabinet member responsible, if Hythe will be seeing any

benefit from the sale of St John's Car Park and sat on the General Purposes and Licensing Committee. The relocation of Hythe Market has been supported by the NFDC, which was good news and I supported my colleagues on proposed boundary changes, an issue that currently has no effect on Hythe and Dibden residents.

The St Johns Car Park sale to LIDL has been one of the headlines of my first year in role. The Council, I felt had not consulted properly with residents, and it was only the great work of the Parish Council that gave the public a chance to comment.

Moving forward, Community safety, CCTV, Litter, Housing, and of course ensuring this Parish gets the best deal possible out of the sale of the car park, will be my priorities. I am keen to ensure that any service reviews that affect my constituents are open and transparent, and I will challenge any decisions made that have a negative affect on the people of Hythe and Dibden.

Casework has been steady and varied, with some longstanding issues over housing and Langdown Estate that will continue in to the year. Rubbish is a common issue and I have met with an NFDC officer about the Woods near Hobart Drive in the Summer about flytipping. There is plenty to achieve, and despite a difficult financial climate I will continue asking the questions and pushing for action.

Each year I get £600 in Councillor grants to give to local organisations that support and benefit the community. This year I have contributed to Waterside Cancer Support centre, Waterside Arts Festival, the Handy Trust Cinema Project, the Dibden Youth Group/Handy Trust camera project and towards the coaches to get local families to the panto, which was organised by the Handy Trust and Dibden Youth group.

*Alex Wade*