

Report by Chris Punnett, District Councillor for Tangmere, for 2007/8

No-one was more surprised than I when I was elected to the District Council last May. I stood because I thought it wrong that the Chairman of another parish should represent this village, particularly one which did not support important initiatives which Tangmere Parish Council felt would make a difference to the lives of residents. I am proud to serve as your councillor, and I attempt through the monthly Tangmere News to keep residents up to date on issues which I feel are important or they should be aware of.

Probably the most important issue for the District Council has been the rejection of the LDF, despite following guidelines and advice from the Government's Office for the South East. This has left parishes in a somewhat vulnerable position in that developers can refer to the need for the district to provide a given number of houses, and say, "my site is ideal and available". There are influential members of the District Council who will favour this argument, because they want the number of houses provided increased, particularly affordable housing, which risks parishes being pressured into accepting development.

I spoke against the Fire Depot development application in Committee because it proposed what I consider to be urban elements, namely three storey blocks of flats, inappropriate to the village environment I believe we wish to maintain. I regret that I lost that argument, and I will be interested to see how the development stands the test of time.

I have been involved in numerous issues for residents of the village, and the parish council, including Perrymead, an ancient Sloe hedge at Nicholson Close, the Bader Arms smoking shelter, Tangmere Airfield Nurseries application for additional greenhouses, Council Tax revaluation following house extension, anti-social behaviour (to individuals and the community at large), cars on grass verges, damage to bus shelters, and of course the proposed development of the Grain Store site. Some of these have resulted in success, whereas for others progress is very slow.

I am a member of the District Council's Development Control Committee, and hope to remain so in the coming year. I have attended one LAT meeting and been impressed by the breadth of knowledge and considerable resources available. I have also attended some Lavant Valley Partnership (now called Forum) meetings, where the District Council attempts to inform parishes of developments in services and policy direction.

The District Council's resources are constrained by continuing reductions in government grants and the increasing demands of government legislation. However, I believe that the council is generally well managed by its senior officers and has a great many dedicated staff. That is not to say that mistakes do not occur, or that every decision will be to my liking, but overall I believe residents receive value for money from the District Council.

Chris Punnett
6th May 2008