**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – JULY UPDATE**

**NHDC - New Council Appointment**

The first meeting has been held and the appointments of Chairs, Vice-Chairs and members of the various committees made. As well as being a member of the Southern Rural Committee, I have been appointed as the Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The function of this committee is to 'hold the executive to account'. To this end we examine many performance statistics and call each portfolio holders to present a report to us once per year. We occasionally have meetings devoted to specific, usually large, projects that we consider require close scrutiny: e.g. last year a meeting was devoted to examining the redevelopment of Hitchin Town Hall.

**NHDC Grants available through the Southern Rural Committee**

NHDC has limited funds, but does make grants to local organisations, as long as they are independent, not-for-profit and work for the benefit of the local community. Currently there is a Community Building Refurbishment Fund which has £15,000 available, and a Playground Fund and an Environmental Improvement Fund each with £10,000 available. With the exception of the Environmental Improvement Fund, community groups will be expected to raise at least 50% themselves. For further details see http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/grants or call 01462 474000 and ask for the Community Services Team.

Grant applications for Knebworth groups will be reviewed by the Southern Rural Committee, which meets four times a year. In our meeting on 11 June the committee approved £250 towards the cost of installing new pedestrian handrails on the steps to the footpath from New Close to Stevenage Road, and £200 towards the cost of developing the new Parish Council Website. Grant applications must be completed in good time before we meet, and may be submitted on paper or filled in online. The deadline for submissions for the next meeting in September is early August.

**Stevenage Borough Council – Consultation on Local Plan 2011-2031**

As part of the development of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, Stevenage Borough Council is undertaking a public consultation on SBC’s preferred housing target for the Borough which is increased to 7,600 homes. Their preferred approach would roll-back the Green Belt within SBC and for needs beyond 2031 would wish to work with neighbouring councils to review the Green Boundary. The consultation on this aspect of the Emerging Local Plan runs from 22nd June to 27 July 2015 and further information and how to submit a response can be found on SBC’s website under Planning Policy: http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/

Please contact me if you would like to discuss these or any other matters: **Steve Hemingway, Councillor for Knebworth on NHDC: steve@stevehemingway.com or phone 01438 940594 (please include STD code when dialling).**

Please contact Steve if you need his help or to share your comments, or be in touch directly with your County Councillor Richard Thake or your Member of Parliament Stephen McPartland:

* Richard Thake, Herts County Council: richard.thake@hertfordshire.gov.uk, 07973 157605
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