# Grants Policy

A report on this is due to be discussed at the meeting of Cabinet on the 15th December. This will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by the end of February 2016. Grants represent a modest, but important part of the Districts cost base, and have to be reviewed just as we review all our spending commitments. Knebworth has to pay for the upkeep of its village hall, pavilion and recreation grounds through the precept it levies. Voters in the towns in the District have the equivalent expenditure paid for directly by the District Council (i.e. everyone's Council Tax). Rural grants, to a degree, compensated villages for this anomaly. For this reason, the review of grants policy is very important to us, and I will continue to argue for a fair deal for the 'parished' areas.

# Preferred Options Consultation

To check the submissions, go to the page you get to by searching for '"Planning Policy Online Consultations" north-herts'. There were approximately 8,500 responses to the 'Preferred Options' document, which is some kind of record, and posed a major challenge for the software used to make the responses accessible to the public. Four hundred and eighty three responses were received for the proposals for Knebworth, 201 for the village generally, 139 for the proposed site off Deards End Lane (KB1) and 143 for the site off Gypsy Lane (KB2).

Every written response is available to read online, and I have done my best to read them all. The number of responses to the document has been truly overwhelming and is strongly indicative that it needs a major revision before it is likely to get widespread support. Other planning authorities in the area are going through a similar process, but have received a response which is, in comparison, minimal. The **total** number of responses to the proposals by Stevenage Borough Council was around two hundred and fifty: around half those generated from Knebworth alone, and less than 3% of the responses received by NHDC!

It is possible that the timetable specified in the Local Development Scheme will be derailed by the sheer volume of responses from the public, but this is a matter that will have to be agreed by the full Council. The (as yet unwritten) Draft Local Plan will be subject to a further round of consultation, by statute, so it is possible that the Council will decide to stick to the original timetable, on the basis that there is now an urgent need to produce a Local Plan, to prevent developers submitting 'hostile applications': applications to build on sites outside the current Plan on the basis that the Council no longer has a five year supply of Land for housing development.

# Bin Collections over Christmas

It is proposed to depart from recent practice, and not skip brown bin collections over Christmas. A consequence of this is that it will take longer to return to the normal pattern, and at least one collection will be on a Monday. I do not know the final dates at the time of writing, so please make a note of the notices fixed to your bins in the next few weeks (or visit the website) to check the collection dates over the holiday.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish my readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy 2016.