**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL – NOVEMBER UPDATE**

**NHDC Local Plan – Public Consultation Period 19th October to end November**

The local public meeting ahead of the Parish Council meeting went ahead as planned on Wednesday 12th October. The hall was full, with many of those attending having to stand. The only occasion I can recall coming close to this level of attendance was the meeting to discuss the NHDC Preferred Options, in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Paul Ward delivered an excellent summary of the Local Plan process. This set the context and enabled members of the public to understand better how they could participate effectively in the Local Plan consultation process. Both of your District Councillors were present, and did their best to answer the questions addressed to them.

The Parish Council, in its regular meeting after the public meeting, decided to allocate a budget to cover the cost of a planning consultant to help it produce its response to the Local Plan consultation which started on the 19th October and will run until the end of November. All residents are encouraged to read the Plan, which will be available in the Library, and online, and to submit their representations. A new improved online system for recording representations will be accessible via the District Council's website, or an email to localplan@north-herts.gov.uk, or a letter to Planning Policy, Local Plan Consultation, North Hertfordshire District Council, PO Box 480, M33 0DE. Please ensure that you make it very clear which section of the Plan your representation relates to. As I have explained previously, these representations will be collated by NHDC and submitted to the Planning Inspector ahead of the Public Enquiry, which is currently expected to take place in the second quarter of 2017.

**NHDC Revised Grants Policy**

The revised Grants Policy, now adopted, has reduced the total amount of money available for grants from the Council, and restricted the groups which are eligible. One of the big changes is that 'precepting bodies', such as Parish Councils are not allowed to ask NHDC for grants. The basis for this is that they already have the power to raise money from local residents via Council Tax. Historically, parish councils have been a big recipient of NHDC Grants, so even with a reduced budget there is an opportunity for local community groups to obtain funding. The grant-awarding committee which covers Knebworth, Codicote and other southern parishes is Southern Rural. It still has a budget of around £18,000 to spend by the end of the Civic Year, so now is the time to write your applications ready for the next committee meeting, which is on 1st December.

Note that there is a separate committee which overseas capital grants for village halls, community halls and the like. This is the Community Facilities Capital Projects Fund. The current four-year programme has one million pounds to disburse for capital projects. Parish councils are permitted to apply for capital funding from this fund.

Please contact your NHDC councillors if you would like to discuss these or any other matters:

**Steve Hemingway, steve@stevehemingway.com or phone 01438 940594 (please include STD code when dialling)**

**Steve Deakin-Davies, stevedeakindavies@gmail.com or phone 07949 435435**

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, phone 07973 157605
* Stephen McPartland MP: stephen@stephenmcpartland.co.uk, Stephen McPartland MP, House of Commons, Westminster, London, SW1A 0AA