

County has a new procedure for gritting the roads.

Their web-site suggests that the met office predicts sheet and snow, so the gritters are on standby to sort out the 'A' roads and access to hospitals and emergency services.

It hasn't yet dawned on them that getting out and onto the roads generally means they have to go somewhere. In Berkhamsted that generally means either up a hill or down one!

Wasn't Monday fun? The main road was clear and gritted – just that the roads joining it, were sheets of glass and I slid round the corner of Woodlands Ave and Beech Drive and again the junction of Hilltop and Chesham Road. The real challenge was getting down Durrants Lane (or up or anywhere else). Not to worry though, four paws succeed every time – except if something gets in his way when he does wonder why something got in his way – like steps, cars, motorbikes, walls or lamp-posts.

Let me see, is it March or May?

It looks as though, once again, young Mr Brown has left it to the last minute and is crossing his fingers that he can convince enough voters to allow him to put right the error of his ways.

Hang on though, is it all his fault? I think we can trace our present minor financial difficulties right back to a certain greengrocers daughter who thought that promoting the idea that getting into debt was a really good thing. The idea of borrowing money to buy something that was bound to increase in value is typical economical theory – and she a scientist by training! That was in the 1980's and just 25 years later, the banks were carrying on the very same philosophy. Mind you, so were the government, big business, small business and even the general public.

So successful (at the time) was this theory, that the Conservative government still wanted to cut taxes, but increase spending. Having almost run out of assets to sell to the private sector, the brilliant minds of big business, suggested that it would be a good idea if they raised the funds to build some of the countries schools, social housing (remember councils had to sell their housing stock, but didn't receive the money to replace it!) or things like hospitals. Nice juicy capital projects which could be rented/leased back to unsuspecting public organisations for the next 30 or so years. It was a win-win situation provided you didn't think about it. Capital projects have to be put into the public accounts but 'revenue' payments can just disappear. And disappear they did (have), even though the public purse has to pay the money until the term ends and then hand over the asset to the private companies. Win-win for the private sector, not so clever for the taxpayer.

It wouldn't be so bad if the new Labour government hadn't continued the 'good' work once they took over in 1995. At the moment, many public offices have been sold off and 'leased back' – same principle, different method. To compound the situation, many of these companies who own 'our' assets are based abroad and so pay little tax on the profits being made. I think it's fair to say that most, if not all of our essential utilities are in the hands of companies based abroad.

What has this got to do with the forthcoming election or even us in Berkhamsted. I'll tell you, £21000+ each of us has got to find to get out of the financial mess that various governments have allowed to happen. The reason why our hospital is in the state it is, is largely due to the payments they are having to make to pay for the 'improvements' made to our hospitals and will have to make, even if they close the whole lot down – *'it's in the contract, gov. Didn't you read the small print?'* Even the new GP lead centre in Hemel is being paid for by the number of people who come through the door, only they have a guaranteed payment for the first year or so no matter what. No wonder they want everyone to go there, it's already paid for anyway by us!

It would be interesting to ask the canvassers for the political parties asking for your vote, what do they propose doing about the problem? I suspect the answer will go along the lines of a shrug of shoulders and mutter that it's someone else's fault, but their party will do better. You could ask about why water companies took on the system, lock, stock and defects. Now want to be paid by the taxpayer to repair it. Same with the railways. They pay the government to run part of the railway, then the government pay the very same (foreign owned?) companies to do it.

I'm sure you could think of lots of other interesting questions like why does it make economic sense for the Borough Council to 'transfer' its' housing stock to an unaccountable body (which might end up in overseas hands) rather than do it itself. Easy, the government takes most of the housing income from the Borough Council, but will allow the proposed housing association to keep it all.

As I write this, County has been 'given' £140 million to replace all the pre-2002 lighting columns for more efficient ones. So we will be paying this back, plus interest for years and years via our taxes and I bet the 'efficiency savings' get no-where near reducing this repayment. Also, it appears that the Council housing maintenance contract has gone slightly pear shaped and is costing more than expected – yep, outside contractors again. Do they never learn (short memories, maybe?). I can remember the 'outsourcing' of refuse collections a few years ago. It had to be brought back in house for similar reasons. Often now, there is no way out. If it don't work – tough. Try to solve it and compensation has to be paid. I really must try to find out how much money governments pour into projects that don't go according to the 'vision' and to resolve the situation costs escalate. I bet you could buy a bank or two with the money rather than the tax-payer. Naturally no one gets the elbow due to the cost of compensation for not doing their job. Bit like bankers and headmasters who actually get a bonus for just doing their job. Funny old world! Just where is this gravy train?

Socialism lives OK! Privatisation is not always the best way as profits have to be made by someone and it is never the taxpayer.

That's just some of the things you might like to ask before you vote in May, as devolving power locally is words rather than action for the major players.

Don't worry, I'll be back shortly!

Your local electrician is still [Norman Cutting](#),
so why not give him a call for your electrical installation work