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Political Newsletter of Norman Cutting Autumn 2004

And now for something completely different.....



This is a photograph of an inactive politician who does not intend standing for either County or Westminster in next years elections - but will do his best to bring interest to an otherwise dreary subject.

In this issue, a story of local interest, another about our well-oiled public information system and more about Regional Assemblies.

If you have a comment to make or more want more information, then my contact details are on the back page -

I look forward to hearing from you!

Regional Assemblies live!

Our wonderful government are still hell bent on imposing 'efficient' government on us by putting in more layers in which can be instructed to do central bidding.

As you know(?), every area of the country has had an unelected regional assembly (aka government) imposed to carry out Westminster's bidding. In an effort to legitimise these bodies, it was intended they would be elected.

Shortly after our very own assembly has 'ratified' the location and numbers of new houses 'needed', those clever sticks up north managed to see the light. I just wonder if the decisions already taken by ours, will be declared null and void?

Timetable for Action

The Conservatives have launched a new policy in time for the expected election next year.

Those of us involved in local politics during the 1997 change of government, will remember how much paper and consultation came out of the new government. We were overwhelmed with consultations on just about every subject under the sun and all had (comparatively) short response times. Needless to say, many were ignored or hastily responded too due to lack of time.

I just hope this Conservative policy gets changed to:

Timetable for Results

Anyone can take action, but will results be achieved?

Skateboard update

The latest is that the planning application submitted by our beloved Town Council to the local planning authority (and owner of the land!) was not determined within the required time (although they are still making a decision!).

It has now been sent to Bristol for determination by the inspector by written submission and a site visit. I understand that this could take up to a year. Do not be surprised if the visit takes place during next summer, when the football pitches will not be marked out (the Town Council tried this wheeze), as the proposed site means that the football players will have to move to an even more sloping part of Velvet Lawn.

I have a feeling this is more about politics than providing facilities.

It all goes back to 1974 when district councils were set up. The existing Town Councils were given the opportunity to retain as much (or little) power, as they wanted. Our very own Urban and Rural Councils decided that getting rid of the lot was best all round and only hung onto allotments. Everything else was transferred to Dacorum - and responsibilities, of course. Time passed and this cozy arrangement continued even as far as Berkhamsted is still the only local

council to take advantage of 'concurrent' services (District councils pay Town/Parish Councils to provide local services such as street cleaning). Tring held on to some property (rent reduces Council Tax) and Amersham still maintains its own street lights, for example.

The Independent controlled Town Council of 1995/99 tried to change this state of affairs, but was thwarted by the 'old guard' as it regained power.

The current Lib-Dem controlled Town Council is trying a similar trick, but without taking responsibility for its' actions with the proposed Skateboard facility.

No planning application is necessary, the Town Council do not own the land, the young people of the town do not want it at the current proposed location, it is understood that the majority of the Council do not want it on the proposed site and the Borough Council (remember - the owners of the land) are very lukewarm. They seem to be taking the very understandable attitude that the Town Council are all words and no action as you cannot be blamed for a decision made by others.

Perhaps it is time for the Town Council to bite the bullet and either drop the idea or actually build it on their own land.

They still complain about the service level on highway maintenance and cleaning,

but that is all they do. Even the warden has no teeth to actually do anything but still costs us about £18,000 a year to report to others. They even set up a duplicate information point rather than provide a decent service.

To be honest, why don't they actually provide facilities for young people? The County Council have reduced funding for youth projects, the Borough Council are based in Hemel - enough said, which leaves the Town Council to provide facilities for the town. The reason why the upper levels of local government don't/won't provide ongoing funding is that national government hold the purse strings and the system is weighted towards capital projects.

You only have to look at our infrastructure. Maintenance of highways, hospitals, schools and open spaces is neglected. In fact, it looks as though money will be spent on buying land in Hatfield for our new hospital. A pity really, as the land is already available in Hemel - already owned and earmarked for a new hospital - but it will be sold for housing and the money used in Hatfield.

You really have to take your hat off to the powers that be, don't you!

Don't you believe it!

Those of you who were here before we lost our wide High Street, had a police station that was open most of the time and we had two national supermarkets in the main road (no, not as far back as Sainsburys, Home and Colonial and assorted Co-op's), will remember that we had to have 'traffic calming' to reduce the number of deaths/accidents on the roads in the town as the by-pass would take all the through traffic out of the town and residents would need only to walk within the town (the plans were printed on flat paper, remember!). A corner stone of the experiment was the introduction of a 20 mph zone in the High Street.

Nearly 10 years later, the government is still trying to prove the point, as can be seen in the current television road safety adverts showing how to knock down children when traveling at 30 mph with the rear brakes disconnected. It had to be done this way otherwise the car would have stopped in time - which would have defeated the object of the exercise, wouldn't it?

I didn't see a notice to this effect on the screen, nor was there one of the additional policemen/community wardens promised, to take the car off the road as it was unroadworthy (deliberately).

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