

New Constitution now in place

What the Council does, how it does it and - most importantly - how decisions are made are all controlled by the Constitution.

- The Constitution is a document that:
- sets out how elected members can influence policy and actions;
- determines how committees operate and whether they should be answerable to any other body;
- defines how members of the public can engage in the democratic process;
- establishes the responsibilities of specific

roles within the Council and the breadth of those responsibilities; and

- provides a legal underpinning for the Council's day-to-day operation.

A new version of the Constitution 'went live' in April following a thorough review last year, and it can be viewed on our website at www.westwiltshire.gov.uk/index/council/your-council/constitution ■

MEP visits West Wiltshire



Cllr Sarah Content with Graham Watson MEP. Photo - Bath Chronicle.

One of the South West's seven MEPs visited West Wiltshire in April, having been invited to the District Council by Leader Cllr Sarah Content.

Graham Watson is Leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament, having represented a part of the South West region since 1994 and West Wiltshire since 1999. During his visit, he met with a number of senior councillors and officers and found out more about the issues facing the area.

Cllr Content said: "Local authorities are facing a number of challenges, especially around our future funding arrangements and the outcomes of the Lyons review into local

government. In addition, how we fit into the regional picture is constantly changing, with the Government Office of the South West due for restructuring and key documents such as the Regional Spatial Strategy currently going through consultation."

She added: "There are always occasions when we have to fight our corner, and we need the support of our key partners, our MPs and our MEPs. They have greater access to the top levels of decision-making, and being aware of the grass roots issues makes it easier for them to represent their areas more effectively. This was an extremely helpful visit for both sides, and I thank Graham for his time." ■

Praise and thanks after year of achievement

The Council has been praised by the Audit Commission for its progress in a number of key areas.

Among the areas highlighted through the annual inspection were:

- **Recycling - significant improvements, including exceeding Government targets**
- **Housing - being among the top performing councils for reducing the numbers of people placed in temporary accommodation, and stopping the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for the homeless**
- **Market town regeneration - the Transforming Trowbridge project and greater investment in street cleansing**

Cllr Sarah Content, Leader of the Council, welcomed the Audit Commission's findings: "It is always easy to focus on the areas where we have difficulties, rather than actually paying credit where it's due. This authority has achieved a great deal in the face of limited resources, and my thanks go to all of the staff and members who have worked so hard to deliver good quality services to local people."

At the Annual Council meeting in May, Cllr Content highlighted other achievements,

including partnership working at all levels, effective lobbying at regional and national level, and delivering the new licensing regime.

She also identified challenges for the coming year, including the Lyons review of local government, new enforcement powers within the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act, maintaining the momentum of making improvements prompted by the leisure and recreation needs assessment, and balancing the budget against increasing expectations and pressures.

Cllr Content said: "Members play a positive and active part within this Council and beyond into the community. It is very obvious that they are genuine in their desire to effect real and positive change for the benefit of all, and it is a delight and a privilege to be able to be part of that process...it is also a credit to the officers and staff of this Council that so many of them are motivated and have the same desire as elected members to achieve the best we can, within the constraints that we are in...their camaraderie and support is wonderful, and a joy to work with." ■

Are you registered?

Did you know you can now apply to add your name to the electoral register at any time during the year?

Registering is simple - all you have to do is download a form from our website at www.westwiltshire.gov.uk or call us on 01225 770312 so we can send you a copy.

The annual canvass forms, which list everyone registered at your address, will be sent to all households during September. All you need to do is check that the information we hold is correct. If it is, you can confirm this to us by telephone, through the internet or by posting the form back to the Council. Any forms where the information is incorrect will need to be sent back to the Council with the appropriate amendments so that we can update our records.

There will be district and parish elections in May 2007 - therefore it is important that you are registered so that you don't lose your right to vote. ■



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