

# Knowing the price of everything...



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AS WE enter what promises to be an economically challenging year for the country as a whole there is one question that we should be asking our elected representatives.

Can we trust the majority parties in Horsham and Chichester (for it is they that take the decisions) to protect the things that we value about our town?

All too often it seems budget constraints are given as the reason for taking decisions

which are unwise, unsatisfactory, and often unpopular.

To misquote Oscar Wilde, sometimes councillors seem to know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Last week the County Times reported that West Sussex County Council had decided to replace paving slabs with blacktop. That's black asphalt to you and me. The reason: it is cheaper.

No consideration seems to have been given to the fact it is depressingly ugly when freshly laid, or that after much inevitable patching it becomes an eyesore. Price not value.

By the time you read this, barring a last minute miracle, the district council will have moved one step nearer to

destroying Horsham Town Hall as a community facility.

The reason: it is said to be too expensive to maintain. Their figures do not add up but it is nevertheless another example of price rather than value.

Horsham council continues to make insufficient investment in the planning application process, being far more interested in speed of decision and cost than the quality of design of our new buildings.

The result is that too often it is allowing sub-standard development which will still be here to blight the street scene in 60 or more years. Again, price not value.

We are told that we face the worst year for council finances ever. Stop for a moment and try

to remember when we have ever been told anything else?

Councillors in earlier days faced equally difficult decisions but thankfully in most cases protected those things that we value.

How else would we have our splendid Horsham Park, the Pavilions, the museum and the Capitol? All, I am sure, could have been claimed to be too costly in their day.

Perhaps councillors then were closer to the communities they represented; perhaps they understood better that they were not the owners of the community's assets but trustees.

If savings have to be made then let them be in areas where they would be unnoticed, such as bureaucracy, meetings and self promotion.

We could offer more responsibilities to Horsham's three neighbourhood councils. For very little cost they might provide some of council services that are delivered elsewhere by parish councils.

Every decision represents a choice made. In difficult times we should give lasting value precedence over short term cost. It is false economy in the long run to do otherwise.

*The Horsham Society is concerned about the town's past, present and future and seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.*

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