

Council must welcome assistance from its many 'Friends'

WSCT 5/1/10

I'M FEELING sad. SAD as in Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Why? Well, even before the recession from which we now seem to be emerging, our district and county councils were laying off staff and allowing early retirement.

As a result we have lost a significant number of individuals with many years' experience.

We are already missing their contribution, not because they always agreed with our views but because they had the interests of the town at heart and contributed to the corporate memory that is so necessary if we are to learn from past



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experience what works and what does not.

The people that remain seem to be much too busy holding their heads above water to have time for the everyday things which concern ordinary people.

Letters go unanswered, simple issues seem to take an age to progress and yet the council seems reluctant to accept help when it is

offered.

The Horsham Society has two major projects in hand which directly involve Horsham District Council (HDC). One is the recent proposal for Local Listing of buildings.

We suggested the idea to HDC a long while ago. Even before the recent cuts they said that they did not have the resources to do the necessary legwork.

OK, so we did it! In identifying individual buildings of merit we found that many were in groups and it was really the grouping which should lead to them being listed.

So, on the back of Local

Listing, we have proposed some new Conservation Areas; places that make Horsham pleasant and which we would hate to lose.

The other proposal was made to the council last summer. It was suggested that HDC takes the initiative and register as town greens the open spaces which it owns.

On the face of it, if HDC owns it, it must be safe. However, it only wants some politician in Westminster to decree that local authorities should sell off all their land and we could lose a lot of green and pleasant townscape for the sake of a few cramped houses.

Again, in spite of our doing much of the initial work, regrettably HDC has not taken up the initiative.

Over the years, the council has responded well to suggestions we have made. This was helped by the good long-term relations we had with many of the officers and the local councillors representing Horsham town.

It would be disappointing if with the recent staff changes we were to experience the 'not invented here' approach, with every proposal being rejected out of hand because it did not come from within the council itself.

This problem extends to

the range of community and 'Friends' groups that HDC has encouraged which are in danger of becoming another layer of unproductive bureaucracy, neither consulted nor listened to.

If they are to be worthwhile they must be consulted and listened to by the council.

In difficult times the council should be welcoming assistance, not retrenching into a bunker.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of our town.

If you would like to join us, visit www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 261905.