

A busy agenda lies ahead for the new district council

THE HORSHAM Society is non-political and keen to work with whoever the electorate choose to run the council.

So we do not comment on the manifestos of the competing parties, but now the election is over we can look ahead to some of the challenges and expectations facing Robert Nye and his new cabinet colleagues.

In his relatively short time as leader, Mr Nye has shown that he understands clearly the importance of Horsham's economy to the success and prosperity of the district as a whole, and that the council has a key role to play in creating strategies to help promote opportunities for



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local business.

It is important that the council presses ahead with the promised town framework to guide future development, and uses its considerable leverage to help to bring positive change over the next ten to 15 years.

The society has long argued that the town should be developed as a centre for culture and the arts, serving and reaching out to the wider district, and we look forward

to working with Jonathan Chowen, the new cabinet member for arts, heritage and leisure.

We hope to see future provision for an art gallery, for example, in the town framework; and early consideration of a major annual arts festival.

Ian Howard, responsible for living and working communities, has a huge portfolio encompassing among other things both strategic planning and development management.

This is logical in the sense that the best strategic planning is only as good as its implementation.

But the need to complete the review of the local development framework

core strategy, determine the number of new homes needed up to 2031 and decide where they will be built, while finalising the outcome of the consultation on new homes for Southwater and Billingshurst, suggests he will be a very busy man.

We will be keen to see the idea of a new market town, which has already been the subject of a joint feasibility study with Mid Sussex and Crawley, pushed ahead, as this is the only realistic way in which we can provide the new homes that will be needed in the future without overloading our towns and villages.

Mr Howard is also responsible for community engagement.

We will be interested to discuss with him how he sees the new policies of localism and the Big Society being applied within the district.

At one level it is reasonably clear how this might work in the smaller towns and villages which have a strong local identity, but how it might be applied within a large town such as Horsham is much less obvious.

Finally, there is still unfinished business. The East Street pedestrianisation needs tidying up, with the promised al fresco dining safe from the danger and pollution of passing traffic.

The Forum resurfacing, surely a candidate for the record book as the slowest

such project ever, will still leave a windswept and uninviting area which badly needs a rethink.

So, there's much for Robert Nye and his colleagues to get their teeth into. Decisions taken over the next year or so could shape the future of the town for the next two decades.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces. Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone, who shares these concerns. For more information, visit our website www.horshamsociety.org or telephone 01403 263870.