

What happened in 2011 and what's in store for us in 2012?

IT'S ALWAYS worth looking back to see what happened in a previous year as it gives you some idea of what you managed to achieve and the challenges that lie ahead. Some of our old friends from the past stayed in the news.

Work continued in Horsham's Forum throughout most of the year with the complete removal and replacement of the surface. We'll find out whether or not the problem of water leakage into the underground car park has been resolved in 2012. Unfortunately, the inadequate drainage from the surface of the Forum remains unresolved. Will this be addressed in the New Year or should we continue to avoid the area when it rains?

Towards the end of the year, the proposed closure of the Broadbridge Heath Leisure Centre caused a furore. No information was provided about income generation from the centre and the argument revolved around repair costs and alleged adequate facilities



by **David Moore**
chairman of the
Horsham Society

elsewhere in the district. There is no doubt that this issue will continue to dominate 2012.

At about the same time, the Town Hall shot back into prominence and the council has decided to put the building up for sale. Whatever happens, the main objective must be to ensure that the building is put back into use and not just left to decay.

The Government caused a great deal of debate with its proposal to simplify the planning rules. Unfortunately, the general view was that it gave too much priority to the developer and left our countryside relatively unprotected. The consultation document was also criticised by the select committee so it will be interesting to see

whether the Government will listen to these concerns in the months ahead.

We also saw the publication by the council of the Future Prosperity of Horsham Town report, which looked at how the town might be developed in the future, while at the same time protecting the historic centre of the town. This type of long range plan is essential if the town is to develop in a controlled way.

The rejection of the draft interim statement, which proposed housing developments in Southwater and Broadbridge Heath, created the risk of potentially uncontrolled house building in the immediate future. This risk remains until such time as the council completes its Core Strategy Review and identifies the housing requirements for Horsham district. This may well mean that more and more unsuitable planning applications are submitted in 2012.

Finally, we must not forget the possible

loss of one of our important green spaces, Muggeridge Field, which is adjacent to Chesworth Farm. West Sussex County Council wants to sell the area and allow it to be converted into a building site. An appeal on this proposal was heard by a planning inspector towards the end of 2011 and a decision is expected during January 2012.

The objections to this proposal were numerous but who knows what the outcome will be. We shall also find out whether the Government's localism agenda really means that the views of local people will carry greater weight in future.

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 261640.