



## Hart to Home

By Cllr. John Kennett

I was deliberately vague and understated in my comment last month about swings from major to minor parties in the County Council elections. I have undertaken not to be party political in these columns and also did not want to risk any charge of a self fulfilling prophecy. As you have probably read elsewhere, electoral turnout was generally down to about 31% and UKIP made gains in terms of votes. They gained some seats at County Hall but Conservatives retained control of the County Council and the election resulted in no changes in any of the six County electoral divisions covering the Hart District.

Hart District Council currently has no overall party in control but Conservatives are the largest group, with 16 councillors out of 35, and Conservatives form the eight person Cabinet. This will probably continue next year since the Leader, Ken Crookes, is very effective in engaging with and persuading councillors of other parties and it is doubtful if anyone would wish to do things very differently on the issues affecting the District Council. I say 'probably', but nothing is certain until the Council has held its Annual General Meeting on May 22<sup>nd</sup>; by the time you read this we will know the outcome (and also whether I retain my Cabinet seat in charge of Community Safety and Licensing)

Planning is one of the more contentious issues as the District wrestles with where to put the new houses it is having to provide for over the next 15 years. The Local Plan has been submitted to the Government Inspectors and now we must wait for any feedback from them.

Hart is backing a drive by the County Council to help residents get lower fuel prices by combining together for bigger group discounts. Over 8,000 homeowners have signed up so far and the more who do the stronger the negotiating position. Registration takes only a few minutes and does not commit you if you later decide that you do want to proceed. The first round closes on June 4<sup>th</sup>. but there will be a further round at the end of the summer. You can find out more at [www3.hants.gov.uk/switch](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/switch) or 01962 846828; you have nothing to lose and probably much to gain by signing up. The scheme is currently just for electricity and gas but there plans to extend it to oil and wood.

Lastly it was good to see Hart Council officers helping at the opening of the new 'SWAGA' games court in South Warnborough last month. Part of the funding for the court came from S106 money accumulated for the village by Hart and, in addition to helping with publicity and with games on the day, they will also be providing tennis coaching to help use of the court get off to a good start.

*If you would like advice on any matter relating to Hart District Council, please do not hesitate to contact me.*

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