

### **Pauline Batstone, County Councillor for Blackmore Vale Division's Report for August 2013**

1. August is traditionally a quiet month for Councillors with fewer meetings. The only formal meetings I have attended this month are Parish Councils in Hazelbury Bryan and Stourton Caundle and Town Council Meetings in Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge; a Personnel Appeals Committee at the County Council which considered staff gradings against market rates; and North Dorset Scrutiny Committee which examined the problems with play areas in particular which have arisen in a housing development in Shaftesbury.
2. I attended a meeting hosted by SturQuest to consider how the town may work with the developers to do something with the derelict land at the traffic lights in Sturminster Newton. The conclusion was that there is no easy answer and no temporary improvements are possible. There is still information that needs to be established about the status of the land. It is hoped that this site can ultimately be used to benefit the town as a whole, not just the owners of the land, but this will take some time to achieve.
3. With the Town Clerk and a fellow Town Councillor I met representatives of the County Highways Department to review parking for the disabled in Sturminster, and also the problems of traffic in Station Road. This was in response to the concerns of disabled drivers who have been warned they may not legally park in Station Road.
4. In addition to discussing parking with Highways, I was also treated to a trip round the roads in my Division with Roland Skeats, Technical Officer for our area, and his colleague. The aim of the trip was to examine particular problem areas in the patch and consider how matters may be improved. We met residents in Fifehead Neville and also Pulham who appreciated the opportunity to put their concerns to the officers. I hope to have a further trip out to the farthest reaches of the Division before winter sets in.
5. It was felt necessary to call an urgent meeting of the Blackmore Vale Travel Forum during August to discuss the County Council's proposals to cut bus subsidies. A further meeting is planned for the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 7.30 p.m., in The Chiverick Room at The Exchange, which is an open meeting, the aim of which is to draw up a response to the current consultation which ends on 24<sup>th</sup> September. Transport will be arranged through Nordcat for anyone needing transport to get to the meeting.
6. A particular hot issue at present is that of school transport for sixth formers. It is now compulsory for children to attend education or training until the age of 17 (to be raised to 18 in 2015). However it is the parent's responsibility to provide and pay for transport. Some school buses may have space to enable concessionary places to be provided for sixth formers but they have no right to these if other children under 16 need them. Parents had to apply for concessionary places by May, were promised a response by July but in fact appear only to have received notifications, generally refusals, on 29<sup>th</sup> September, under a week before the start of the new terms. At the time of writing this report I can offer no solutions.
7. On a lighter note the Friends of Stur. Library continue to work to increase the use of Sturminster Newton's library. A third "Evening with....." a local author is to be held on 10<sup>th</sup> September when Hilary Townsend of Stalbridge will be talking about her work. I have now met the new area manager for North Dorset, Manny Manoharan who is committed to extending the library service and promises to arrange training for volunteers to work in the Sturminster Library. Later this month I will also be attending a meeting in Dorchester with representatives of the community libraries, along with Tim Lee of Stalbridge.

Cllr. Pauline Batstone,  
2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2013.