

What's cooking?

We have been told that the Bayview caravan park restaurant is closing 'for the winter' because of commercial considerations. We wonder how rigorous was their original business plan. The Mayor continues to promise that the park is a fantastic asset to the town, a real money-spinner that he has promised will mean the end of the Council tax precept for Swanage within a few years.

We can see the possible benefits to the town, but are concerned at the way the business is being run at the moment. Hundreds of thousands of pounds have been invested, and apparently the town is at the moment in debt again. The unwarranted secrecy over these matters must worry all of us, especially those who can remember the farce over the Co-op site where the town ended up paying out, and where there were rumours of individuals misappropriating funds.

We call on the Council to make an open and frank disclosure of what's going on. It's OUR caravan park and we have a right to know.

Labour control freaks? Who says that bigger is always better?

Labour's attempt to control everything in huge organisational units spells danger. The latest victims are the Dorset Police force. They are currently being told that they must either amalgamate with all the other five forces in the South West to form one force, or have two forces in the south-west: one of which would be Devon and Cornwall; the other would be Dorset combined with Avon and Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. The status quo is evidently not an option.

Following on from plans to form bigger administrative units in the NHS, a pattern seems to be emerging. And it comes alongside statements in the recent Education White Paper that 'no more community schools will be established'. This apparently innocent statement means that if two schools should wish to amalgamate to ease the problems of falling rolls, they cannot remain with the Local Education Authority. They must either be run by business and other sponsors, or become Trust schools. Either way, financial control will come direct from London.

This all spells danger. Tax payers must know who is responsible for providing their police, their health and educational services. The basis of good government is to provide these at the most local level possible. British traditions going all the way back to Magna Carta support this.

Stop this nonsense!

School closures to be discussed



When they meet in December, a small number of Conservative councillors, who comprise the 'cabinet' of the Dorset County Council, will discuss whether to close certain local schools because of future falling rolls. Consultation meetings were held in Wareham in January and in June as part of 'The Great Debate'.

But it has been very difficult to find out what was going on both at the meetings and since. We do know that at the January meeting, officers were calling for 'a fundamental appraisal of the current pattern of two and three tier schools across Dorset'.

However, in June they said 'There are no reasons to move to a single pattern of education in Dorset' but that 'Purbeck was an area of concern'. This means that some of Purbeck's First or Middle Schools are at risk. The angry reaction in January to changing all the middle school (three tier) systems may have caused this shift of attitude. In Blandford, the Middle schools have already gone. The cost of doing this has been so great that one speaker there stated that the imposed change would take 34 years to pay for itself. So on the broad front, the county seems to have back-pedalled. But that still leaves Purbeck in limbo.

Liberal Democrats say 'Do not threaten our first and Middle Schools like this - unless of course you can prove that doing nothing will cause our youngsters to have an inferior education.'

Reverse traffic flow on Church Hill?

Despite being rejected by the Council 8 years ago, we believe it is now time to re-visit the idea of reversing the flow of traffic on Church Hill. This would enable drivers to reach south Swanage without going through the town centre.

The Lib Dems believe that with little effort and low cost, this could reduce congestion dramatically in the centre of town and make life easier (and safer) for all road users.

Apart from the will to act, it would take only a little effort and some minor works to make a change that would bring great benefit.

Talking rubbish

We remain unconvinced that the new scheme has been properly planned. We wonder if the fortnightly collection will work. If you have any problems please call the PDC helpline on 01929 557279.