

COUNCIL PRIORITIES: EMPOWERMENT, AAP, BETTER FACILITIES

Town Council Leader James Baldwin highlighted three priority areas for action as the Council embarks on its last year before the 2007 elections: winning more empowerment for the local community, winning a better Area Action Plan, and working to improve further existing facilities and develop new ones for the young and elderly.

James said that the Government would be issuing a White Paper in July on Local Government Reorganisation: 'This should mean more power to the Town's own Council, which means more power for the local community. We are actively working at a number of levels to make our views heard on the White Paper and are confident that, this time, Government will deliver reforms that decentralise power with the Town the winner.'

A continuing priority for the Council will be to safeguard the Town's interests in the debate on the District Council's Area Action Plan. James said 'We have a unanimous policy of opposing this excessive development and have defined in detail what we expect for the Town in terms of new infrastructure and the road. It's our job to lead the Town in winning on this vital issue in the face of what seems to be the District Council's continuing failure to listen. In doing so we want to work with all the Town's residents groups and develop a common approach to the fundamental issues of housing growth, traffic relief, infrastructure and identity – and a better Plan.'

James said the Council's third priority was to improve further the management of existing Council facilities and continuing work on the development of new facilities in the Town for the young and elderly. In particular, this will involve a review of the future funding of Chequer Mead to ensure value for money and continuing work to facilitate the development of a youth centre and new premises for Age Concern.

James concluded, 'we will ensure our work over the next year enables us to fulfil the programme set before the Town in 2003 and by doing so provide a powerful platform for the new Council that will be elected in May 2007.'

ENDS

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