



**LIBERAL
DEMOCRATS**

July
2007

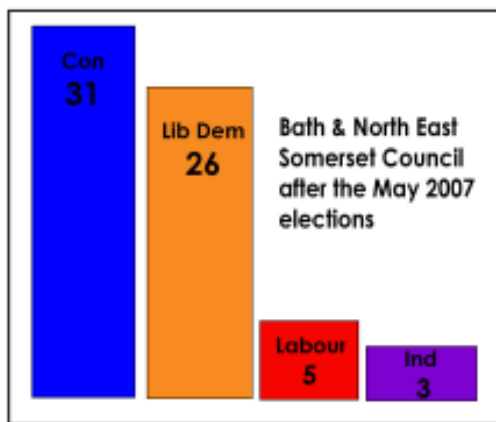
FOCUS

on Bathavon South

Edited by Neil Butters and the Bathavon South Liberal Democrats - Call us on 01225 832 256

Council now in Tory control

The winners of the May election were the Conservative Party - gaining seats from both the other parties. With 31 of the total 65 seats and the support of two Independent councillors, they have been able to take overall control of Bath & North East Somerset Council. Says Cllr Neil Butters, **"This is quite a departure for our Council. We have not had a party totally in charge since this Council was created in 1996! There will be clear accountability for once - not perhaps a bad thing"**.



The Tories now hold all the cabinet posts, which puts them in charge of all operational decisions. They also chair three of the five overview and scrutiny panels, which means they will be scrutinising their own cabinet decisions, as well as the - one - planning committee (see p.2).

They have promised financial savings, and towards that end, they have cut the number of full Council meetings from six a year to four, and the public cabinet meetings from 12 a year to six.

It is at these meetings that members of the public and councillors can speak out on subjects of particular concern to them - a chance to make sure that those who make the decisions hear you. There is considerable disquiet that such opportunities have now been slashed.

Thank you!



Newly elected Cllr Neil Butters with wife Charlotte Moore, on election night

A big thank you to Bathavon South residents for giving Lib Dem Neil Butters your vote - to succeed popular hard-working Gitte Dawson. He won the seat with a comfortable majority and a particularly high turnout (51%).

The result:

- ◆ Neil Butters (Lib Dem) 502 votes
- ◆ Harvey Haeberling (Conservative) 405 votes
- ◆ Janet Plater (Green Party) 189 votes.

Neil is very aware of the strong green vote on the day. **"I would like people to know that, like my predecessor, I personally care greatly about the environment and am keen to support green initiatives,"** said Neil.

Examples of what Neil would like to see happen in our Council:

- ◆ more recycling and less waste
- ◆ practical help and advice for those wishing to reduce their carbon emissions
- ◆ more sustainable buildings through stricter planning policies
- ◆ a campaign to reduce packaging and the use of plastic bags.

October visit to Parliament

Cllr Neil Butters and fellow South Stoke residents are organising a visit to Parliament on **Tuesday October 23rd**. There are still a few spare places!

This is an exciting opportunity for both adults and children with an interest in politics to visit both the House of Commons and the House of Lords while Parliament is in session.

There will be an official tour lasting about 1 1/2 hours, taking in both chambers and also the Queen's Robing Room. Local MP Don Foster will be on hand, as will at least one Lord.

The group will be travelling



South Stoke Village Hall appeal

The hall which serves South Stoke and Midford is increasingly well used but is now in need of major refurbishment (roof, floor, and the provision of facilities for the disabled). The Management

by coach, leaving South Stoke at 7 am. There will be a free afternoon – perhaps for a trip on the London Eye or a visit to a museum.



Bath MP Don Foster and Cllr Neil Butters will be there

Cost: £15 for children under 16; £20 for adults. Any profit will go to the South Stoke Village Hall appeal (see below).

Contact Neil Butters on Tel 01225 832256 or email CllrNeilButters@aol.com if you are interested.

Committee, backed by the Parish Council, have applied to the Big Lottery for funding.

But there is still a need to raise a significant sum of money locally. If you would like to help, please telephone 835100; you will be sent a form to enable the Hall to reclaim tax on your donation.

Thank you to Gitta



To mark her eight years of excellent service as councillor for Bathavon South Ward, local Liberal Democrats presented former councillor Gitta Dawson with a limited edition print by Charlotte Moore, at a special 'thank you' party in May.

Award for St Julian's - Wellow

Wellow primary school was pleased to receive a **Quality Mark** for its approach



to **Inclusion**. "Every Child Matters" is the theme of this programme, and Wellow was awarded this recognition as the result of a team of specialists visiting the school to observe the children and how they interact for a day. Cllr Neil Butters was pleased to be there in the Guildhall for the award ceremony.

Three planning committees into one

One of several economy measures introduced by the new Tory Council has been to abolish two out of three planning committees.

All applications are now heard by one single committee, at the Guildhall. The first meeting in May lasted eight hours!

Inevitably, more decisions will now be made by officers rather than the committee, and secondary issues like enforcement cases, performance reporting and policy debates will suffer.

Cllr Neil Butters wants to make sure that applicants and objectors get a fair hearing. Do contact him if you are concerned about a particular planning matter.

Remember you can now inspect planning applications, plans and comments from your PC at home - by visiting the Council's planning website, <http://planning.bathnes.gov.uk>.



Bin and green box back in their place after collection - with lids on. Too much to ask?

Improvements demanded on waste collections

Neil Butters is still pressing the Council for improvements to the re-organised waste collection service. **“It’s the issue that was raised most often on the doorstep”**, says Neil. **“Residents are having to do more - in putting out their own bins or sacks. Why can’t the dustmen do their bit - empty all the bins**

properly and put them back in their place, with their lids on?”

The same goes for the green boxes which are often left out in the road. There have also been serious shortcomings in the cardboard collections, many repeatedly being missed altogether.

Neil has asked for special monitoring in some areas and would like to hear from anyone still having problems.

Councillor visits Combe Down Stone Mines Project

Neil Butters has been learning all about the Combe Down Stone Mines Project - the five-year stabilisation programme designed to make the mines under Combe Down and part of Monkton Combe safe. Finance for this vast project, employing some 100 miners and due to be completed in 2009, came from English Partnerships.

Neil toured the mine with fellow councillor Cherry Beath who represents Combe Down.

Access to the mine is from the Firs Field which is currently almost entirely covered in construction huts, equipment



Cllr Neil Butters and a colleague on a tour of Combe Down Stone Mines

and material.

A major feature of the mines are rare bats. Great efforts are being made to ensure that the bats will continue to thrive.

No more free fridge disposal

There is now a fee for having your old fridge collected - in line with the charge for all other bulky refuse collections.

Up to three items of bulky refuse cost £21.60 to collect - and half that for concessions. Book your collection through Council Connect.

Is your dog causing a nuisance?



Some dogs bark much of the time during the day - inside houses or outside in

gardens - while their owners are perhaps out. This can be quite a nuisance.

If you have a dog - and if you are out during the day - are you sure this is not happening in your house? Do please consider your neighbours.

If you are suffering from this problem and cannot resolve it directly - do contact the Council's dog warden Kim McGarva on 396633. She may well be able to help.

Shared space approach to Freshford streets, too

Following the examples of Wellow and Norton St Philip, Freshford Parish Council has commissioned a study from Ben Hamilton-Baillie, champion of shared space traffic schemes, to see how this approach might be used to make Freshford safer.

The result was studied with interest by the Parish Council,

and plans are to present the various schemes to residents in a public presentation in the autumn.

Unfortunately such scheme are costly, and if the village wishes to pursue the ideas put forward then a major fundraising exercise will be required.

Tunnel open for a day

The Two Tunnels project was given a boost when the mile-long Combe Down Tunnel was opened up for a day in early July, courtesy of its owners, Wessex Water. Access was from Tucking Mill. Some 250

people made their way through in the course of that one day - including Neil Butters and Gitte Dawson, who chairs the project. All were impressed by the tunnel's good condition and excited that it might be open for good one day soon.



Three Midford lads getting kitted out ...



... and arriving safely at the other end

Visit www.twotunnels.org.uk for up-to-date information about this project

Two times Midford House, Midford Rd

The new NVQ Assessment Centre was looking for a name for its new home at St Martin's Hospital - and unfortunately hit upon "Midford House" - never mind there is already a Midford House in Midford Road, and has been for 500 years! Postal and travel chaos was the result.

The Primary Care Trust - chaired by Conservative Cllr Malcolm Hanney - saw no problem with this and initially refused to make a change - apparently just because some letterhead has already been printed!

Following pressure from various sources including the Bathavon South councillor, they did, however, finally relent - thus ensuring that patients don't suffer when their post goes astray or a taxi takes them to the wrong place.

Another 2,500 post offices to go

Despite massive protests all over the country, the Government has confirmed its decision to see a further 2,500 post offices closed, 1,000 of them in small villages.



The Government is looking only at the "loss-making" aspect of the post offices network, ignoring the important community and social inclusion benefits which it provides and which justify this cost. This policy will also kill many village shops in the process.

People in Freshford are already feeling this effect. Freshford Shop and Post Office has closed because its owners wish to retire, and Post Office Ltd have already announced that they will not provide a full-time post office again even when the proposed community shop comes into being. **"We were counting on getting a full-time post office back"**, said Gitte Dawson who co-ordinates these efforts, **"it will be much harder to make a community shop work with just a very part-time post office, especially as the existing shop was quite small"**.

The campaign group has now moved on to investigate three alternative sites that might accommodate a larger community shop.

Temporary post office for Freshford

Meanwhile, a temporary part-time post office is being set up above the surgery around the corner from the one-time shop. A visiting sub-postmaster will be providing post office services there for two mornings a week. It's due to open at the end of August.

Please tell us what you think!

Your comment / problem:

.....



NameTel.....

Address

.....Email

Return to
Cllr Neil Butters
 at Hillside Cottage, South Stoke,
 Bath BA2 7DN
 Email CllrNeilButters@aol.com
 Tel 01225 832 256