

## **Report for Brympton Parish Council – 27.10.10**

Everything seems to be changing and there is lots happening on the CUTS front. It looks as though the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October – gave general detail of the Rate Support Grant and Specific Grants to Local Authorities – suggesting a cut of 16% over 4 years. This as part of the savings of £81 billion over 4 years.

Somerset CC had a Scrutiny meeting set for 26<sup>th</sup> October – with the Agenda looking at Pupil Achievement and then the Medium Term Financial Plan with the various suggested cuts to the many County Council Services being declared. We received the bundles of papers yesterday morning and started the meeting at 10 am and finished after a small break for a sandwich at 6.45 pm. My longest Council meeting in 13 years.

Since the General Election the Coalition Government has had to borrow an extra £400 million every day. That is because for every £300 coming in the government is spending £400.

This financial year up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 an extra £150,000 million will have been borrowed and added to the National debt.

The Government aim is to stop adding to the National Debt and certainly not to repay it yet. The level of debt increase in this current year is by a wide margin bigger than any previous year.

There will now be a “Special” Cabinet Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November to agree the SCC “cuts” although the specific levels of funding for local authorities will still not be known. We believe that Somerset will be repaying debt and not taking on any more new debt – despite that being the way to fund new schools and expensive and necessary road repairs. It is therefore highly likely that the investment in roads will be cut by at least 50%, with the Capital Programm still be discussed next January.

We will then have a Full Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November to put the cuts suggested by Cabinet into effect. This will be much earlier than the normal February 2011 meeting – so that cuts can be made much earlier. This despite still not knowing at that point the amount really needed to be saved.

I believe that the “cuts” will be very deep and could be damaging to the people of Somerset. There are lots of other ways to save money that are not being explored. Which would include following the example of South Somerset District Council and joining with East Devon to have one Chief Exec and now they are having one Director instead of 2 for various parts of the core services. They keep their democratic identity intact but share management.

The County Farm saga continues with tenants being advised by letter a three weeks ago and the decision then being made public two weeks ago if individual tenants can buy their farm or not - with a massive discount. Those that cannot buy may have their farms which they rent sold onto a 3<sup>rd</sup> party (Crown Estates is a name mentioned).

I attended a Special Cabinet Meeting at the beginning of October at Bridgwater where the EDF proposals for the new Nuclear Power Station and the consultation were discussed. EDF were asked to provide more information to the people of Somerset and to consult further. Consultation for stage 2 closed on 4<sup>th</sup> October. It is possible that there will be a Stage 3.

We had a Scrutiny meeting mid October to consider health issues in Somerset. This includes new structures to replace the PCT and Children’s’ Heart Surgery units. Currently locally in Bristol & Southampton for the whole South West.

Sam Crabb  
27.10.2010