

## Dear Resident,

Since being elected on May 1<sup>st</sup>, life has been busy! The Council has provided all Councillors with laptops. I had to become computer literate within a week to deal with e-mails etc. My e-mail address is [fran.bennie@surreyheath.co.uk](mailto:fran.bennie@surreyheath.co.uk) and my phone number is **01276 61793**.

The big issue locally has been 'The Mast'. Regrettably like many other residents, I was away in August and unaware that the proposed re-siting of the mast had been put on the Planning agenda for Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August. I have expressed my concerns about the unfortunate timing of the Planning meeting, lack of time for the proper consultations and other questions for the Council to answer. It is all now down to the Trustees of the Fuel Allotments Charity who have to make the final decision whether or not to have it on their land. The newly formed Residents Action Group has done a brilliant job in a very short time to provide information and co-ordinate action.

*Fran*

## **FOCUS** on the Borough Council

### New 'Cabinet System' for Surrey Heath

Despite only having a majority of 4 out of 40, Surrey Heath Council is now run by a Cabinet system or 'Executive' consisting of 7 Councillors all from the Conservative group who are 'portfolio holders'. In addition there are Select Committees whose role it is to scrutinise their decisions. They have the power to "call in" decisions and question the Cabinet further. The system has its drawbacks – the call ins so far have been instigated and endorsed by the opposition groups only which is not the point of the system at all. Council is supposed to scrutinise these decisions – Party loyalties should not come into it.

The Liberal Democrat group has now formed a Shadow Executive Committee in order to monitor and scrutinise more effectively the decisions of the Executive.

Being a fairly new system we are all, Councillors and officers alike, getting to grips with it. In the end, the good of the Borough is all that matters.

## **FOCUS** on the UK

### War on Iraq

Nationally, the biggest issue has been the war on Iraq and the enquiry into the death of weapons expert Dr David Kelly. The Liberal Democrats were the only mainstream party to question the Government's motives for taking Britain to war and a large contingent including a number from Surrey Heath attended the 'Stop the War' demonstration in March. As well as being a principled stand, it has also proved popular. The Liberal Democrats now have 54 MPs following our victory in the Brent East by-election (our highest since 1923) and a recent ICM poll for the *News of the World* put the party on 31% (our highest for 14 years).



**Liberal Democrats – 'The Effective Opposition'**