

# Local Politics

BY JOHN HOLLIDAY

I recall suggesting, on my retirement as your councillor, that, with the new political makeup of the Council, we could be entering exciting times. This is beginning to happen. In March, I attended the Council meeting at which the existing Provost, Councillor Brisley, was deposed and the Labour/Lib-Dem Executive replaced with an SNP administration. This was purely a party affair, and Councillor Wood (SNP) who proposed the Motion of No Confidence took pains to point out that no slur on the personal performance of the Provost was intended.

Nevertheless, Provost Brisley took the matter personally and did her reputation no good by delivering a vituperative speech defending her performance rather than stepping down with dignity. The new Provost, Councillor Fergus Wood, once elected with Conservative support, gave an excellent speech of acceptance. In my time, the SNP had always insisted they would never work with the Tories.

I was glad to see that on Stirling Council at least sense has prevailed at last, even if it means long spoons all round. I understand that a joint Conservative/SNP administration had been considered but the Tories decided this was a step too far. Allowing the SNP to form a minority administration means the Tories will be able to influence policy and block left-wing policies. That's the theory. We will have to see how it works in practice.



They could start with the on-going question of the Bridge of Allan toilets. I was promised a report on these for November 2006. Here we are 2½ years later and still there appears to be no action, although the grapevine says "these toilets are recommended for demolition". If so, when will new toilets be built to replace them? For Bridge of Allan, tourism is an important part of the economy and public toilets are a necessary facility. We have four councillors with responsibility for Bridge of Allan. How about them getting together and moving things along at better than glacial speed? Provision of facilities such as this is one of the reasons we have a Council. Can anyone imagine a private sector organisation taking this long to sort out a similar problem?

The Keir Street tennis courts are in danger. These are a heavily-used facility provided

when we had our own Town Council. This had the interests of Bridge of Allan at heart, unlike Stirling Council, which appears to regard Bridge of Allan as a cash cow to fund its inefficiencies. Will the change of Administration affect this? Let us hope so.

In the meantime, I quote from Lord Penrose's Opinion on another matter (the Museum Hall): "If a community has developed and had the benefit of a wide range of facilities over its historical life it is likely that that has been the product of local pride and the application of locally generated resources. Reduction of all to the lowest common denominator is not an attractive policy." Precisely.

It might seem that the opening of the new rail link from Alloa to Stirling would be of only academic interest to Bridge of Allan, but in practice it could dramatically reduce the traffic through Bridge of Allan, mornings and evenings. My investigations during my time as your Councillor revealed that many of the commuters using Bridge of Allan station were not locals but came from along the Hillfoots. The choice was Stirling station (pay for parking) or Bridge of Allan (free parking) - no contest. We may expect that Alloa will now get their custom. The downside is that the extra space in our car park may attract commuters from Dunblane instead.

At least they will not clog up Henderson Street.

## Pullar Memorial Park - Volunteers Required

BY ANGUS CAMERON

You might be aware that the Community Council is considering a proposal to renovate the Pullar Memorial Park.

Briefly, the idea would be to upgrade the paths and planting, replace the original railings and gates to create a safer play environment for children and to make the park lockable. We would also remove the densest undergrowth to provide clear sight lines and to allow the beautiful specimen trees to flourish.

More contentious perhaps is the plan to create a small groundskeeper's building, which would include toilets and a community meeting space/schools study centre and which could also be used as a very small café space providing juices, teas

and coffees. I had a meeting with a member of the Heritage Lottery Fund in April and they are very supportive. It seems that we might be able to draw down up to £500,000 towards a total cost of £670,000 - the remaining funds would come from Historic Scotland and the Memorial Hall Fund.

As the next stage of the process we are setting up a small team to steer the project and help complete the funding application. The Friends of Pullar Memorial Park needs volunteers - members of the community who are enthusiastic about the scheme and who have a small amount of time to contribute. We are hoping, particularly at this stage, that there might be people with quantity surveying and drafting skills who wouldn't mind donating some of their time.

If you would like to help, please contact the *Times* or the Community Council, who will pass on your contact details.

There is a nationwide on-line survey taking place into park and open space use. Enter 'greenstat' into Google you will find it. Select 'Scotland' in the region menu then 'Stirling' from the list of councils. Once you have been given the chance to give your name (optional) you come to a page which allows you to select two questionnaires - the one in the yellow box is the one we are interested in as it brings up a survey specific to our park.

The kind of information you can provide in this survey will be hugely valuable when we begin to officially apply for funding.