

A new Head of Planning has now been appointed, is due to start in February and should therefore be in place to steer the SWDPR through the Inspector's Examination. Meanwhile the Planning Improvement Group's suggestion that there should be a standing committee to monitor Planning performance has been rejected by the Executive in spite of support for the idea from Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It is, however open to reconsideration in six month's time and in the meantime the PIG will continue its work with the same enthusiasm.

The agreement to commencing a public consultation on a new CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) on new developments was sought at the last Council Meeting, but a decision was referred back to a subsequent meeting due to a feeling that further consideration of the details by councillors was needed. A total of £1.9 m has been received to date under the existing scheme and is supplemented by the £1m allocated for infrastructure from additional government grants. The Transport policy which will also support the SWDPR is still awaited.

The five year Medium Term Financial Plan has been approved and it was revealed that the Council will have to find savings or additional income of £1.5m over that period to avoid cuts in services.

The first set of grants to rural businesses from funds provided by central government has been approved with successful applications from Astley Vineyard situated in the ward, plus the Save The Bell group which is supported by many local people.

Finally, we should like to wish all villagers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.