

## **County Council News – East Gartree**

### **NEMA flight paths and noise ...**

The second consultation on the proposed new airspace flight paths over south east Leicestershire ended on 10<sup>th</sup> January. In a recent letter from Charlotte Atkins MP, Minister for Aviation, I was told that unless NEMA makes changes to their original proposals as a result of the consultation, the decision by the Civil Aviation Authority last August to approve the flight paths will stand. I understand that the earliest likely date for introducing the new flight paths is April 2005. NEMA is the only airport in the UK permitted to have 24 hours a day flights delivering urgent parcels and fresh vegetables, fruit and flowers overnight.

The County Council is leading a local authorities working party (next meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January) which includes representatives from districts both within and outside Leicestershire. This group has been working with NEMA and external consultants to draw up measurable tests against which NEMA can be assessed. These include reductions in night flights and noise levels. Should NEMA not meet these locally agreed tests, then the group is committed to requesting, in collaboration with MPs from across the whole area and all parties, that the airport be designated under section 78 to 80 of the Civil Aviation Act (1982). This means the Government would define the times when aircraft could use the airport. Currently only Gatwick, Stansted and Heathrow are so designated. Other airports have voluntary local agreements to restrict night flights.

Is there anything you can still do? Yes, if you have access to the internet, or can ask a friend to let you use theirs, or use a PC free in your local library, you can register your name and address on the DEMAND website petition: [www.demand.uk.net](http://www.demand.uk.net) This new campaign website is dedicated to Demanding East Midlands Airport is Now Designated and has supporting letters from numerous local MPs, Councillors and environmental groups.

### **2005/6 Council Tax increase**

Last month I warned that poor Government funding of the County Council might penalise Leicestershire tax payers. Following receipt of the details of the central Government grant (64% of the total £500m budget), the County Council remains the lowest funded Education Authority in the country, and is 148<sup>th</sup> out of 150 for Social Services funding. Leicestershire has very few wards with high deprivation levels and so is penalised on the current funding formula. In addition, the census figures for 1991 are still being used despite this being 2005!

Despite these major funding hurdles, the County Council, in December, was placed in the highest possible category of “Excellent” by the Audit Commission in terms of the quality of services, its management and leadership.

The Cabinet of the County Council have recommended a Council Tax rise of 2.9% for 2005/6 for the County portion. This figure has to be ratified by the Full Council in February following scrutiny and discussion with other members of the council. This figure would be the third successive annual reduction. I am pleased to have been part of the administration that has insisted that, while the quality of core services is retained, tough efficiency and cost saving measures are used to reduce the tax increase to be lower than inflation. This should particularly help those on inflation linked pensions and fixed incomes.

### **Contacting me**

I work during the day if I am not on County Council business, but am usually home in the evenings and weekends if not at one of the many parish council meetings across the East Gartree area. The best way to contact me is by email, but failing that phone me in the evenings and leave a message if my answerphone is switched on.

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