

# The Apathy Of Municipal Electors

## Only One in a 1,000 Gave Views On Roundabout

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WHAT was described as a "money saving" scheme for the layout of pit site roundabout was put forward by Coun. John Smith at Monday's meeting of Christchurch Citizens' Association.

Coun. Smith, who is to put the scheme before the next meeting of Christchurch Council, suggests that tenders be invited from reputable landscape gardeners in the district for the layout of the roundabout on terms that the successful tender cultivates and maintains the site at their own expense for a period not less than three years. In return for this, permission would be given for the firm to erect four small advertisement boards indicating they were cultivating the site.

The firm, he explained, would also be paying rental to the Council for use of the site and in this case, the highest tender could probably be accepted.

The Council would not have to pay a penny for the lay-out, and it would mean a first-class floral display plus a rental.

### NOT DECIDED

Coun. Smith said the Council had not yet decided on a scheme for the site. Now was the time for ratepayers to decide whether his scheme was worthwhile.

Earlier in the meeting, Coun. Peter Brand had also referred to the roundabout. He mentioned the two schemes which were on public view and on which public opinion was invited.

"Out of 25,000 people in Christchurch, only 25 troubled to express their views in writing to the Town Clerk," said Coun. Brand. "This, I think, is just one example of the apathy of municipal electors.

It was still not too late, however. "Think it over again and then write to the Town Clerk. Do you want to spend £2,700 on a fountain? If not tell the Town Clerk that you don't."

Coun. Brand said he would oppose the spending of £2,700 because he did not think it was in the best interests of the ratepayers.

Monday's meeting was called to give a platform to candidates at the forthcoming municipal elections.

Retiring members, who are being returned unopposed, present at the meeting, were Councillors Barrington Myers (Central Ward), Peter Brand (Jumpers) and B. E. Mulhall (Highcliffe).

### NEW CONTESTANTS

New contestants on the platform were Mr. Ede England (Liberal, Mudeford), Mr. Eric N. Spreadbury (Conservative, Mudeford), and Major Vyner Joseph Thorndike (Conservative, Somerford). It was stated that an invitation had also been sent to Mr. John Higgins (Labour, Somerford) but the association had not had a reply from him.

Chairman was Mr. C. W. Hawkes.

The speakers touched on a variety of subjects: More control for Christchurch, a face lift for the town, more light industry, adequate recreational facilities and a "brake on spending."

Major Thorndike said he stood as Conservative candidate for Somerford—"But there is no party whip in this borough, therefore I am free to vote as my conscience dictates."

He believed he could assist in the well governing of the borough, but he did not promise that rates would be reduced or that should he enter the Council chamber everything would be immediately changed to rosy colours.

Christchurch was an area of much beauty and ancient charm. This, he said, should be maintained to the fullest extent.

As a retired master builder and civil engineer, he believed he could contribute towards this end. He had specialised knowledge of the problems which arose in the adequate provision of suitable housing. He had also built private houses which had to conform to strong density and by-law regulations.

## DISTURBING RUMOURS

Christchurch, added Major Thorndike, was mainly dependent on one or two large industries, and he was aware of the disturbing rumours of changes which could lead to unemployment and distress. To avoid this, smaller units of light industry must be encouraged.

He was sure this problem was already very much in the minds of the Council. He hoped the rumours were being noted and that active steps were already being taken to combat eventual possibilities,

Mr. England said he made no secret of the fact that he was a newcomer. He had no direct experience in local government except that his father was a councillor for 25 years.

"What do you want?" he asked, "A tub-thumper or a man with solid commonsense and one who has had many years in business and in other walks of life—one who knows the 'seamy side' of life as well as the bright side?"

He could see it would be his job to represent everybody, whether they voted for him or not, and to deal with anything which came before the Council with impartiality, honesty, efficiency and with some sense of humour.

## NO WILD PROMISES

Mr. Spreadbury said he would make no wild promises, "I offer my electors a normal and sensible working family man, buying his own house."

There were two main committees of the Council on which he had particular interest—planning sub-committee and beach. "Mudeford sinks or swims through the planners." As a draughtsman he did not think he would be a square peg in a round hole if he were on the planning sub-committee.

He would like to serve on the Beach Committee because he had a personal interest in the beach. His children used the beach and he knew of things which needed to be done there.

## "FACE LIFT"

Coun. Mulhall said his theme was more control for Christchurch and a face lift for the town. As a town of 25,000, Christchurch had roughly something like 40 per cent. of control, but as the town became larger there was a need for more control.

The town was to have delegated planning control in October this year, and he was hoping that a Divisional Education Executive Committee would also be added to the list in the not too far distant future.

A move had been made to give High Street a face lift. He hoped that in time this could be extended to other parts of the town. He could see a future for Bargates, Barrack Road needed tidying up and he would like to see Purewell, at present an eyesore, something like the Princes Street of Edinburgh with a vista to the south of grassland and trees and a tidying up on the north side.

Coun. Barrington Myers said the Council was not there solely to make a profit so that rates did not go up. They must be prepared to pay for amenities. There were other things that mattered besides revenue producing projects.

A sewage disposal works was not an attractive amenity, but it was a very necessary one, and as such they had to pay for it. A great deal of the Council's money was spent on public amenities such as this.

## FLORAL DECORATIONS

Until 1948, he continued, there was not a single public flower in Christchurch. But last week the Clerk to the County Council had described the town's floral decorations as surpassing any he had seen in the county. The ratepayers were paying for that. It was not revenue producing, but in a remote way it attracted people to the borough.

The Pit site roundabout was the hub of Christchurch. Money was being spent on the site in beautifying the spot and showing that it could be attractive instead of an eyesore. This could not be classed as a revenue producing project, but it was money well spent. The meeting decided to send a letter to Canon R. P. Price, Vicar of Christchurch, hoping that he would soon recover from his illness. Ald. Miss E. I. Padwick, Mayor elect, was congratulated on her election to the town's aldermanic bench.