



Developers need to help their community

There are many new developments currently underway in and around Horsham. There will be thousands more houses over the next couple of decades which means a massive population increase.

Most of these houses will be relatively expensive. We all recognise the need for affordable homes but often homes are built for the (relatively) rich.

Nevertheless, our new housing estates will not be full of childless couples. Maybe, to start with, few of the new residents will be able to afford to start a family having just bought a new house. But there is no indication that, after a very few years, the estate will not be complete with families just like anywhere else.

Usually, the developer will be committed to provide various 'infrastructure' for his new development and this should include community facilities.

A good developer will recognise that such 'add-ons' will help sell their houses. Berkeleys in Southwater have built quite sumptuous new sports facilities.

But sport is not all. A fully-functioning



Scouts and Girl Guides taking part in Sunday's Remembrance Parade in Horsham

community also needs facilities for other activities such as play groups and things for young people to do. Recently there has been concern about lack of activities for young people, letting them drift into minor crime and civic misbehaviour.

The Scout Association (with its sister organisation, Girl Guiding UK) is far and away the largest youth organisation in the country. Just in and around Horsham we have more than 1,400 young people aged six to 18 in 15 Scout Groups with more than 500

adult volunteers supporting them (and 250 youngsters waiting to join). Each of the new housing developments would justify a new Scout group, with its own headquarters in use five evenings a week plus some weekend activities.

Obviously Scouting does not appeal to every youngster but it is a good start with some not-too-onerous rules and worthwhile mores. In a fully functioning community there should also be play groups (which might use the same building during the

daytime), fitness groups and social clubs, all of whom need a base to meet and, often, storage space for equipment for their specialist activities. These are all voluntary organisations, perhaps registered charities with little or no income except what their members themselves can contribute.

When it comes to resources, the developers are the ones with the money as well as the materials and (hopefully) the expertise.

It would be a real contribution to our local communities and to the long-term wellbeing of our children if our local authorities (for example our elected councillors and their officers) would agree to put pressure onto the developers of these large housing estates to provide the facilities for our young people. They could, in exchange, get considerable kudos for their 'good works'. In the longer term, there would be less chance of juvenile crime and antisocial behaviour (the Devil makes work for idle hands).

Developers come and go in a few years but our local authority is always with us. So how about persuading its officers and members to make sure we get the community assets which we need?