

## The Diary.

Last month the Council held its annual Policy Seminar. This session is one of the few "closed" meetings during which Members have the opportunity to review the direction that the Council is moving. It is fair to say that many Councillors expressed strong views in particular with respect to the pedantic movement over the development at Stanton Cross (WEAST). I have for some time expressed the view that we should buy under a Compulsory Purchase Order the land currently being used for a ransom to the east of the Station. Apparently we cannot buy land that already has planning consent, not sure why that is the case. Other issues included the levels of crime in the area, the town centre re-development program and of course the reaction to the very disappointing news that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) gave formal notification that no funding would be available to re-locate the Tresham College I know the Director Mark Silverman is very frustrated but a far bigger problem is the mess it makes of the re-development of the town centre as many issues and projects depended on the college moving to the High St site. We now know that the LSC has funding shortfalls in excess of £2 billion, how on earth can that have happened.

## Council Meetings

At the last full Council meeting in September we had a representation by the prospective Labour Party candidate for Wellingborough, on the subject of no-inflammable waste bins. I did not know that in the borough there have been some 30 fires in waste bins over the past year or so. I understand most of these are started deliberately but only a year or so ago a young boy died as a result of a waste bin burning adjacent to his home. It seems to me that we should be tackling the problem of the idiots who dare to set fire to the bins as well as the material of construction. Waste bins currently cost the Council around £30:00 each dependant on quantities. I would imagine that non-inflammable ones would cost a great deal more and to replace all of them in our Borough would probably be in the region £4 million and most likely a Council tax increase to cover the cost, not, I think, possible in the current climate.

## Planning

It was my "turn" to be on the site viewing Committee in September. One application of interest to most, was that of the "Affordable Homes" development in Little Harrowden. I mention this by way of discussion because soon an application will be made for Affordable Homes in Sywell, followed by Ecton and Mears Ashby. Now the issue for me is that the formula for the "needs assessment" is quite reasonable and covers the elderly who may wish to down size and thereby release other property to the market, the second group would be the youngsters who at the time wish to stay in the village but cannot afford to do so and finally there is single parent families who may qualify. By definition these groups are some of the most vulnerable and should be "assisted" wherever possible. The development at Little Harrowden was approved and will begin fairly soon. My issue is with the design and so called sustainability of these properties. For example it is a known fact that (even in our climate) Solar Panels for water heating do save substantially on energy, the downside is that the capital cost of installation is difficult to amortize however the capital cost during construction is significantly less than for retrofitting. The point really is that affordable should not just mean in terms of acquisition costs but also running /maintenance charges and I am encouraging the developers to the view that the developments should be to the highest standards and not a median of moderation.

## Development Committee

This committee has a very important remit in the strategic thinking of the development of the borough and recently, as mentioned before, the Town Centre has been given a great deal of time and energy and justifiably so. We are now at the stage of selecting all of the different types of furniture for the areas within the development plan. Hopefully this will be done by the sub-committee ready for presentation at the next meeting followed by approval from the full Council. In addition the committee were asked to consider an application to provide funding of some £250,000 to "work up" a plan of action to create a Science/High Tech Business Park within the borough, there followed a very serious discussion before approval, in principle, was given to create a first stage plan including marketing and site viability.

## Audit & Performance

This committee has a responsibility to monitor all aspects of the Council and regularly holds departments to account both in terms of finance and performance. This time it was Finance and in particular the accounts for the year ending April 2009. The accountants KPMG were producing their last report as apparently there is a process that the auditing accountants are rotated to maintain fiscal probity. The report was, as the auditor stated on hold, because of a valuation anomaly. It seems that the Audit Commission has a habit of changing the rules on how assets are valued and in this particular case the Asset register had been re-valued according to the new guidelines but it was uncertain whether they should be re-valued retrospectively since the re-valuation was a correction (to the

better ) of some £14 million. It was felt appropriate that due consideration should be given to this point and KPMG were requested to report back to us at the next meeting.

#### Council for the Protection of Rural England CPRE

This committee meets on a quarterly basis and reviews a whole raft of issues from windfarms, new roads and all of the development areas in the County. Broadly representative of all of the areas of the Northants there are some interesting discussions. The meeting had a presentation on windfarms the logic being that there is a requirement for a national CPRE policy on the generation of electricity from wind. We do of course have what appears to be a reasonably efficient site at Burton Wold and Kettering Council are proud of the performance of this site. It does however seem that the wind levels around our county are not that conducive to many more windfarms. The group decided to set up a sub-committee to garnish as much data as possible for the next meeting.

Sywell Aerodrome was also discussed as was the West Northants Emergent Core Strategy more of this below.

#### West Northants Joint Planning Committee

I mentioned in my last missive that I felt that there were major flaws in the emerging strategy documents. It looked rushed and missing some fundamentals, such as "Where were all of these people coming from? Where is their employment coming from? Who is funding the infrastructure?" It is therefore great news that the County Council has rejected the Emergent Core Strategy for number of simple reasons. But everybody should be aware that the West Northants Planning Committee had not voted on the document anyway. The rejection is for review not cancellation but it is hard to see how all of the development as justified anyway.

There has been a rise in the speculation of the potential sale of land in the Parish of Sywell, you will be aware that all Planning for this Borough is done through Wellingborough BC not through West Northants JPC. That being the case those speculators hoping to make a "killing" can forget it until the next review of the CSS which is not likely to be before 2021 and hopefully under the guidance of a Conservative Government!

#### Sywell Aerodrome JCC

The next meeting of the JCC will be held in Sywell Village Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> November it is scheduled to start at 18:00 which I appreciate is a little early but I understand some of the aviators have to travel distances to get home. I am hoping we can have a Public Q & A at around 19:00. The meeting is scheduled to end at 20:00. **Everybody is welcome but you may need to get there early as I am sure there will be great interest.**

I mentioned in my last Missive that Sywell Aerodrome Ltd had made a formal complaint about my conduct with respect to their business, there is now a degree of crystallisation of the allegations. I list them below:

- 1) I am using my "office" to pursue a personal vendetta against Sywell Aerodrome.
- 2) I am using my "office" to make various enquiries of public bodies to obtain information that would not otherwise be available to a member of the public.
- 3) I am attempting to use the authority of the Council in my investigations and have been trespassing on private land and have instigated investigations with the aim of harassing/harming the business of SAL.

I already have a significant amount of support via Parish Council's, I am of course representing your views as stressed during my election campaign in September and October 2007. I look forward to your comments and individual support in this matter.

In the meantime SAL has admitted (in the evidence to the above) that the new All Weather Runway does not comply with the Secretaries of States Decision to allow an "**All Weather covering of the existing 03/21 Runway**". In fact they say that it complies with an abstract drawing used in evidence but never referred to in the Decision Letter or the Conditions. This refers to a **re-aligned 03/21** not an existing 03/21 runway. Now it is my belief that only one of these statements can be "true". I have to believe the Secretaries of State knew what they were doing.

As ever if you have any queries please contact me and remember, I cannot help you if I do not know of your problem. I shall, however, be away until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November.

*Jim Bass*

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This Missive can now be seen on the following web sites:

[www.ectonvillage.co.uk](http://www.ectonvillage.co.uk)

[www.mearsashbyparishcouncil.com](http://www.mearsashbyparishcouncil.com)