

Borough Councillor's Missive. April 2010

The Diary.

Every now and then I get an invitation to a really worthwhile function, last month I was invited to the Wellingborough Schools Business Dragons Den Competition held at the Castle Theatre. The competition was the Wheelie Bin Fire Reduction Challenge 2010. In 2006 a young boy died in Wellingborough as a result of some imbecile setting fire to the contents of a wheelie bin which just happened to be located beneath the child's bedroom window. The boy died of asphyxiation it was an absolute tragedy. The Council together with other Councils in the area have been testing many ideas to resolve the problem. But the students of Wrenn, Hatton Weavers and Friars schools were asked to put their minds to solving the problem. Weavers were the winners. Interestingly the themes of the solutions were similar from all of the schools, generally focussing on communication, education and advertising.

Later in the month we visited the Top Lodge facility of the Forestry Commission at Fineshades and saw a very interesting exhibition of sculpture using chain saws! Also an equally fascinating exhibition of axemanship which included chopping a "V" slot in the trunk, inserting a piece of wood with a metal "spring" into the slot and standing on the wood to repeat the process!!!!!!!!!!!!

Council

This month is a fairly quiet month being the start of the change of the Council year I am undecided which committees to sit on this time so I shall have to wait and see. The Leader of the Council was re-elected at the Tory Group AGM and we have announced that Joe Hubbard currently Deputy Chief Executive is appointed as the Interim Chief Executive.

Partnership Review

This month we had a presentation by the new Head of Highways, Peter Farquhar, many will consider this to be a very topical subject and so it turned out to be. A lot of detail was discussed for example as a result of the Government edict, how they managed to save nearly 50% of the salt by mixing it 1:1 with grit and achieving a similar result. Just goes to show "in adversity" etc etc. But far more importantly was the Highways budget I was staggered to learn how small the sums of money that were involved. For the Winter Gritting program including cost of vehicles, wages and grit etc a total sum of £1.28 million was the budget, to repair all of the roads in the County an annual sum of £10 million, for re-surfacing a sum of £13 million. I was shocked at these figures as the cost of the repairs is generally reverted back to the utilities company's who were responsible for the "hole" in the first place. I did suggest that the number of times Overstone and Sywell Road had been dug up in the past five years would have justified laying a "conduit" down the full length with junctions to the footpath thus preventing any further road works. Maybe it will be considered as I understand new estates are fitted with such conduits.

Billing Anglia Water Authority Sewage Treatment Plant

This month we had the most unsavoury release of odours for some time from the plant and the people of Ecton were subjected to a most obnoxious permeation of their properties by the odours. I have asked Officers at WBC to look into the problems. Unfortunately the plant is not within the District so I have contacted elected colleagues in Northampton Borough Council who inform me they will begin another Scrutiny and Task Force Working Group, hopefully they will invite me to attend.

Sywell Aerodrome

I have now completed the Defence and Counterclaim against the allegations made by the Company, subject to editing it will comprise some 25 pages of my text and about 100 evidential documents. I want to publicly thank colleagues for their editorial skills in assisting me put the file together. More interestingly the "investigation" throws up many more issues than I had first thought. For example

Ancient Woodland is protected from any form of development by Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation 2005, which states:

Ancient Woodland and Other Important Natural Habitats

*10. Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. Local planning authorities should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection (e.g. as a SSSI). **They should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in its loss or deterioration unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location outweigh the loss of the woodland habitat.** Aged or 'veteran' trees found outside ancient woodland are also particularly valuable for biodiversity and their loss should be avoided. Planning authorities should encourage the conservation of such trees as part of development proposals.*

As ever if you have any queries please contact me and remember, I cannot help you if I do not know of your problems.

Jim Bass

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

www.ectonvillage.co.uk

www.mearsashbyparishcouncil.com