

Borough Councillor's Missive. June 2010

The Diary.

In last month's Missive I wrote that in May we had entertained the Burgermeister of our twin town Wittlich in Germany or to be more precise the Rhineland Palatinate. This month I was fortunate to be one of the members of Wellingborough Council to enjoy the reciprocating hospitality given by the Burgermeister, his charming wife and staff. Wittlich, on the edge of the Mosel wine region is an almost classical German town. Although my first perception was of a great similarity to places I had visited in Bavaria, I hope neither is offended! Nestling astride a small river tributary to the great Mosel River the trip from the airport was through masses of vineyards on very steep hills. Mentioning the airport reminded me about the time I used to use Ryan Air frequently, on this occasion we did not just touchdown, we hit the ground running, ah beware the novice pilot. Immediately after our arrival in the town we were whisked off to a restaurant to meet parties from France, Holland and the old East Germany, in all probably about 50 people. We all enjoyed a meal of Pizza then returned to the old market place and had beers etc. The market square was filled with people enjoying themselves and it was great to join in. With music until the early hours we were grateful when it stopped as my room faced the market square. On the Saturday morning we visited the Bitburger Brewery in the town of Bitburg and sampled the beer at the same time, why would you not? Apparently the water used for this beer comes from deep in the ground, I believe around 300metres, giving the beer its unique taste. The evening of Saturday was the formal banquet. Many speeches and translations gave me another opportunity to practice my French, which I always maintain improves as the wine bottle empties!

Council

By the time you read this Missive the Chief Executive of Wellingborough Council will have retired. It is an open secret that she did not enjoy the full support of the Administration of Conservative Councillors, as a relatively "new kid on the block" this view was put to me early, following my election. However I rarely accept the view presented as a "fait accompli" without justification and evidence. It is undoubtedly the engineer in me that demands answers before I reach my own informed decision or position. This case was no different but was perhaps assisted by some comments the CE made to me after my second Council meeting, when I had asked some questions about the airport and in particular the JCC. She said "how far is this going to go about Sywell Aerodrome" to which I replied "as far as it takes". There were also many other issues I and my other elected colleagues were fundamentally opposed to, which were proposed by the Executive of the Council. For example the Wellingborough North development project, the way that Stanton Cross (WEAST) was progressing and the Town Centre regeneration project. WEAST was already "approved" as was the Town Centre project before I was elected. But neither were making any progress WEAST in particular was a complete "dogs dinner" with land being bought in a free for all such that we, as a Council, lost control. The Town centre project is a little more complex in particular in terms of timings, materials and aesthetics. We have some good people in the Planning Dept but having met most of them I could not see how we had the capacity to handle all of these projects at the same time and produce quality at such a level that would improve the aspirations of the community, after all if we cannot improve quality, then I do not believe we should begin to make changes. We now know that with the change in Government the Regional Spatial Strategy is to be dropped and rightly so, hopefully returning control of all development back to the local community. I am not against development but I am against it being forced on us, indeed I support development of the right size and in the right place. Size must suit demand and not speculative Development and location must suit the community. Simple really, but what happened to commonsense? Let's hope it is on the way back.

Planning

Last month I mentioned "retrospective planning" as becoming more prevalent, there is another issue related to planning which in my view is just as important, that is the enforcement of Planning Conditions. Once again last month our friends in Ecton had to endure the most obnoxious odours from the Waste Water Treatment Plant at Billing. This is totally unacceptable. I know the CLEAN group are working hard on this matter and they have my total support. Interestingly, although Ecton is within Wellingborough Councils area, it seems that WBC have no records of complaints of smells. I am now informed however that a record of complaints is now being kept. I do not know how long these odours have been permeating Ecton but it is as long as I can remember. The old sewage plant

was of Victorian standards and was guaranteed to produce odours as the sewage flowed in through a large pipe some 4 feet in diameter into an open pond! My visit there nearly two years ago left a lasting impression but we were told that the new plant, then in the planning stage, would solve all of the problems of odours. Unfortunately this turns out not to be the case as the recent odour came from the new part of the plant and apparently was a result of a "seal" failure.. that's for sure!! The project of the new treatment plant was handled by West Northants Development Corporation on behalf of Northampton Borough Council. In my work as a Member of the West Northants Joint Planning Committee (WNJPC) (not to be confused with WNDC) I will be endeavouring in the next few weeks to get the issues of this failure resolved, I will meet with colleagues at NBC to see what steps can be taken to enforce the Planning Conditions.

On the same subject, Sywell Aerodrome Ltd has applied to Northants County Council to extend the time allowed for the import of materials to continue land levelling at Sywell Aerodrome. Following a substantial, number of complaints over the past few years I have formally objected to this extension and the Leader of the Council has supported my views. There is also a secondary issue on this subject and that is the flooding of the Holcot Lane roundabout (such as it is). There is no doubt in most people's minds that the flooding has increased over the past few years and it is no rocket science to state that if the surrounding land level is raised then water will run to the lowest point in this case it looks like Holcot Lane. The drains have clearly reached capacity and therefore before any further importation should be allowed this problem needs to be resolved.

Sywell Aerodrome Joint Consultative Committee

I know that very few people, in particular the elected representatives, are satisfied with the way the Committee is operating. It is obvious that the committee is not complying with the DfT Guidelines, neither is it compliant with S106 Planning Conditions. This month we received the "Minutes" of the April meeting, as usual six weeks after the meeting and four weeks after the date we were informed they would be done. These were "minutes" with a difference; in this case they were a verbatim transcript from the audio recording of the meeting, some seventeen pages! Was that because a member of the audience thought they should be posted on the Public Notice Board! It was equally obvious that the Chairman who stated in his own words that he does not understand "Noise Monitoring". If this is true what on earth is he doing in the chair.

Sywell Aerodrome

The long awaited Court Hearing occurred last week. I will not bore you with the minutia, suffice to say just two sentences. The Judge asked me how many witnesses I would be bringing I stated at least ten he then asked the MD how many will you be bringing, he said one. The judge stated he was of a mind to "strike out" the allegations and then instructed the MD to get a lawyer!! The case has now been referred to the multi-track Chancery Court in Birmingham.

The management team organising the aerobic competition between July 15th and 18th have been in contact with me and have agreed that the location for the actual aerobics will be in "box" to the north east of the control tower. Hopefully we can enjoy the competitions without the accompanying noise.

I want to take this opportunity of thanking all of you who signed the petition in support of my actions on SAL it looks like more than 80% support within Sywell and Mears Ashby. Plus the formal support of Ecton and Overstone Parish Councils and Hardwick Parish Meeting.

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

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

www.ectonvillage.co.uk

www.mearsashbyparishcouncil.com