

# **Borough Councillor's Missive February 2011**

## **The Diary.**

This month as for the previous few months there has been a great emphasis on economics in particular how we can handle the reduction in income from Central Government over the next few years. My grandmother would have been able to tell us how not to get into the mess we are in but then she had some commonsense and understood the simple term of balanced budgets because she could not spend more than granddad brought in! Yet here we are in 2011 with some Wellingborough Councillors screaming about cuts and destruction of services, interestingly one wrote today "*Yet again another load of cuts! When will it end?*" My reply and I am sure that of most with a grain of financial knowledge was quite simple "When we stop spending more than we earn". The charade of the last government to continue to borrow at a rate nobody else in the free world would even contemplate has been totally exposed and they are now a source of ridicule. But back to WBC or BCW if you prefer, in January a draft paper was issued looking at the potential areas of the Council Budget which could be considered for reduction, the paper in itself was confidential not because it was "secret" as recorded in the local press but because its contents had not at the time been agreed for public consideration. The minutiae had to be approved by the Members before it was released, one member in the opposition decided he was not going to allow the process to work properly and decided to disgrace himself at Council and make a complete fool of himself thereafter. His idea apparently was to try to expose what he understood to be a further raft of redundancies amounting to 100 employees within the Council. This not surprisingly led to an extremely angry batch of exchanges and in particular deep concern by many of the staff at WBC, as a result we are still awaiting the promised apology. What actually happened was that a draft document outlining a number of jobs which were being questioned were listed in the paper but the jobs total did not equate to the number of potential redundancies as many staff "multi-task".

## **Planning**

Three applications in the West Ward gave me concern this month, two in Mears Ashby and one in Ecton.

The Ecton issue considers an application for a completely new development within the conservation area and the Parish Council are totally opposed to the building on the grounds of over development. It is very difficult to argue against this point as the amount of space being taken up by the building will swamp the piece of land.

In Mears Ashby, previously I had not formally commented on the application to build a new house in the valley within the environmentally sensitive area, once again the Parish Council and indeed my mail were in unison in objecting to this application which was subsequently withdrawn I struggle to understand why these applications were thought to have any real merit. The final application was in respect of an extension to the garage in Earls Barton Rd, I objected to this application on behalf of the P.C. and the neighbour at a previous planning meeting but was unable to attend the last meeting. My understanding is that the application was approved because the Members felt that it would have succeeded at Appeal. I have a problem with this position in that it completely removes the democratic process from the Planning process and some arbiter many miles away makes a decision but does not have to live with the consequences of their actions in other words an autocracy.

## **Development**

The West Northants Joint Planning Committee met at the end of January to discuss the Joint Core Strategy. I believe that there is a need for an overall development plan since without one any developer could buy a piece of land and develop almost what they wished as against what the community would like. Although having said that, I still have great concerns as to the forecast housing trajectory numbers. This program will affect the residents of Overstone and in so doing affects Sywell. The West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy is now available to view online please follow the link below <http://www.northamptonboroughcouncil.com/councillors/ieAgenda.aspx?A=6361>

The period available for all to make representations on the Strategy runs from 17<sup>th</sup> February to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. This is a statutory fixed 6 week period: all representations need to be received by the JPU before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011. Alternatively let me have your comments and I will make sure they are recorded. My apologies for the size of the document.

### **Ecton Waste Treatment Plants**

With colleagues from Ecton P.C. and CLEAN we attended the Northamptonshire Minerals and Waste Local Development Framework (LDF), Control and Management of Development DPD Examination, held at the Derngate Theatre. What a title for a start! In principle the Inspector was charged with attempting to create a framework for the handling and treatment of minerals and waste in the county. Unfortunately the clerk of the Inquiry made such a mess of the timetable that we actually arrived after the main presentations had been given. By far the greatest concern for the people of Ecton is to be faced with a very large new waste treatment plant adjacent to the current AWA sewage plant. The work done by CLEAN over the past few years to "clean up" the odours from the sewage plant must not be lost. At the time of writing this missive WBC had not made any formal responses to the draft documents but providing I am re-elected in May I will ensure that the proper and comprehensive representations are made. I will also try to ensure that WBC has a proper input to the final document.

### **Council Service access changes**

The new One Stop Shop facility for the Council's Services and Citizen's Advice Bureau opened for business on 14<sup>th</sup> February. The CAB services will be accessible to customers on Thursday afternoons only. On other days they will still be accessible at their premises on High Street.

As from 14<sup>th</sup> February all Council Services that were accessible from Croyland Abbey have now transferred to Tithe Barn Offices and customers will be served from this reception or self serve via the Council's website will be promoted. The services that are now additionally being delivered from Tithe Barn Office reception are;

#### **Built Environment**

Planning Application Advice  
Planning Policy Advice  
Heritage / Conservation Enquiries  
Building Control  
Local Land Searches  
Highways Register  
Housing Strategy Advice  
Economic Development Advice

#### **Environmental Services**

Taxi Licensing  
Stray Dogs  
Noise Complaints  
Food & Health and Safety  
Health Promotion  
Contaminated Land  
Pest Control  
Public Health Matters

A Licensing Officer will be available each day from 10am – 1pm and a Planning Officer will be on duty from 1pm – 5pm daily to give advice for walk-in customers. For more detailed and specific enquires customers will be encouraged to make appointments as they do at present and Customer Services will endeavour to resolve issues involving officers if available.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) will operate out of the One Stop Shop from 28<sup>th</sup> February providing advice on tax credits, tax issues and VAT.

I have also been made aware of the risk to the No 38 bus service between Northampton and Wellingborough through the villages. I will endeavour to determine the true position. In the meantime if you know of anyone who regularly uses the service please contact me, as viability will be a key issue.

### **Sywell Aerodrome Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)**

We are still awaiting results from the negotiations between officers and the company but the ownership of the JCC is now beyond doubt. The company had attempted to indicate that it was "their" committee, whereas the UK Aerodrome Consultative Committee Support group are adamant and state categorically "*Suffice it to say that I'm sure none of the member Committees in UKACCs would feel that their Committees are in any way "owned" by the Airport operator and moreover I'm very certain that they would not allow such a situation to arise*".

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*

*(Councillor for Sywell, Ecton and Mears Ashby, Wellingborough Borough Council)*

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The full Missive can be viewed on web sites: [www.ectonvillage.co.uk](http://www.ectonvillage.co.uk)

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