

Borough Councillor's Missive October 2011

The Diary.

I was reminded a few weeks ago that I had not claimed any travelling expenses since October last year! Mileage travelling expenses are allowed for Borough Councillors if we have to travel on official business a distance greater than 3.5 miles. In my case travelling to Swanspool House in Wellingborough is just over 6 miles each way. So my claims would be valid for each official meeting I attend at BCW Swanspool, Daventry D.C. or NCC and NBC. Bearing in mind the current financial situation on all councils I have decided to make no claims for the financial period 2010 to 2011. This is my small way of saving the Council some money. Over the past year or so BCW has had to make some very difficult employment decisions due to the economic crisis we find ourselves in. Shedding nearly one hundred posts across the Council, has put serious stresses across the whole staffing area, some have taken early retirement, some voluntary redundancy but inevitably some compulsory terminations have been necessary. When I was in business I always found it extremely difficult to make people redundant mainly because they were probably needed but could not be afforded! The scale of the current economic crisis should remind us that those in control of the taxpayers funds need to be extraordinarily diligent in the way those funds are handled. Probity and transparency of any financial transaction is an absolute requirement of all elected and unelected Councillors.

Development

Many will have seen the significant improvements to Wellingborough town centre over the past year or so. I am pleased to have sat on the Development Committee until my personal withdrawal from Committees during the period of the SAL Court case. I have now returned to the Development Committee and planning the future looks of the town centre is one of the more enjoyable aspects of being a Councillor. We have been informed that there is some Government funding available for which we can bid, were the application is for developments in so called heritage areas. The committee has decided to re-design some of the gateway entrances to the town centre. These designs will shortly be available to view via my website link as below.

Planning

One notable application this month was that made on behalf of Marks & Spencer Simply Food, this application obviously attracted some serious interest but none more obliquely than the headlines in the Evening Telegraph of the day of the Planning Committee which stated to the effect that "BCW Planning Committee was set to refuse the application by Marks & Spencer's for planning approval for Simply Foods to take over a tenancy on the Castlefields estate (near B&Q and Dunelms). As it happened the committee unanimously approved the application so finally we can say:

"Marks & Spencer comes to Wellingborough"!!!

We still await the appeal decisions on two applications in the ward as soon as I have them they will be posted on the website.

Billing Sewage Treatment Plant Working Group

Anglia Water Authority has finally agreed to attend the Working Group meetings and the next one will be on 26th October, once again details will be on the website. Unfortunately AWA seem to wish to own this committee, by requesting some onerous conditions. However I am confident that in this case the Chief Executive will review the documentation and have his staff reconsider their position. Colleagues have already suggested that enforcement proceeding should be considered very soon if the company were to remain intransigent.

Sywell Aerodrome Working Group

The next meeting of this group will be on 1st November, I will ensure the details are on the web site as soon as possible otherwise. In the meantime Sywell Aerodrome is currently in breach of the Statutory

Instrument, requiring the company to have a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). Friends of Sywell Aerodrome (FOSA) as determined by the Department for Transport (DfT) is not a proper JCC. I have written to the DfT requesting them to enforce the Statutory Instruments. I also understand that formal complaints to the Control Tower are not being properly acknowledged. So if any of you have any complaints please let me know formally. I will not disclose your details without your permission

Wellingborough Council Chief Executive

You may recall that the previous permanent Chief Executive (CE) of the Council was given the "opportunity" to take early retirement in January last year. A decision I totally agreed with. I found that she had very limited financial knowledge and it seemed to me that any council running a current account deficit in excess of £2 million per annum should be carefully considering the position of its CE. She had been CE for some five years but lost the confidence of the Administration before I joined the Council so she had to go.

The then Leadership of the Council decided to promote the Deputy CE to an Interim position of CE for a period of 2 years. That period expires in May next year

It has been decided by the Administration that the post should be advertised. Unfortunately this process seems to have some interesting "controls". Hopefully by late November we will have a short list of candidates. My wish is for a person with a strong financial background to at least be sure of where your money is going, rather than have members launch inquisitions which in themselves cost significant sums.

I am pleased with some of the re-organisation in particular the Council was top heavy and the departure of one Corporate Director will save at least £95k per annum.

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

Or visit the web site and lodge your comments: <http://jamesbass.yourcllr.com/>

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The full Missive can be viewed on web sites: www.ectonvillage.co.uk

www.mearsashbyparishcouncil.com ,