



The Diary.

I ask myself, "Are we on the other side of winter yet"? For me this is the worse time of the year, does it ever get properly light?

I love the snow and cold clear bright days but the recent cloudy and heavy days are so dismal they are depressing.

Christmas time is not normally a busy time for the Council and most officers try to get a break from the elected Members, unfortunately they were not so lucky this year. Very few of the senior officers took more than a couple of days off during the period and it is to their credit that during the Economic Depression that we are in now, it is considered so serious that as a Council we are doing everything we can to support our community. This month I attended a meeting of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (Northamptonshire) (CPRE) for those who are not aware this group is a national organisation whose task is to influence the decision makers on all aspects of development in the rural areas, a most laudable aim. I fully endorse the activities of this group and hope to take a more active part in the future.

Discussions and decisions at the formal Council meetings this month are as follows:

1) Communities:

One result of the preventative measures taken with Smartwater in Wellingborough was the migration of crime away from property towards vehicle related offences in the Hemmingwell area. To counteract that migration a 'trap car' was being deployed which had resulted in a reduction of crime figures.

Operation Tiger had a 3 year target to reduce auto-crime. There were short and long term initiatives involving the use of publicity material; technical equipment and 'trap vehicles', including a motor cycle, car and van. Thefts from HGV's had increased by 80% within the County and therefore a lorry is to be purchased to add to the pool of 'trap vehicles'.

Additional Initiatives were being brought forward in a substantive effort to reduce the crime figures in the County. The Smartwater product is available via the Safer Communities Team (SCT) team if you are interested.

b) The Committee received a presentation from the Weight Management and Obesity Project Manager and the MEND Coordinator for Northamptonshire on the Government initiative to tackle childhood weight issues and obesity. MEND stands for Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it. MEND's mission was to enable a significant, measurable and sustained reduction in global childhood and family overweight and obesity through multi-component interventions and a programme targeted at overweight and obese children through a family based approach. Local statistics showed that in 2007 Wellingborough had the highest rates of childhood obesity in the County. The reasons were not known and required further investigation as more recent information showed a slight reduction in the figures.

The 'Change4Life' Campaign consumer launch, which is receiving national media coverage, had 3 stages:

1 – Reframing the Issue.

2 – Personalising the Issue.

3 – Rooting Specific Behaviours.

The national ambition was to be the first country to reverse the rising tide of obesity and overweight in the population. The initial focus was on children and the aim was that by 2020 the proportion of overweight children would be reduced to the levels seen in 2000. Currently 66% of adults and a 33% of children were either overweight or obese. It was estimated that at current rates nearly 60% of the UK population would be obese by 2050.

2) Development: The Agenda for this month's meeting ran to more than 400 pages of double sided text! Fortunately this week I attended a day long course on speed reading and achieved a doubling from 350 word per minute to nearly 700 words!

a) Wellingborough north – sustainable urban extension. A report from the Corporate Director was received on key interim planning guidance relating to the proposed Sustainable Urban Extension to the north-west of Wellingborough in advance of the preparation of the Site Specific Proposals Development

Document (SSPDPD). The guidance would support policies in the Development Plan and was intended to contribute toward the Council's objectives of delivering high quality growth.

The SSPDPD would build on policies in the North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy and would include site specific principles for the development of the Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUE) to the town. In the interim, outline planning applications had been submitted for a SUE at Wellingborough North. In the event that the application was determined prior to the submission or adoption of the SSPDPD relevant background work carried out in preparation for the SSPDPD would need to be taken into account. Proposed interim planning guidance was included in the report. Unfortunately an applicant has applied for planning permission on land at Wellingborough North and had subsequently appealed to the Secretary of State against non-determination. The planning application for Wellingborough North would be determined in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. Since the Development Plan documents had not yet been approved by Council there is a real irony here in that it looks like a developer is forcing the hand of the locally elected Members. The Council's Legal Services Manager provided a verbal report and advice on the status of the guidance, together with procedure and policy.

On this occasion seven speakers addressed the committee and outlined their objections.

I am in favour of quality development but I do feel this project is being rushed and if there is anything good about the current Depression it is for sure that this development will be slowed to a crawl.

b) On-street parking regulations – residential schemes. Of particular concern was the area around the station and Alma Street where residents experienced difficulties with parking near to their homes. Some members of the community have expressed great concern at the parking costs at the station. As a result commuters using the station have been parking in convenient side streets. The Council has decided to consider on street parking permits which will limit the hours of parking thus forcing station users to pay the exorbitant fees charged by East Midland Trains.

Before introducing a scheme it is necessary to carry out a consultation with all affected residents. During this time I will be speaking with Peter Bone to see if there is anyway the Parking Fees at the station can be reduced by the railway company.

Sywell Aerodrome

In the December Missive I mentioned that there would be a meeting with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in January, and by the way, thanks to all those who offered to improve my English. For guidance the WBC lawyer said it was not even a discussion as "prior" was before and no other term could be inferred. The meeting with CAA created more problems than it resolved. It would appear that the safety of the community is not the responsibility of the CAA neither is it that of the Department of Transport (DfT). According to Mr Elgy of CAA it is the responsibility of the Local Planning Authority! This statement nearly sent WBC officers into apoplexy. Given that WBC rejected the planning application for the All Weather Runway, they are now being told they must police it! I know officers are currently doing all sorts of measurements at Sywell and we have asked CAA to prove that there was a licensed runway in the position in question. The CAA was not aware of the Shooting Range which clearly existed before the Aerodrome, neither were they aware that the all weather surface is in a new alignment.

Over the past few weeks I have had a number of complaints about the aerobatic team Blades or 2excel. I have asked the "boss" of Blades to meet with me to discuss the problems and hopefully resolve them to our mutual satisfaction.

I have also had complaints about the flooding in Holcot Lane and the area around the Bellman Gate, it looks like the sheer amount of water coming off the northern side of the aerodrome is causing the flooding at the Bellman Gate and this problem is subsequently transferred to the lower part of Holcot Lane. The Northants County Council Environment Department are investigating and I am being advised by another expert just in case!

Meantime as ever if you have any queries please contact me as below and remember, I cannot help you if I do not know of your problem.

Jim Bass

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