

## Borough Councillor's Missive.

April 2009



### The Diary.

Since the last Missive I have attended some sixteen formal meetings on Council business of varying importance and relevance. So I was intrigued when a villager recently said to me "You attend an awful lot of Council Meetings at which I gave a casual shrug and said "part of the job", but then this person said "you get paid for each meeting you attend don't you" I said "I wish I did" at this point it occurred to me that maybe I was being linked with the full time politicians some of whom appear to be extracting income and expenses beyond what they should do, so it occurred to me that perhaps there was some public interest in the amount I get paid as a Councillor, my annual gross allowance is £3,356.00

I also receive travelling expenses for formal Council business but not for Ward Councillor activities. The list and amounts for this year are as below:

Period	Reason	Amount
May to July 2008	Travel/Mileage	£115.53
Sept to November 2008	Travel/Mileage	£114.42
Nov to December 2008	Travel/Mileage	£93.77
December to February 2009	Travel/Mileage	£117.21
February to March 2009	Travel/Mileage	£40.04
	Total	£480.97

So it is a princely sum is it not! I have always said that I do not do this job for money and I think most would agree that these amounts just about cover most of my costs.

And now for the name dropping bit, at the end of March we enjoyed a "Lunch with David Cameron". For me this was a memorable occasion. David was very impressive, he spoke for about ten minutes and then answered questions. There was supposed to be a protocol of who would ask the questions as a result of a "draw" but he would have none of it and said "I don't do it like that, I take questions from anybody in the

### Council Meetings

We have had a lot of Council meetings since the last missive, Resources are working through new protocols of expenditure based more on private enterprise operation and justification. I mentioned in an earlier note that our Financial Department have been most prudent and unlike many other Council's our Investments are in "solid" fund management, nevertheless our dividends and interest are almost at rock bottom. This means that we are down in income by approximately £3million. To a Council of some £13 million Revenue this is a significant figure which in effect means we have to save this amount or continue to draw from Reserves and or try any other combination. I hope that we do not have to make any staff redundant as when I was in private business this was the hardest and toughest task I ever had to do.

The Zero Budget Based (ZBB) groups are tasked with saving money and reducing costs and increasing efficiency I am personally working in three areas of the Council namely Business Support Unit, Planning and IT. Each of these sections will be investigated with meticulous care to wean out any unnecessary expenditure.

On the 2nd April we had the Annual Report of the Council which enabled us to interrogate the Officers in an open forum, It is always good to have Officers face the Members and have a good discussion across the board of Council activities, it seems so easy for some, to get "closeted" and that does not lead to good governance.

The Public Inquiry into the Core Spatial Strategy (CSS) Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF) began at the Saints Rugby Ground. The Inquiry is to determine the strategy for the disposal of waste (such as kitchen waste) and the Mineral extraction from the Nene Valley. It is forecast that we will need to handle nearly 800,000 tons of waste per annum by 2012. I attended the first session in order to develop a sense of this procedure and the type of Inspector involved. I have hitherto not been very impressed with Inspectors as they seem to run only to the Central Government agenda and will completely over rule local Councils. This Inspector however was fastidious in the extreme and within the space of the first few hours he had given one of the County Council officers what amounted to an inquisition.

### Local Activities

I was pleased to attend a tree planting in Ecton, this was a replacement Walnut tree in the play area behind the Worlds End Pub. It was great to see so many youngsters helping to dig the hole and clearly taking a great interest in the tree, let's hope they continue to do so.

Part of my Borough Councillors Fund has been spent by Sywell Parish Council on a range of shrubs at the Playing Field, We were please to attend the planting and look forward to seeing the benefit to the community in due course.

We also attended the Official opening of the Beckworth Emporium I imagine most have been to "check it out" but if you haven't you should!

### Aviation

I mentioned in the last Missive that a date was set to meet with Blades, This has now taken place and I was accompanied by **Chris Petrie (Chairman of Ecton Parish Council)** we had an interesting, informative and hopefully productive discussion. One of the main concerns is that the flying "in formation" at high speed over the villages was very disturbing particularly in the mornings when people who had been on nightshift were trying to get some sleep. Blades have agreed to look at their program and see how it can be modified they have also agreed to try not to join into formation over Ecton village to begin what they call their "Arrival" routine. We will be happy to continue to work with Blades in the interests of being "good neighbours".

### Sywell Aerodrome

I received a telephone call late in March to inform me that there was a serious amount of "felling" going on in Sywell Wood. Sywell Wood is at the eastern end of Sywell Aerodrome and is owned by the Pytchley Hunt and let to the Forestry Commission (FC) on a 999 year lease. Together with a member of the Pytchley Hunt I visited the site and was amazed (as he was) to find some 40 acres of total wasteland filled with wood chips. We are attempting to determine who has felled the trees and upon whose instructions. According to the FC part of this area of the wood is designated "ancient woodland" with trees up to 80 years old and is adjacent to a Roman Pottery Discovery Site which also seems to have been destroyed. It may be that the Roman site has determined as required by the Secretary of State but we will need to see evidence to support this. There is another point at issue that is that the hedge and ditch boundary have also been destroyed and ploughed over.

I have said for some time that the runway is not in the correct position and now have the evidence to confirm the point, interestingly there was a heated discussion with a prominent member of the community recently who said that I was talking nonsense with respect to the alignment of the new all weather runway and that I was totally wrong to state that the runaway pointed to the Pub Car Park and over the pond. So I sent him the photographs I had taken from the air to prove it, some two weeks ago, I have not heard anything since!

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

### Jim Bass

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