

SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
Martin Rees 13.05.09

The year 2008\9 like any other year has run as usual, with the steady pace of rural life gently ticking over. Following previous years of Car Auction and major infill applications (26 Town St), this past year has seemingly passed without major incident in planning matters at least, and those particular schemes have still to begin, so the impact has not yet begun to impact on village life.

We have continued to conduct the usual background work, and worked on tactically positioning in several areas with both Bassetlaw and Nott's county council. Whilst we have not been successful in all areas, we can draw some satisfaction from those that have been successful, and we will remain resolute to completing the others in due course. In the body of this report I will cover what I feel are the significant points we have worked on, and summaries our position.

Footpaths and rural access remained in focus throughout 2008/9 and will continue to form part of our strategy in 2009/10. We have been rewarded well for our efforts in requesting assistance grants, to maintain and improve the rural paths, with a sizable award (c. £1,900) to fund the replacement of all style access and replace them with kissing gates. The work on the installations is due to begin anytime now and will be a welcome improvement to many as access is generally improved by these changes. Further to this work with P3 and the Counties Rural access team, I am keen to seek a level of co-operation with land owners and County council that delivers further acceptable and safe access to permitted areas of the Parish, that delivers sufficient levels of circular routes in line with any results arising from the Parish Plan consultations.

Flooding issues dominated much of 2007 and it has taken a lot of effort by several interested parties to bring about sufficient pressure to get some action in the Parish. The campaign for action gained a significant boost back in June 08, with the appointment of Mr Ian Davies, to assist Mr Bowler. Following a presentation to council, Mr Davies got a programme of extensive investigations under way. The results of which assisted in prioritising some quick win work around the Parish, whilst the larger issue and plans for Station road and the collapsed drains were drawn up. Following the release of finance from County, work finally began late in the summer with a predicted completion by Christmas 08. Unfortunately this deadline came and went, due to a host of issues beyond anyone's control, (mainly uncharted infrastructure, unearthed as part of the works), however all existing works were completed and grounds restored in early April 09. There is still some remaining works to be done that went beyond the existing programme, however further financing will be needed from County to see this through. We will need to remain aware of this and pursue matters with County, however the substantial works already completed will be a major improvement to the residents of Station road and should give them all peace of mind from further flooding.

The Parish Plan got under way in 2008, with the publication of the parish questionnaire. This was a particularly large document in itself and hopefully by its size and inclusive nature, answered its critics regarding the time it took to get something out for the Parish to see. A great deal of work has gone into drafting this questionnaire and now the results are in, a further trench of work is being undertaken. The plan, to some, may be regarded as the great panacea to our Parish life, and in many cases it may well be, however there are still some very basic questions to which we already know the answer, and in reality there is no credible reason why we can't begin moving towards putting solutions into place. The need for child and youth provisions can not be denied, in fact its absence is regularly cited as the reason for some of the unruly element in the village. As another year passes so too does another generation of our children who we have failed, another group of children who will look back on their childhood in Sutton cum Lound, and recall how "boring" it was growing up here without any play park or equipment. 2009/10 must be the beginning of turning this around and laying the building blocks for a new and creative interest for our Parishes children. The plan will certainly give the finer detail to what the children would like but the basics are already well known and must now be recognised and acted upon.

We should all be aware, that as with all things in Parish life, the plan is being exclusively attended to by volunteers, who's time, like all of ours is precious. I would like to pay tribute to all involved and thank them all for their continued support with the Plan. We should all now look forward to the questionnaire results and the associated focus groups who's results will help galvanise the final Plan.

Both the Village hall and Parish Church remain key focal points. The village hall continues to go from strength to strength thanks to the tireless work of the hall committee. The hall survives on the hard work and goodwill of a few dedicated people, thank you to their Chairperson Angela Close and all the committee members for their work in keeping the hall open for everyone else to enjoy.

St Bartholomew finally secured a new Priest for our group of parishes with the ordination of the rev Mark Stafford. We welcome Rev Safford to our Parish and hope he will have a long and happy time with us here. Our thanks must also be extended to Mr Jeff Richardson for his dedication and service to St Bartholomew's during the absence of our own priest and his continued support to the Rev Stafford.

Street cleaning became a particular issue in 2008, as we were heavily let down by Bassetlaw in the service they provided. However following a series of successful communications and subsequent meeting, the team at Bassetlaw acknowledged the shortcomings and resolved to address matters and reinstate the level of service we had agreed and were paying for. Bassetlaw's new pedestrian "Green Machine" now forms the main stay of their street cleaning force and has been a welcome sight on our paths.

Our village's public phone box came under threat of removal in 2008, as BT sought to react to falling takings from public phone boxes. The Parish council defended the need for a phone box in the Parish, for people who do not have mobile phones or indeed house phones, (and yes they do still exist), and of course for the ever present danger of an emergency. As part of a disaster recovery plan, having a public pay phone does at least give us the potential of an independent communication link should all other domestic and mobile communications fail. It has been recently noted that Barnby Moor's phone box has been removed, so it seems our campaign to keep ours has been successful so far.

The bowling green remained in our agenda on a regular basis last year. Numerous complaints regarding its inappropriate use, led to a planning enforcement order being imposed by Bassetlaw. Following a drawn out dispute over the content of the order, earlier this year (09), Bassetlaw planning reported they were finally happy that provisions of their order had been met and the occupier had the order lifted.

All of this was of course a secondary distraction to the Parishes long standing quest to ascertain rightful ownership of the land, following numerous complaints from various residents across the Parish that the land was and should remain in Parish ownership. Sadly this particular matter remains unresolved for now, although we have now traced the family of the original owner, who purchased the land from the LNER back in 1890. It was confirmed by the family that the land was effectively given over to the Parish and it was intended that the Parish would have the benefit of the land forever. This matter remains open and the family are considering their option.

The Speed Watch Scheme has remained a disappointment, with again more retirements \ resignations of key personnel within the Police authority, leading to a disruption in the flow of communication to keep the project going forward. However we have recently learnt that the local community policing unit are to be given the responsibility, (under Insp Hincliffe), for getting the programme up and running. Assessments and surveys are underway and it is now hoped to see the Speed Watch programme launched in the near future. We are joining forces with Barnby Moor, Torworth and Mattersy to deliver this scheme. Speed issues remains a key target area of Safer Neighbourhoods Group (SNG).

The long awaited decision on our Parish weight limit was returned and having being pursued up to cabinet member, was finally overruled in favour of the upper 18t limit. This was of course disappointing and we will continue to lobby for a reduction to 7.5t in the future. However it should be noted that despite the decision being made several months ago, and the original deadline for County to have changed all their relative signs by Dec 31st 2006, we are still without any updated signs, this is leading to confusion as to what is and is not enforceable, and we are daily subjected to environmental abuse by HGV's that fall well outside even the new scope. We should all remain vigilant and report vehicle details to the Police via the beat officer or Worksop Police station, to keep this on their agenda, which in turn will assist us in turning the limit down to 7.5t as originally requested.

Parish allotments, as well as being a topical national issue, have also been raised on several occasions this past year, (and presumably will be reflected in the Parish plan results). Taking my earlier comments on the “Great Panacea” and the knowledge of the impetus being shown in getting everyone healthy, both physically and via our eating habits, this is another area the results may be taken as given, and we can move forward in our pursuit of a suitable area for Parish allotments. It would be great to be able to go into this coming autumn with ground to be prepared in time for the new spring sowing. Torworth parish have recently secured a small field for use by their parishioners and encouragingly reported a great deal of assistance from the local authorities to secure the land. So start planning your crop rotation, who knows what this years harvest may yield.

In summary, another year of paper work and tenacity to achieve some goals, and some still to achieve, but I remain committed in the pursuit of them and the general improvement of our community, not just in aesthetics, but also the much needed feel good factor.

I sincerely hope that I have fairly represented the last twelve months for you in this report, and may I end by thanking all our my fellow councillors, my Vice Chairman John Gough and our clerk, Peter Roberts, for their support over the past year, and I look forward to working with you again in 2009 / 10.

Thank You.

Martin Rees
Chairman
Parish Council
Sutton – cum - Lound