

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008

Another busy year for Somersham Parish Council started on 3 May 2007 when we welcomed five new members to the council in an uncontested election, Andrew Beaven, Judith Bullard, Lesley Minter, Dorothy Siggs and Graham Siggs. Shortly after the elections we were sorry to lose Richard Elen as a councillor and pleased to co-opt Michael Hoy back on to the Parish Council.

Once again this has been a very busy year which has seen innovations and new developments in the way the Parish Council works to provide services and facilities to the village. As part of the continuing improvements to the council's service provision our website went live earlier last year. The website can be found on www.somersham.org and we welcome any ideas on the type of information you would like to see on there.

During the year the newly formed Youth Working Party became involved with a project to improve the skate ramp and to install a bench near to the ramp made from recycled plastic kindly donated by Waitrose in St Ives. Some months ago Huntingdonshire District Council (who are responsible for the repairs and maintenance of the skate ramp at the Norwood Playing Field) decided it was uneconomic to continue to repair the old wooden ramp. Luckily the district council found the funding to replace the ramp with a new metal one. Although the work has been delayed the new ramp should be in place by the end of May, early June 2008.

The Youth Working Party are also seeking to improve social and play facilities for the young people in our village and with this in mind have produced a questionnaire. Please encourage your young family members to complete and return their form via their school, as it will help establish what they want in Somersham and will assist with funding opportunities in order to do this.

Many of you may have noticed the multi sports area is now open for free access 5 days out of 7. The facility is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to allow groups and individuals the chance to book a sports session through the booking secretary Mrs Brooks 01487 741050. Again the use of the facility is free of charge for booked sessions, however if floodlights are required there is a charge. In addition work on an application is being made for funds to replace the outer fencing with something more substantial and should be a visual improvement.

Another new working party is the Environment Working Party; their first project is to help make Somersham become plastic bag free, you can read more about this project in the Voices June Issue 35. It is planned to provide every household with a personalised Somersham cotton bag free of charge. The Parish Council hopes all parishioners will fully support this worthy project as a community and support our local shops/businesses on a smooth change over by bringing your own ecological bags.

Still with the environment in mind, the parish council are working in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council to create a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) along a section of the dis-used railway line from Station Approach up as far as and including Station Land and also the lake area. This proposal will protect the natural habitats, flora and fauna, retain the land for the enjoyment of walkers and assist with funding opportunities to maintain the reserve.

Of course not everything we try out works as well as we would hope and sadly it was the end of line for the Peterborough Bus Service with the last service running on 5 April 2008. I would like to express my thanks to Dews Coaches for providing this excellent service and to all the loyal passengers who regularly used this monthly service. Unfortunately, in the end, it became too much of a financial burden on the parish to continue.

In the course of the more regular day to day running of the parish council and parish assets, we undertake a variety of works on behalf of the community including setting up village projects and by representing the parishioners on matters of importance to them. Last year Somersham Parish Council responded to over 70 planning applications and whilst the majority of applications are

largely of an ordinary nature, very occasionally some become contentious showing just how emotive planning can become in any community.

In addition to planning applications, the parish council considered and responded to approximately 30 consultation documents on matters ranging from Government planning legislation to the Terminal Control North (TCN) Airspace Change Proposal to Huntingdonshire's revised dog bylaws.

The Recycling Credits received in the last financial year from the Church Street recycling centre amounted to an incredible £3074.43. The majority of the money raised goes towards the loan repayments used to refurbish the Victory Hall in recent times and has also been used to partially fund projects. Thank you to everyone who uses the recycling bins in Church Street for their glass and paper, please keep up the good work and help recycle money back into the village.

This will be my last report for Voices as Chairman of the Parish Council. For personal reasons I will be standing down as both Chairman and as a Parish Councillor and so I'd like to finish by thanking David Cornwall for his support and help as Vice Chairman over the last year and also all those who have served on the Parish Council during the few years I have worked with it. It has always been a varied bunch of people and it has been a pleasure to work with them, I've certainly learnt a lot in the process and I'd like to think made a few new friends as well.