

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2006/2007

Issues large and small have kept the Parish Council and Councillors busy over the past four years and this my final report as Chairman as this current Parish Council comes to the end of its four year tenure on the 3rd May.

When we look at what we achieve it is sometimes difficult to see this when you look at just the last three months. One positive achievement has been the planting of some trees with the Scouts as part of their 'Trees for All' project. Councillor Ian Smith, the Parish Tree Warden and others worked with the youngsters recently planting a range of indigenous trees on an area of Parish land. Their hard work should develop into a pleasing wooded area in years to come.

So what have the last four years meant for Somersham? There certainly have been some things to be really pleased about. There's the Peterborough bus service - it is a simple idea - take people somewhere they want to go - and bring them home again on the first Saturday of each month and all for a reasonable price. Let's hope that in four years time it is still running - it you haven't tried it yet, perhaps next time.... Our thanks to Dews Coaches for helping to make this happen.

One realization of particular note is the achievement of Quality Status for the Parish Council. When this was achieved in January 2006 only 200 Town and Parish Councils nationally and 10 in Cambridgeshire had been accredited. This award recognized that the Parish Council is seen to be representative of and actively engaged with all parts of the community, providing vision, identity and belonging.

Four years has seen the Millennium Sports Facility go from strength to strength. The pitches have matured, the users are developing a sense of belonging and there are more really exciting plans for the future, including an all weather pitch which will improve availability when the pitches are wet. The Parish Council recently received requests that they consider that Parish facilities be made available free of charge for local people. It seems like a reasonable idea, but at present the Parish is spending approximately £10,500 on the upkeep of the Norwood Playing Field and the Millennium Sport facility and although the booking fees are modest they do help to defray costs and any loss of revenue would equate to an increase in the Parish precept which is part of the Council Tax we all pay.

The Victory Hall has had something of a makeover using nearly £18,000 of funds which the Parish Council borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board having earmarked the proceeds of the recycling credits from the paper, glass and cans recycled at the village facility. So as we have said before - Keep using the facility - you will be pleased to know that it really is one of the best used in the district.

Losing the village library might have been a real catastrophe, but thanks to the hard work and dedication of the Community Information Centre Management Committee and their band of volunteers we have a 'Library' which is held up as an example of excellence around the country. Somersham Parish Council has been happy to support them in their work and look to their continued success.

The Christmas Lights have extended their coverage markedly. For a village of its size the hardworking volunteers give us a great display - and it is entirely financed by fundraising.

The Lake has seen the addition of a pathway which provides access to this Parish treasure to those with pushchairs or wheelchairs.

In closing, this really is farewell from me. I have been a councillor for eight years, and Chairman for the last two. The Council also says farewell to three other Councillors who between them have served

the village for 49 years. Mrs. Chambers 17 years, Mr. Hoy 20 years and Mr. Hulme 12 years, including 9 years as District Councillor our sincere thanks to them for all they have done.

Being a councillor has for me been a very rewarding experience, but increasing work commitments have prompted me to decide that, for now at least, I will stand down from Parish Council duties. I have to thank my fellow Councillors for their enthusiasm and support, and Penny, the Parish Clerk whose advice has always made the pathway straighter and smoother than it might otherwise have been. I wish the incoming Council all the very best for the next four years.