

Hesketh-with-Becconsall Parish Council Newsletter

Shoreline Summary

Issue 8 Spring 2007

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2007

The present Council is now three quarters way through its term with elections for the whole Council due to be held this time next year. Of the eleven Councillors elected in 2004 from a list of eighteen candidates, two have had to resign for personal reasons and one was disqualified through lack of attendance at meetings; we have been fortunate however in welcoming new co-optees on each occasion with no less than four putting themselves forward on the last occasion.

Being a Councillor is not, as many would assume, just a title. Many decisions that Members are required to make are very controversial by their very nature and it needs a broad back to bear some of the criticism and hurtful comments that can be made. Despite this we have made steady progress and the Council's affairs are now in excellent order. Earlier this year, the Clerk completed the long and arduous job of resolving the long outstanding issues regarding the ownership of various parcels of land. I can now report that the Shore Road site, comprising the Recreation Ground, Childrens' Play Area and Car Park; the twenty Allotments on Shore Road and the Play Area adjacent to the old railway bridge on Station Road are properly registered with the Land Registry and are secure for the generations to come. The Clerk is also pursuing the question of securing ownership for the village of various other pieces of land especially those around the new developments.

Over some considerable time, and following on from the REAL survey led by Cllr. Tompkins, we have been pursuing residents concerns in respect of safety and speeding, especially on Shore Road and Moss Lane. Through the persistent efforts of the Clerk over the last two years, the speed limit on Shore Road and Marsh Road, Banks was finally reduced in March to 50mph and we are grateful to both Lancashire County Council and North Meols Parish Council for their support in achieving this. Hand in hand with this, some of the worst areas of tarmac have been repaired and potholes filled. Very shortly, we'll see new street lighting being installed from Hundred End Lane through to Chapel Road. This is another initiative of the Parish Council with the Parish financing the capital cost of the equipment and Lancashire County underwriting the cost of ongoing maintenance and electricity. Finally the new Traffic Speed Indicating Device (SPID) is helping reduce speed here and will soon be deployed on Moss Road and Station Road as well.

Thanks to the work of former Councillor Tony Murphy and the Recreation Committee, we saw last summer the completion of the new Play Area at Shore Road which seems to have been very well received and is certainly well used. The footpath was completely rebuilt from Delta Park to Shore Road, now being wide enough to accommodate wheel chairs and the largest buggies. A gate has also been installed at the School Fold entrance to stop unauthorised access. Drainage to the car-park has also been improved with the installation of covered guttering at the base of the embankment.

The complaints of anti-social behaviour and vandalism, which were well aired during the consultation process on skateboarding, prompted the Council to install sophisticated, state of the art, CCTV equipment which now constantly monitors the recreation ground, play area, car park and school at Shore Road. This will hopefully reduce dog fouling as well with two local owners already cautioned; the Council will not hesitate in taking action wherever and whenever possible against the perpetrators of unsocial behaviour. The Park is now well maintained and with the assistance of West Lancs Council, the graffiti has been removed.

Following the extensive consultation, and representations from residents, the Council withdrew its plans for a skate ramp at Shore Road – democracy in action! We are still however looking for any site which might prove suitable. As I mentioned earlier, decisions like this are difficult for Councillors, and in trying to make the right decision, we make as many adversaries as friends!

The first of the new style lighted bus shelters was installed on the windy junction of Shore Road and Hundred End Lane before last winter and the one at Charles Close replaced in April. Two more are at present in hand – a replacement outside All Saints Church and a new one on Chapel Road adjacent to the older peoples' homes.

Last year also saw the launch of the Parish Charter – an important statement of intent and co-operation between the District and Parish Councils. We are indebted to our Clerk for his efforts on the Working Group at West Lancs Council which put this important initiative of the District Council into effect. It is now making a positive contribution with the two tiers of local government working together in a cohesive way. To date some 14 Parish Councils out of the 20 in West Lancashire have signed up with 2 more expected to sign shortly; the Charter itself is groundbreaking and leads the way in Lancashire. Regrettably, Lancashire County have repeatedly failed to produce a similar commitment.

Work on a Parish Plan is now well under way thanks to the efforts of Councillor Kirby. This will hopefully produce a working document on the way residents wish to see the village progress and develop in the future, and also identify concerns that the community have. The written plan itself becomes an important document that all levels of local government are required to take note of in their planning.

In February we were delighted to be advised that Ian, our Clerk, had obtained a top distinction in the "Certificate of Local Council Administration". This puts Ian in the top twenty Clerks in the Country for his knowledge of law, duties and procedure of Parish Councils. Following on from this he is now preparing the Council's submission for "Quality Council Status" which we are hoping will be granted later this year.

One of the complaints often made regarding Parish Councils is that 'Parished' areas are said to be "double taxed" in comparison to 'Non-Parished' areas; however, here in West Lancashire we are more fortunate than parishes in other Districts. Firstly we receive a contribution towards things like playground maintenance called 'Concurrent Expenditure'; *this simply means costs which can by statute be allocated to Parish or District.* Most District Councils don't do this but West Lancashire Council will give us £5,100 this year towards these costs. In addition our District Council makes 'Capital Grants' and again this year we have secured £8,000 towards the upgrade of the Station Road play area. We are also expecting to receive in the region of £20,000 from the developers of "The Nurseries" estate as their contribution to the community of 'Section 106' monies. Here again most Districts/Unitary authorities decide on the use of such money themselves whereas West Lancashire District Council will allow, and encourage, Parishes to spend it on suitable schemes. In addition, we have secured from Lancashire County Council grants in the region of £28,000 towards the new bus shelters I mentioned earlier. We are truly indebted to District Councillors Ashcroft and Forshaw and County Councillor Barron for their continued support for this funding.

We have also obtained grants of £5,000 towards the cost of producing the Parish Plan and £540 towards the cost of the Speed Indicating Device.

Finally, the Council have agreed to the installation of a communications column at the 'Centenary Sports Ground'; this is at a point as far away from residential accommodation as is technically possible and is the Council's attempt to address the concerns some people have regarding these masts. In addition the Council will receive over £41,000 in licence fees over the next ten years which will help offset rises in the Council Tax precept.

The total that the Council has therefore secured on your behalf from all sources over the last twelve months is in excess of £106,000!

In the year ended March 31st 2007, the Council's actual income excluding grants amounted to just over £76,000. Of this £16,700 was expended on administration, nearly £19,000 on maintaining and improving the recreation areas, over £33,000 on highways and £3,300 on loan repayments

Finally, I would like to thank Ian our Clerk and all our Councillors, not just those I have mentioned by name for their support to me as their Chairman, and their work for the whole community.

PARISH PLAN

The Parish Plan team have been busy for several months and you should by now have received through your letter box, two questionnaires; one for adults and one for the younger population of our village. Please do take time to complete these and return them to one of the collection points as soon as you can. It is only by your responses that the Parish Plan steering group can hope to assimilate the village's hopes and aspirations and produce a useful planning document for the future. If you have mislaid one of the forms, further copies can be downloaded from the Parish Council Website (www.HwBPC.org.uk).

BEST KEPT VILLAGE

Once again we are indebted to Arden Lee Nurseries for supplying the commercial premises in the village with beautiful hanging baskets. The Judges are around from the beginning of June so let's all make a special effort to tidy up the place and see if we can win a prize!

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Richard Plant, 12 Granville Ave: **Cllr. Iain Ashcroft**, 1 Chandlers Croft
Cllr. Christine Farrington, Birch Tree House, Shirley Lane, Longton:
Cllr. Norma Goodier, 43A Fermor Road, Tarleton: **Cllr. Steve Kirby**, 50 Shore Road:
Cllr. Christine McLeod, Primrose Barn Marsh Road : **Cllr. Paul Sergeant**, 108 Moss Lane
Cllr. Lesley Standish-Gore, 4 Foxglove Close: **Cllr. Hilary Tompkins**, 69 Moss Lane:
Cllr. Gerard Twigger, Long Acres, Guide Road

PARISH CLERK

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