

Chairman's report, Town Meeting

Northleach with Eastington Council – what's changed since 1999?

It is normal in the Town Meeting for the Chairman to give an account of what has been achieved over the past year. This year, as it is the last year for the Chairman and myself, I thought I would take the opportunity for a rather longer review – not of the past year, but of the past eight years. This coincides with my time on the Council, but more importantly 1999 is also the year Jack joined the Council.

So I wanted to reflect, on behalf of Jack and myself but also for everyone present, on what we had achieved as a Council since the time we both joined. Though I may pick out individuals, my wish is to pay tribute to the Council as a whole. And I am sure I will leave out some items, and some people – so please may I ask for your indulgence.

The first meeting that Jack and I attended was in the Fire Station! Jack and I (among others) were new boys: the only surviving 'old guard' from then are Alan, Rommel, Doug, and Chris.

The first area to pick out is finance. We have

- appointed Jill as RFO
- put our finances on a much sounder footing
- built up reserves
- been able to be largely self-sufficient for many of the projects we have undertaken

And this in turn has enabled us to undertake many worthwhile projects in the town which we could not have otherwise achieved.

For this I would like to thank Chris in particular, but also of course Jack.

Secondly, modern life has forced upon us new ways of doing our work and we have, I believed, achieved much greater efficiency and professionalism in how we work. We now have

- a very effective committee structure (thanks to Phil Mustoe)
- much improved links with CDC and Glos CC (Caroline)
- appointment of Brian (Town Handyman)
- the benefit of a PCSO (Mark).

I would like to put on record how fortunate we have been in having two exceptionally energetic, professional, and good humoured Town Clerks in post for most of the last eight years – Phil Mustoe and Caroline Braidwood.

Third, co-operation with other groups in town. This is very near to my heart. There's a long way to go but I think it's improved with

- Sports and Social (huge input of voluntary labour on the part of their members)
- various of the sports clubs in the town both for adults and young people
- above all, Cotswold Hall.

Fourth, communication: we now have a website (thanks Gill Fothergill), regular entries in the Parish Magazine, and a newsletter.

Fifth, the Westwoods Centre – which was not built when I joined. It was an enormous task to get it operational and financially viable and to the point where in the last year we have had 530 lettings, with regular users from the town (Guides, Brownies, Rainbows, Lunch Club, Martial Arts club, Fitness Circuit Training, Keep Fit classes, Spanish

lessons, Computer training courses, the WI, Historical Society, Mothers and Toddlers Group and NADFAS) and out of town groups including Cotswold Conservation Board, CDC, Stroud College and Gloucestershire CC. This does not include events such as Workshops, Exhibitions, Wedding receptions, Anniversary Dinners, Luncheon Parties, Childrens Parties, Ballroom dancing and Disco's.

Phil Mustoe put in heroic efforts to get things going and he has a worthy successor in Brian Crossley who can take credit for the successes of recent years.

But we have also depended very heavily on the efforts of many volunteers – notably but not only Alan, Jack, Patsi, and Mike Pezet.

Sixth, Medcentres. Think back eight years and the Surgery was in Fortey Road. The move to this part of the town attracted great public concern, but this was allayed at a public meeting and the move was achieved smoothly. From the Council's point of view we drove a hard but fair bargain after substantial negotiations for the sale of the land and as a result gained funds we can use for the good of the town.

Seventh, improvements we have made, or helped to make, in the town. These include

- tree planting
- improved lighting in the Town and in the Square
- resurfacing the Market Place
- rebuilding the cemetery wall
- surfacing Back Lane
- clearing the town drainage after sixty years (thanks Caroline)
- getting a Slow Down sign at East End
- surfacing the School car park and creating a safer route to school (thanks Rommel)

Very few of these would have been possible without the funds we have accumulated over this period.

What challenges lie ahead? If I may suggest how I see things, I see some things that still need pushing forward, notably

- to continue to increase involvement with all areas and groups in the town
- to try to build links with Youth Club
- to make better links with businesses
- to facilitate good initiatives such as 5-a-side pitch and low cost housing

But there are some exciting new ventures coming through from the newer members of the Council, notably

- plans for controlling the traffic in the town and making the Square a safer and more pleasant place for pedestrians
- town survey/business plan

And we are increasingly developing a higher profile in the County, particularly to explore sources of external funding.

In all these areas I'd like to pay tribute to the work Keith Blundell is doing.

So I'd like to conclude by thanking all present for everything they've done to make Northleach a safer and more pleasant place – and to wish good luck, from Jack and from me, to our successors!

Cllr Simon Loveday, Vice Chairman and Deputy Mayor.

