

CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE BARNETBY-LE-WOLD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2011

Since the last annual parish meeting your council has continued to monitor the activities of other public bodies and utilities in those activities that affect village life. When necessary it has sought to bring its influence to bear on behalf of the village.

Your council has continued to scrutinise planning applications and to manage the village cemetery and the playing field.

Your councillors have continued to work diligently on a range of issues. They have been concerned about the well being of both the young and the elderly, issues relating to crime and antisocial behaviour in the village, dog fouling and the health hazards resulting there from, parking and road safety issues, highway maintenance including the adequacy of salting and gritting of highways in cold weather. They have been concerned with issues arising from North Lincolnshire Council's policies and procedures or the lack of them in relation to the clearance of snow from footpaths and highways when there has been severe weather. They have been concerned about the adequacy and proper maintenance of street lighting, measures to prevent flooding and the adequacy of drainage in the village.

Various actions have been taken and continue to be taken in pursuit of these concerns.

Councillors and the clerk have in the past twelve months put a great deal of effort into the development of a new committee structure for the council. This has enabled groups of councillors to be delegated tasks by the council and to give fuller and more careful consideration than is possible when matters are only discussed when there is a meeting of the full council.

In addition to the personnel committee the council has appointed a finance committee and a health and safety committee.

The finance committee is chaired by Councillor Asquith and is already providing more effective scrutiny of council budgets and expenditure. Councillor Monks has provided valuable technical help with the development computer software to make this process simpler and more efficient.

Councillor Lawson chairs the Health and Safety Committee. In addition to securing tighter and more effective compliance with current Health and Safety Law this committee is actively working on developing a project involving the acquisition of state of the art children and young person's outdoor play equipment ("The MUGA") for the village.

The personnel committee in its role of line managing council employees continues to make available much needed support to council staff in a time of change.

Councillor Hutchings has worked effectively and subtly with other councillors to help produce a more collegiate and less adversarial relationship between the parishioners, the ward councillors and the parish council by introducing changes to the way we arrange ourselves at meetings.

The council is currently reviewing its need to continue as a member of the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association.

I greatly appreciate and have been very much impressed by the support that has continued throughout the year and the way all members of the council, the clerk and the cemetery registrar have been willing to think and operate in ways that have not previously been tried. It is these people that deserve most of the credit for the progress that has been made. Yes we can be very argumentative and at times talk too much but this does show the passion we all share for the well being of the village.

In my last annual report I explained that I viewed an important part of the job of a parish council chair as being to do the best he or she can to bring about a situation whereby every councillor and every grouping of councillors feels they get a fair hearing and whereby individual parishioners with concerns feel confident about approaching any councillor they might choose including myself and also the clerk. This in the knowledge that they will be listened to and responded to positively

I believe that I have listened to what people say especially when they have told me things I did not particularly want to hear. I have appreciated the support and constructive criticism that I have received.

As chair it has been my responsibility to support councillors and council staff in a non-partisan way to help them maximise the contribution they are seeking to make to both the council and the community.

I am not allied with any particular group on the council or in the village. Whilst this is probably why people wanted me to be chair this situation does cause me some problems. I continue to welcome informal contact from parishioners as well as councillors as a means of staying aware of what people are thinking.

I can be reached via the Parish Clerk but should anyone feel they need to contact me direct my telephone number is in the local telephone directory. My e-mail address is john.speyer@homecall.co.uk should anyone want to e-mail me direct.

I am firmly committed to the concept that the council should encourage, not frustrate good work undertaken by individual councillors on behalf of the village and its residents. Everyone on this council including myself as well as those the council employs are highly committed to seeking to protect the well being of the community of Barnetby and further its interests. They give freely of their time to the extent of the amount of time that they have available.

As fellow councillors and parishioners we very much need to help one another to move things forward is by being "critical friends" ready to point out errors and for ever drawing attention to the best in one another.

The parish council is the only elected public body that exists to represent solely the people of Barnetby. Whilst other elected public bodies also represent the citizens of Barnetby, they do this in much wider contexts.

The objective I was set as chair was to help the council reach the day:

- When there is mutual trust between every councillor and every employee of the council. This trust being based upon respect for each other's developing competence and professionalism.

- When the authority of the Parish Council to speak on behalf of the village is secure, not because of its legal powers but because of the genuine respect it has earned in the eyes of every member of the community.
- When the separate and shared powers and responsibilities of the council as an elected body, individual councillors and the clerk are fully understood by all.
- When every parishioner feels comfortable about approaching any councillor who does not have a prejudicial interest in the parishioner's concerns in order to help represent them to the parish council.
- When individual councillors will receive approval not censure when they advocate on a parishioners behalf in a non-prejudicial way.
- When all parishioners who come to parish council meetings go away feeling positive about the experience.
- When there are always more people wanting to be on the council than vacancies.
- When the residents of Barnetby consider that the village has a quality council.

Whilst I believe good progress has been made towards achieving these objectives I strongly suspect that a number of Barnetby residents feel that we still have a long way to go before Barnetby-le-Wold can regard itself as having a quality council.

In this I would agree but if December 2009 is taken as the starting point we were at that time at very low baseline. Barnetby Parish Council had allowed itself to become a "Quango" in all but name. Significant progress has been made since that time.

Generally I have found the advice given by the East Riding and Northern Lincolnshire Local Councils Association ERNLCCA as administratively wise and safe and frequently politically inept.

In my view ERNLCCA is a "Quango". It does not in my experience see anything wrong in Parish Councils being Quangos as well.

In the United Kingdom a Quango is a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization: an organization that is separate from the government but has responsibilities similar to those of a government department.

Legally Town and Parish Councils are not Quangos. They are democratically elected bodies answerable to Parliament. Parish and town councils have a history that predates many of the other arms of local government.

When a parish council lacks democratic credibility its ability influence on behalf of the community is very much less. This affects the council's ability to advocate on behalf of the village in all sorts of matters including planning drainage and highways.

In Barnetby over the years the clerk has taken on more and more responsibility for running village affairs and most councillors had been content for this to happen. On the present council the majority of councillors have been co-opted not elected and all of those who have been elected including myself have been elected unopposed.

That being said we have all worked very hard to bring about a change in this state of affairs. Councillor Lawson has worked particularly hard to encourage members of the community with a range of valuable skills to serve on the Parish Council. Councillor Monks has been the first person to put up for election to fill a vacancy on the council mid term for many years. We now have three women councillors. When half the population of the village are female this is hardly representative but it is a considerable improvement on how things have been in the past.

So where do we all go next?

**This is not up to the council.
It is up to you as an individual parishioner.**

In May there will be elections for a new parish council.

Papers for people who wish to stand are available at this meeting from the clerk. If we run out more can easily be obtained.

If you would like to become a member of the council don't be afraid to stand for election. If you know someone who you think ought to be on the council please encourage that person to stand. If you don't belong to a group connected with village life or if you do belong to a group formally or informally involved in village life, village hall, a sports club, the street in which you live, youth club, etc, etc and one or more of you would like to put up for election please put your names down.

I think it likely that I will stand for election once more. If I do one of three outcomes will occur. 1. My place on the council will be contested and I will win or 2. my place on the council will be contested and I will lose or 3. my place on the council won't be contested.

In my view the worst of these three possibilities is the last. It will mean that once again there are fewer people in the village who want to be on the parish council than there are seats.

If the village is to have a strong council it needs lots of people who want to be on it.

John Speyer (Chair)

21st March 2011