

It was not without some trepidation that I accepted the nominations for Chairman of Groby Parish Council in May last year but now that my year in office draws to a close I can honestly say that I've found the position both rewarding and at times even enjoyable.

It has been rather a busy time for your Council with much being achieved and much more on the verge of achievement and I feel that over this year your Parish Council have worked really well as a team.

Not everything has been a success, as is visible by the Wind Turbines over towards Anstey. The Parish council and your Borough councillors worked hard to try and prevent and then remove them but so far with no success! Also there have been a gradual increase in the parish of some of the major crime statistics this past year or so, about which I hope Sir Clive might be able to comment!

### **But to go to some of the successes**

Housing: We had yet another renewed application and then the following appeal for **Bloors** to build on the (Ratby) land to the east of our cemetery which has again been resisted by the team which included your Parish Council, your Borough councillors and a superb planning barrister by the name of Simon Stanion of Marrons, without whom I don't think we would have succeeded in winning that appeal. Now we still have to wait for a few more months for the outcome of a further legal challenge to the inspector's decision by Bloors' legal team, so at this point we've only won the battle, we've yet to win the war!

Parking Restrictions: A subject that is a constant question from parishioners is the situation of the long awaited revised waiting restriction scheme in the village! This is one of the "verge of achievement" items in that all being well it *should* be completed by July this year. I've been involved with this project as part of the working party over the past 3 years and I realise that it does seem to be taking an inordinate time to complete, however the democratic process involved to allow feedback from those affected and then to build those changes into a revised plan and then get more feedback etc takes time and unfortunately we were also caught up in a major re-organisation within County Hall which didn't help! The budget had been ring-fenced for this project some time ago and your then County Councillor, Rob Frazer had signed off all of the final changes and now, just this month we've had the final ratification by the LCC Cabinet, so a start WILL be made towards the end of May/early June giving a successful conclusion by this July.

Quality Council Status Application: This is one of those items which is almost invisible to those outside the council but which WILL bring considerable benefits to us all over the long term. This process has been driven primarily by the efforts of Beverley Greenwood, your Parish Clerk and we are expecting the successful conclusion of being awarded Quality Council Status with the new allocations in October 2013.

Finances: On the finance side GPC are in a fairly healthy position for 2013/14. By careful use of resources, detailed financial planning greatly assisted by your Parish Clerk and additionally, and perhaps surprisingly, by taking on additional staff & staffing hours, overall we have been able to reduce our annual spend this year whilst still completing new projects. This is reflected in the 4.6% **reduction** in your parish precept. The staffing changes means we have been able to take on more work "in-house" and subsequently reduce contractor's costs particularly in the area of the "Parks and Cemetery" team, ably led by Cllr. Peter Batty over this year.

*Next Year is going to be just as busy if not more so!*

Finance: The financial situation for the following year (2014/15) is certain to be much tighter due to the revised changes to the finance structure of local government which were part of the 2012 budget (brought in April 2013). We were advised only in late December last year that some of the changes which were originally ONLY going to apply to County and Borough level would NOW be applied also at Parish

Council level, this was much too late in the day to allow us to include this effect in the current (2013/14) year's budgeting but it is almost certain to cause some belt tightening in future years in line with Government Policy, however rest assured your Parish Council will endeavour to continue to limit the effects on services within our Parish.

Business development: We, that is your Parish Council, your Borough councillors, your County Councillor and the whole village of Groby, are going to have to get involved in the Public Enquiry by the Vehicle Licensing Authority for an application to allow additional HGV traffic to and from The Rookery if we are to protect this sensitive area from additional HGV traffic! We will all need to add our weight to the forthcoming Public enquiry starting in June 2012!

Future Housing: Your Parish Council is well aware that there is a continuous push by Governments to build more houses, however we also believe that the residents of an area should also have a say in that need. It was without hesitation that we agreed to the recent Housing Needs Survey which most of you will have seen recently enclosed in your Spotlight. Both Richard Windley (the survey organiser) and I are greatly encouraged in that there have been over 800 responses which in postal survey terms is a terrific response. The outcome of that survey will be published soon.

However there is still extreme pressure from H&BBC to allocate more area(s) within the village for housing development in order to meet the Borough's requirement for Groby to add an additional 110 houses, however we want to drive that from within the Parish rather than have it forced upon us. With this in mind we will be endeavouring to allocate areas for growth within the village over the next few months.

Notwithstanding any housing need, we are still constantly pushing the case for an improved infrastructure, particularly in areas such as education, health and transport. We will not be just accepting any development willy nilly. We will be arguing for improvements in these areas. I'm afraid that this is rather an uphill battle in the current political and financial climate but it's not a fight that we on your Parish Council are looking at shirking.

CiC: Before closing I must mention the Meadow and the CiC (Community Interest Company) which is in the process of being set up. Those of you who have been involved and who have contributed to this project may be wondering what is happening. GPC, the "Meadow"/CiC organising committee and our solicitors have been working hard to achieve a fully working, democratic and independent structure whilst still protecting the interests of the Village at large. I believe that we are now in the final stages of this process so all of those contributors, please look out for calls for meetings to set the final management of the CiC in place. Remember that it's a COMMUNITY project and therefore needs the community to take a part.

To finish I must say is that over the past year your Parish Council, Parish Clerk and all of our employees have worked really well as a team and I must thank all of those involved and hope that we can go forward into the coming year with the same attitude and success.