

2013 Chairman's Report

It was not without some trepidation that I accepted the nominations for Chairman of Groby Parish Council in May last year (2012) 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.

2012/13 has been a busy year within the Council with much achieved and much more on the verge of achievement and I feel that over the past year your Parish Council have worked well as a team.

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 I do 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 has been ring-fenced for this project some time ago and your County Cllr. Rob Fraser, recently signed off all of the final changes and the final ratification by the LCC Cabinet was approved in April, leaving the way clear to a successful conclusion of the scheme by July 2013.

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 in October 2013.

Finances: On the finance side GPC are in a very 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 in this current year which has been reflected in the 4.6% **reduction** you will see in your parish precept. The changes in the staffing situation 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 the past year.

Next Year (2014/15)

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 late 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 most certain to cause some belt tightening in future years in line with Government Policy, however rest assured your Parish Council will endeavour to

limit the effects on services within our Parish.

Future Housing: Your Parish Council is well aware that there is a national need to build 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 myself 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.

There is still an urgent need to allocate more area(s) within the village for housing development but we want to drive that from within the Parish rather than have it forced upon us. Notwithstanding any housing need, we are still constantly pushing the case for an improved infrastructure in areas such as education, health and transport. We will not be just accepting any development without 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.