

Annual Report 2009/2010
Councillor Carol Hart
Derbyshire County Council

This is a slightly different report to the one I usually give as major changes have taken place at Derbyshire County Council in recent months. I have been the elected member for Morley on Derbyshire County Council as a member of the minority Conservative Party for several years but after the June elections there has been a change of control and I am now a member of the controlling group.

I had been acting as a Shadow Cabinet Member for Community Safety up until June but I have now been given the position of Cabinet Member for Communities. My portfolio still covers Community Safety but also includes Youth Offending, Trading Standards, Emergency Planning, Travellers, Coroners & Registrars, Equality & Diversity, Community Cohesion, liaising with Parish Councils and from May I will also have responsibility for Sport.

My main concern was that with my extra responsibilities I did not lessen my attendance in my ward and at my local parish meetings and I hope that you do not feel neglected in any way.

It is a daunting task taking control after 28 years in opposition but we are eager to get on with the job and start to make our mark. Derbyshire is a vast county and we aim to make sure that everyone in the County is considered equally, there has to be a fair balance of funding across the whole of the County. We are also very keen to make a difference in the way our roads and pavements are monitored. There is a vast amount of work to be done and it will take time so changes will not be made overnight but they will be made. We have produced a new Council Plan, which is still out for consultation, we hope this is an easy read which sets out our aims for the next few years. We welcome your observations on this plan.

Money is going to be very tight and the Government grant is being drastically cut which means we have to continue to deliver first class services but in a more efficient way. We have decided to go with a 1.5% Council Tax for the coming year, this is the lowest Council Tax by Derbyshire County Council since this tax began and one of the lowest in the Country, we are mindful in this recession that anything that will help our taxpayers will be welcome.

I was particularly pleased to have the Parish/Town Council Liaison in my portfolio and as some of you know I held a first meeting at Matlock in October last year and the next meeting is 22nd April, this year. We are very keen to work with parish/town councils across the County as the local councillors are the ones that know best about their areas, we need to use that knowledge. An example of this has happened this winter when because of such severe weather the County team of gritters had such a problem keeping even the main roads open and many parishes said they wanted to help. We are now looking at ways of involving parish councils and even local 4 x 4 drivers so that we can call on them for help if necessary. This will be one of the topics to be discussed at the next Liaison meeting. There must be many more ways we can work together and hopefully some ideas will be suggested.

This year in Morley the usual problems have been raised, namely the condition of pavements, footpaths and roads. Speeding traffic is always a problem although with the new speed signs and railings at the school hopefully the parents and children feel a lot safer. I have also just had confirmation that the new reduced speed limits approaching Broomfield College which were on trial are to be made permanent.

I must apologise for not attending your parish council meetings as regularly as I would like but unfortunately your meeting night clashes with the Dale Abbey Parish council which is in my Erewash Borough Ward and I have to alternate my visits to both of you but also for some reason this is a very popular night for meetings i.e. council meetings at Erewash, and it does make my visits infrequent, however I can always be contacted by e-mail at carol.hart@derbyshire.gov.uk or by telephone on 0115 9322513.