

I am very happy to present my second Chairwoman's Report for Morley Parish Council for the 2009/10 year.

The Council's business has included:-

COUNCIL

Following the retirement in the Autumn of Alan Draycott from the post of Clerk to the Council, Councillors have been involved in recruiting, interviewing, supporting and training two individuals for the post of Parish Clerk. However, both candidates failed to complete their probationary period and we continue to seek a competent Parish Clerk.

The Council has become increasingly aware of the unique financial constraints experienced in Morley due to the very small numbers of properties set in one of the largest parishes in Erewash in terms of acreage. The difficulties are compounded by the scattered nature of the hamlets which make up the Parish. This Council is required to fulfil its legal obligations in the same way as other much larger and consequently better funded parishes. We have raised this important issue with Erewash Borough Council and are working to secure a more equitable funding arrangement for this parish in the future.

The parish website, hosted by the Council with pages populated by various organisations, continues to grow. The number of 'hits' is growing year by year and since last May there have been just under three thousand unique hits, (that's first timers) and many more return hits, (those who access our website on numerous occasions). These hits come from UK, but also from United States, France, Israel, Germany, Japan, Singapore and Ireland to name a few. Most people have arrived at the site by searching for "Morley Parish Council" but others have searched for 'Great Northern Greenway' 'Morley Parish Church' Morley Mirror, and Morley Book Club. I am particularly pleased that the W.I. have appointed a web liaison officer, and as a result the W.I. page is updated every month making it the most active page.

The Council has agreed to purchase at least one of Morley's familiar iconic red telephone box (at the corner of Quarry Road and Brackley Gate) when and if it is decommissioned.

Work has begun on the Community Response Plan, a planning exercise to identify local expertise and resources to be called upon in the event of a local disaster. We hope this is never going to be used, and my thanks to Councillor Hickling for her work on this plan.

During the last year the Council's historical documents, prior to 2002 have been lodged with the Derbyshire Archivist in Matlock for safe keeping.

I'm pleased to report that this Council received a grant of £50 from Wilmot Gilbert and Berrysford Charity towards our Christmas Lights switch on event. I thank Councillor Daykin who sits on the board of this charity, and whose work helped secure this funding. I thank Councillor Daykin for his support, particularly over the most recent Clerk issues.

COMMUNITY

Throughout the year the Council has provided financial support to several village organisations including the school for railings, the church for upkeep of the clock etc. Once

again we supported the Village Show with prize money and I congratulate the organisers on another record breaking year. A village show is a great British tradition, part of rural heritage and we are very happy that Morley continues to have such an event and thank Dawn Lockwood and her team for all the hard work which goes into organising it.

We have supported Morley Mirror and the Young Journalist of the Year Competition. Issue 9 is currently available. The Council has recently agreed on a set of principles for the continued organisation of Morley Mirror in accordance with Standing Orders. Morley Mirror is free and delivered to all households in the parish and is also available to others having links with the village. I am grateful for the generosity of the sponsors who have ensured that it is currently self-financing. I want to thank the editorial board, Councillor Hickling, Rebecca Pollard, Andrea Last and others, the contributors who provide an interesting mix of articles, and the volunteers who deliver it.

The new Morley Village History Group has also received support from the Council. Members are meeting regularly and liaising with The Victoria History Project and there have already been several articles published in Morley Mirror as a result of research in local archives and input from the community. This group is being co-ordinated by Jim Parish assisted by others, and I want to express my thanks to him for his enthusiasm for the project, for the enormous amount of work already done, and that yet to be done.

The Christmas Lights Switch on event, hosted by the Youth Club and school was once again a very successful event providing an opportunity for the community to join together and enjoy a village occasion. I thank Councillor Hickling for organising this event and Bex Pollard, the Youth Club Leader, and the 'clubbers; for providing hospitality for this occasion. Thanks also to Bex and for the work she does throughout the year with club members.

The welcome pack continues to be popular, delivered free to new residents.

Environment

Our Verge Reserves continue to enhance the village. The native daffodils certainly made a wonderful show again for the second year, easily visible from the A608. Morley is participating in the community radar speed gun initiative, and our volunteers are working with other parishes and the police with this jointly owned equipment in the interests of road safety for residents and for all road users in the parish. I thank Councillor Twigge, P.C. Crookes and others who have participated.

Planning

The Council has been consulted by Erewash Borough Council on an exceptionally large number of planning applications during the last year. Including several very large proposals. Planning procedures are sometimes complex and often controversial, and in the case of many of those we have considered during the last year, this has definitely been the case. Most Councillors are not planning experts, however, the applications have always received careful scrutiny and detailed discussion. I am grateful for the expertise of Councillor Queenborough on planning issues, and I thank him for his willingness to summarise lengthy applications and prepare draft reports and letters, his help has been invaluable.

In conclusion

Looking back over my two years in the hot seat, it has been quite a hot 'hotseat'! With difficult planning issues and ongoing problems with recruiting a suitable permanent Clerk. On a positive note, as Chair, I've endeavoured to promote an inclusive, non confrontational and interactive style of meeting. I believe it is that which has led to an unprecedented rise in the numbers of parishioners attending. People come to our meetings because it's worth the bother, it's often very entertaining, it's a good social occasion, and parishioners are encouraged to contribute. This is not the case in other parishes where it is rare to see a member of the public and even rarer to hear one. Talking about what's rare, women are rare, in Local and Central Government. On 31st March 2010 in a league table recording the percentage of women in state parliaments, UK was 62nd from the top in a list of 139, with only 19% of women MP's in UK. A Parish Council is a great place for women to begin to think and act politically, not party politically, but in the interests of collaborative decision making for residents and the wider community, where incidentally women outnumber men by approximately two million. I thank everyone who enabled me to be Morley Parish Council's first Chairwoman, and I thank my fellow Councillors for their good will, good humour and good natured hard work and support. I hope there'll be many more chairwomen in the future to correct the imbalance of our long history of male domination, and though I'll no longer be Chairwoman I look forward to continuing as a Parish Councillor.