

Burton-in-Kendal Parish Council

Annual Report for the year 2008/09

Chairman's Statement given by Councillor Francis Mason-Hornby

2008/09 has been a year of consolidation for the Parish Council rather than momentous change.

It all started with the uncontested Parish Council Election of the 1st May 2008 which whilst saving the residents electoral expenses has been perceived by some as undemocratic. It is hardly the fault of the current parish councillors that so few residents were prepared to put themselves forward as candidates for election.

Following the routine administration that the change of council necessitates action was taken to co-opt a new councillor. Three candidates selflessly put their names forward and Ian Hunt was co-opted at the June meeting. I am very grateful to the unsuccessful candidates and would hope that in the future they or indeed anyone else would consider standing for election.

The issue that seemed to take most of the council's time over the year was the Burton Playing Ground, located in Boon Town in particular trying to get the site reinstated to a similar or better condition than it was before the development of the affordable housing by Impact Housing Association. The lease was finally signed at the September meeting and as the financial year ends we are nearing the end of the saga and hope the Playing Ground will be well used by all of Burton's children from now on. The Burton Playground Fundraising Committee is doing excellent work in trying to raise funds to improve and increase the play equipment available and it has the full support of the Parish Council.

The severe downturn in the economy triggered in part by the banking crisis has proved that globalisation is a reality and that we are all interconnected. I doubt there has been a year when Wall Street, Iceland and Ireland were all mentioned in the course of single parish council meeting. Prudence in the face of such forces outside our control has led to closer scrutiny of where we hold your money with security being more important than rate of return

Another direct result of the difficult economic climate has been the decline in the numbers of Planning Applications to come before the council with no new applications forthcoming at the February meeting.

The Parish Council is a consultee for many bodies and over the last year we have been asked to comment on various issues too numerous to name. The two most relevant were parts of the South Lakeland Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Local Area Partnership (LAP) on both of which consultation is continuing

The LDF is a set of documents which all local authorities are required to produce under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to replace the current Local Plan and covers South Lakeland outside the National Parks. The LDF provides an opportunity to identify sites for major redevelopment up to 2025. The latest part of the LDF to come under scrutiny is the Allocations of Land Development Plan Document (DPD). This will highlight sites that may potentially be suitable for accommodating the District's housing, employment and other development requirements. Adoption and publication of the DPD is scheduled for the second half of 2010 and I can highly recommend visiting www.southlakeland.gov.uk/ldf to learn more and to make comments. Hard copies are available for inspection in local libraries and at South Lakeland House in Kendal.

The LAP is trying to achieve greater influence for local people in what happens in their community and the way public services are provided to them. The LAP will be made up of representatives from Parish Councils, South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) and Cumbria County Council (CCC) based on groups of parishes which share a common interest. The intentions are good but if we are not careful it may become just another layer of bureaucracy.

We are always striving for increased public involvement in parish council affairs and the response to updating the Parish Plan has been most welcome. Whilst everyone has a pet project or gripe many of the issues raised are not within the parish council's remit and others we are unable to fulfil due to lack of available funds; however we do listen and all councillors are keen to hear your views.

Unlike central government the Agenda and Minutes of our meetings are published on a monthly basis and as well as appearing on the parish notice board they are available online at www.burton-in-kendal-pc.gov.uk

Please contact the Parish Clerk if you would like the Agenda and Minutes emailed to you on a regular basis.

Most small complaints made to the Parish Council are dealt with by the Clerk who doggedly chases up the relevant department of SLDC or CCC by letter, email or 'phone but general housekeeping duties including the weekly inspection of the Playing Ground are carried out by our highly efficient and hard working Lengthsman David Holmes. Cumbria Highways have completed some major re-surfacing around the parish and minor maintenance and repairs have been carried out diligently by the Highway Steward.

One new addition to the village this year has been the “right way / wrong way round “ Bus Shelter on Main Street near the pedestrian entrance to Glebe Close. Whilst not pleasing everybody it is much appreciated by those who shelter under it and serves both northbound and southbound travellers. Unfortunately we were unable to locate one on the other side of the road due to the restrictive width of the pavement. A similar bus shelter is planned for the south end of the village near the junction with Dalton Lane during 2009/10.

We are fortunate to have the regular attendance of County and District Councillor Roger Bingham, District Councillor Brian Cooper, and Police Community Support Officer Rachel Thomas at our meetings and I am grateful for their help and support over the year.

Thanks must go to all who take the time and effort to attend our meetings and in particular the members of the press and their understudies whose colourful reports I always enjoy reading.

I would like to thank all my fellow parish councillors for their commitment during the year; they give generously of their own free time to serve the people of this parish and they also represent us at various other organisations whose activities have an impact on our village.

All that remains is to thank Charles our Parish Clerk for all his hard work and guidance over the year and without whom none of what we do would happen.