

CASTOR PARISH COUNCIL



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2008/2009

2008/2009 has been yet another busy year for the council. We have endeavored to be proactive and responsive to the challenges, both exciting and mundane that have been presented to us. It has been a year of change and a year of achievement for the council.

In brief, the council has addressed the following issues and continues to strive towards fulfilling the identified objectives:

- **Clay Lane**

Following just over two years of consultation between the parish council, village residents and English Partnerships (EP), an initial planning application for 40 houses was submitted by EP in April 2008. Working closely with our city councilors and the PCC planning Department, CPC managed to apply pressure and through lobbying finally convinced the planners and developers that a development of this size would have a detrimental effect on Castor's conservation area and on its community. A new application for 25 houses was submitted, which after much scrutinisation at PCC Planning Committee, was approved with restrictions.

CPC continues to monitor the Clay Lane Project closely. It is currently waiting for confirmation that the site has been sold to a developer. It is CPC's intention to work closely with the appointed developer and to make sure that the Castor residents are consulted at all stages of the development.

Clay Lane will remain an agenda item until the project is completed.

- **Village Hall refurbishment**

In April 2008, a new VH Management Committee was formed. The new committee strongly represents both Castor and Ailsworth Parish Councils, which are both overseeing the running of the hall in the run-up to transfer of Trusteeship to both Parish Councils.

In the last year the new committee has made changes to bookings, the running of the hall and has completed major refurbishment works.

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Refurbishment projects have included, a new floor, kitchen and heating. Works have been funded by the Village Hall Building Fund, CASPRA, Ailsworth Parish Council and Castor Parish Council. This summer the hall will be rewired and lighting improved. The committee has been successful in securing a grant of £5,000 from the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation towards the rewiring and lighting project.

Further projects in the pipeline include the refurbishment of the hall windows and a facelift for the toilet areas. It is hoped these projects will be possible later in 2009/2010.

- **Parish Land Management and Village Amenities**

CPC continues to preserve and enhance local amenities by endeavouring to improve its management of parish lands and enhance all areas of the village.

CPC conducted its annual walk in October 2008, to inspect all its land holdings including land over the A47. Many remedial works were identified, and since have been rectified. During 2008/2009 CPC a new gate has been installed on the Recreation Ground. In conjunction with PCC, a tree planting scheme has been completed during Spring 2009. Also, improvements can be seen on the corner of Manor Farm Lane, which after many years of neglect has been cleared and planted with trees. A full report of the works can be viewed in October 2008 minutes (check date?)

A project to install oak posts to protect the grass verges in the village has been approved by PCC highways department and will commence during 2009 subject to receiving a list of approved contractors from PCC.

All CPC land, excluding Tweentowns field is currently let.

The proposed construction of the Farmers Cross on the village green has been delayed due to the lack of availability of weathered natural stone. This project will be completed as soon as a source of stone is identified.

- **Allotments**

Following the appointment of our new clerk, allotment management issues were identified and problems resolved. All allotments are now allocated and there is currently a waiting list. CPC has earmarked a section of Tweentowns field as possible new allotment land, subject to receiving a 'change of use' agreement.

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Councillor Andy Smith is currently in the process of starting an Allotment Holders Committee. A new water pipe extension and tap is also being installed for the convenience of allotment holders

- **Children's Play Area, Allotment Lane**

Following incidents of minor vandalism, it was decided to re-site the picnic benches at rear of the playground to deter late night gatherings. The picnic bench was re-positioned at the front of the area and a new tree has been planted to provide shade. CPC is currently exploring the possibility of installing a new piece of play equipment, and a possible youth shelter is being considered.

The rear fence of the play area has been replaced and stile installed to prevent further damage occurring to the fencing.

CPC is currently exploring using part of Tweentown field as a dirt cycle track and play area for young teenagers. CPC is working with CASPRA and a group of youngsters to progress this idea. It is hoped that the youngsters will drive this project and identify their own requirements which CPC will hopefully be able to fulfill during 2009.

- **Appointment of a new Parish Clerk**

2008 saw the departure of Sue Henson after many years serving Castor as Parish Clerk. Sue worked very hard for the parish and she is greatly missed.

Sarah Rodger, Sue's replacement, joined during a busy year. Sarah is in the process of attaining CiLCA qualification, which means she is qualified to lead us towards Quality Parish Council Status. Sarah's knowledge, organizational skills and enthusiasm are serving us well and she is getting us all in line.

- **Parish Councilors**

Our 9 parish councilors have worked hard during 2008/2009 responding to the demands of planning issues as well as general council work. Although a voluntary role, being a councilor can be time consuming and demanding. Unfortunately, two of our councilors have recently resigned after many years service to CPC. Eleanor Hoggart and Martin Chillcott will be greatly missed. Both contributed much time and effort over the years. Martin served as Chairman, and led many lively debates during his time as a councilor. Eleanor's legal experience was also invaluable.

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The council has two vacancies and is currently seeking any one who feels they can actively contribute. In particular it would be beneficial for the community to find someone who feels they could represent the youth of the village and help drive the proposed Tweetowns Bike track/play area project. We are looking for councilors who are energetic, and who wish to be highly involved and proactive.

It has been another good year for CPC. As chairman, I would like to thank the councilors and parish clerk for their continued support.

John Taylor
Chairman
Castor Parish Council