

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 West Hallam 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.

Just to finish off and talk about local issues, the main problems again centre around traffic, whether it be inconsiderate parking or speeding, and although we have had numerous discussions with officers, apart from being very close to agreeing the VAS signs, we do not seem to be able to move forward on other areas. One major problem caused by cars is the area around the Bottle Kiln, this is a very successful business and brings many people into our area but as the Methodist Church has now been granted permission for a large extension this problem could get worse. I will continue to work with our Highways Department and the Police to try to come up with some solutions to ease this problem. Although we do not now have the problem with heavy lorries using West Hallam as a route to TDG we do still need to be vigilant and to report any vehicles that do break the weight limit.

Just to remind anyone who would like to contact me with any concerns connected with Derbyshire County Council, I always have a surgery before each parish meeting, held on the first Monday of the month, 6.30 p.m. until 7 p.m. and I can always be contacted by telephone 0115 9322513 or e-mail carol.hart@derbyshire.gov.uk .