

Juliet Layton. District Councillor report from May 2011 to April 2012

It is not quite a year since I was elected to be a District Councillor and I have been on a steep, though interesting learning curve.

I am a member of the Planning Committee which generates much reading material and an awful lot to learn, and just when I thought I was getting to grips with planning policies they were replaced with the new National Planning Policy Framework and the learning begins again.

I was required to leave the Council Chamber on my very first meeting as I had a prejudicial interest in the Mallards development in South Cerney. Now there is a good start! But I persuaded Legal and the Chair to allow me to stay to present the findings of a survey of the village before being relegated to the member's room.

It was no surprise that the Water Park Ward would generate controversial elements, this after all was why I stood for election, and many of these elements are linked to Planning. However, I was surprised to find myself invited to meet with Lower Mill property owners to discuss safety issues regarding the road system in the estate and then supporting their application to Lower Mill for a new entrance for the Minety Lake development. Again on holiday/second homes I have attended meetings regarding the Guidance notes to Occupancy. And, again rather surprisingly for me, I am now arguing the mis-selling issues and mis-advertising of these properties which I believe has led to confusion for purchasers. I am also questioning why the only breaches of occupancy are reported to CDC by Water Mark and not, to my current knowledge, by Lower Mill and LakesbyYoo. I didn't expect to be using energy on holiday home owners but it seems there has been a raw deal done which needs investigation.

The issue of excess infill at Lake 31, in the Country Park and Beach, came to the planning committee. It is again featured this month – this time retrospective planning permission is sought for the earlier breach.

This year in the Ward we have had several major developments come to Planning Committee; The Mallards at South Cerney, which was granted

permission. A field adjacent to North Hill Road in Siddington which was refused at Committee but has gone to Appeal and we now await the results of the hearing which was held earlier this month, and we will be soon looking at a Care Village at Siddington Park Farm, complete with a new roundabout on the A419 and the proposed closure of the Preston Toll Bar.

Esmond and I pooled our Youth funding money and supported The Willow Lantern Pageant entitled 'Creatures of the Night'. 250 to 300 people attended and at least 150 young people were involved in making some incredible willow structures and parading them around Upper Playing Fields and lake in South Cerney accompanied by Samba drummers from Kingshill School. It was a great night and one which I know the organisers, 'In our Element.' want to repeat.

I have sat through days of Esmond's hearing, and bought the Tshirt. Listened to the findings of the Pegasus Report on Lake 31, supported Siddington at the NHR appeal and more recently attended the Inquest into the drowning of Kajil Devi at Cotswold Park and Beach.

I have dealt with potholes, noisy neighbours, damp patches in ceilings, dog poo and even a long long conversation with someone who thought I was a counsellor. I listened to her problems, made a phone call and went away for a week, when I got back I contacted her again and she seemed to have turned her life around and was feeling very positive. So at least I can report a result!