

## County Council – East Gartree Division (January 2002)

Like many I was disappointed that one of the Kibworth councillors, Mrs Roeber, had to bring politics into her December letter. I had hoped elected councillors at all levels could work together to improve local communities and not try and score political points off each other. With District elections looming she is beginning her electioneering early – her letter and report certainly seemed to be the start of her campaign and full of half-truths and inappropriately targeted blame. I eagerly await any suggestions she might have for funding and improving traffic management in Kibworth; the newly resurfaced Warwick Road has demonstrated how effective a properly planned and landscaped route avoiding Fleckney Road and High Street might be.

In the November Chronicle I gave readers information about the concessionary bus pass scheme, but she chose to ignore the most salient point – the “*countywide scheme has to be by agreement with all 7 districts*” as the funding is now directed at Districts not County. The new scheme must be in place by April 2002 and all 7 District Councils agreed the new scheme, which is based on directives from central Government. Mrs Roeber, as one of the Harborough Executive members, is collectively responsible for the concessionary changes, together with central Government (Labour) and the other Districts (several are either Labour or LibDem controlled) who have both defined and agreed the changes. The Leader of the County Council is seeking to obtain better concessionary arrangements with the Districts but he can only ask, he cannot force them to agree.

As a new county Councillor I have been impressed by the workmanlike unanimity of purpose shown by fellow councillors in Committees, but disappointed at the blatant, political tricks played by both the opposition groups at the monthly full Council meetings and particularly when the press are present. It seems their main priority is that anything goes just to get a favourable headline rather than reaffirming the views that have been scrutinised and discussed jointly in Committee.

I was delighted to hear the news that the application for the Kibworth housing has been withdrawn. As a vigorous and consistent opponent of largescale housing without infrastructure improvements, I could never understand why the District kept on supporting this greenfield site. One tried and tested way to obtain village improvements without building developments is through the Village Appraisal process. I am pleased that both Kibworth parish councils seem to be preparing to call a public meeting to start the procedure. We need everyone’s help to encourage villagers to support the meeting and the eventual questionnaires that will let people of all ages have their say about local issues. The results can then be used to influence the people responsible for implementing change. Great Glen demonstrates the clear advantages of seeking the village’s views and then undertaking a clear strategy: speed cameras, skateboard park, bypass, traffic calming, new pavilion etc.

Finally, some excellent news came in over Christmas because the County Council, after sustained lobbying, obtained improved funding from central Government to enable 3+ Nursery Education to be provided for all in the Spring Term rather than having to ration it.