


Where councillors put politics aside

The good of the village is paramount at Holmesfield Parish Council where members of the authority refuse to let politics get in their way. Kat Withers calls in to meet them



Set for the monthly meeting of Holmesfield Parish Council are chairman Coun Barry Wheat and parish clerk Liz Boswell (seated) with other members of the local authority

 WHEN it comes to the cut and thrust of local politics, local authorities don't come more tranquil than in Holmesfield, where village councillors have put aside any political differences to focus on the the good of their parish.

And it seems to be working as Holmesfield Parish Council has made big changes in the parish, which covers from the edge of Dronfield Woodhouse as far as the Longshaw Estate and bordering Barlow, Baslow and Totley.

Chairman is Coun Barry Wheat, the longest standing member, having served for 31 years. He explained: "We're a non-political parish council which means we deal with the matters of the parish."

Explaining how he isn't the only long standing councillor, Barry added: "There are a number of parish councillors who have served for in excess of 12 years."

Comprising of nine councillors and parish clerk, Liz Boswell, the next elections will take place in May 2011, when the council hopes more people will put themselves

forward for election.

Explained Coun Wheat: "It's fair to say over the course of the last few years, we have never needed an election because more than nine people have never stood. We would hope next year in May we have more people interested."

In the last few years, Holmesfield Parish Council has made several positive differences to the community.

As well as getting a seven-and-a-half-tonne weight restriction for traffic passing through the village two years ago, the council successfully campaigned for a 30 mph speed restriction and are currently involved in consultation on the Derbyshire Local Transport Plan for 2011 to 2016.

Talking about the Parish Council's biggest achievements, Village Society chairman and telecoms consultant Coun Bernard Hoare said: "We are proud of the playground opposite the Rutland Arms which is owned by the Parish Council but maintained by the Village Society. We recently spent £1,100 on more equipment."

Added Coun Wheat: "We're also particularly proud of having a Village Hall which was recently extended and is well used."

Providing expertise to the Parish Council are the various backgrounds of its members. Explained Coun Wheat, who is a former architect: "Most of the council members are retired and bring experience from past professions and trades."

Vice chair Coun Godfrey Smythe is a retired solicitor and deputy district judge in civil matters, so is able to help on legal matters, and retired university histologist Coun Roger Webb is the perfect person to oversee the 62 footpaths and 23½ miles of rights of way in the parish.

Local pub landlord Gary Fantom is the newest member of the Parish Council, being co-opted to serve on the local authority

At a recent Parish Council meeting, discussions included a visit to Holmesfield by the Youth Service Bus, additional play equipment in Holmesfield Park and repairs to footpaths.