

Life as a councillor

Making a difference by Cllr Ken Cleary, Seneley Green Parish Council.

I have been asked on many occasions by members of the public why and how I became a District and Parish Councillor and this is my explanation.

From the day I first started learning my trade as an electrician I realised that I needed some outside activity to keep my mind occupied. Whilst at school, like all young boys, I had tried all kinds of sports and had found there was only one sport that not only gave me satisfaction, but that I was good at. The only trouble with the works angling section was that it was not run very well; after many arguments I was asked to take over as secretary of the angling section this I did and held the role for a great many years.

At the age of thirty, my wife and I moved house and as well as angling I became the secretary of my local darts league, my local party branch and my local labour club and I also became involved with the local voluntary sector. I have only mentioned all of the above to show that from the day I started work all of my leisure time was taken up working in one way or another to ensure that the groups and the community I served and lived in had the best opportunities I could give them.

When I was forty I became ill and was admitted to hospital, when I was better I was unable to continue with my sporting activities. I was then asked if I would stand for election to the District Council and it so happened that the parish elections took place on the same day. I was successful in winning both elections. It did not take me long to attain senior role on the District Council and I held this for a number of years. The one thing that I could not come to terms with was the conflict of interest I often felt about my dual role as a District and Parish Councillor and the fact that I seemed too far removed from the people who had elected me. This often brought me into conflict with my fellow parish councillors. I, therefore, stood down from the Parish Council for one term.

I then realised that the power I had at District was not enabling me make a difference to the community I lived in. The answer to this came when I was not selected to stand for the District, but regained my Parish seat. I have held this to date. I cannot relate the feeling of elation in being able in any small way to bring about changes for the better to the lives of residents in my community and the feeling that I am helping to be seen working with people instead of doing things to them, with the help of others and may I say with a superb Parish Clerk I am sure that the Parish Council will continue to go from strength to strength.

When I look back one of the changes I feel very strongly about is that in other activities when all is running well it is very easy to hand over to others. However when you become involved in the every day lives and activities of the community you serve, the need is so great that the will to help becomes stronger.