

## **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT- MAY 2011**

It has been a great honour to serve as Mayor of Amble for the last year.

I accepted with a great deal of trepidation mixed with excitement about what to expect. Soon it became clear that it was not going to be easy and there have been many times in the last year that I questioned the wisdom of taking on the role- it has been a real roller coaster of a ride but never the less I have made it through, somewhat battered and bruised but with a great deal of pleasure and pride in the town and its people.

We have once more seen changes in Councillors as Sarah Mitchell, Ray Saunders, Neville Scott and John Geggie have decided that other commitments don't allow them the time to be active Councillors. It is with sadness and regrets that we say good bye to them and with my fellow Councillors, I give thanks to them for their contributions and wish them well in the future.

During the past year the Council has faced a number of changes brought about by the re-organisation of local government. Some of these changes may not prove to be a bad thing in the long term provided the council are given the time, shared knowledge and willingness to learn what is involved in implementing them successfully. However there will be local cost implications involved for our ratepayers for those services should they wish to see continued, but which the county are no longer prepared to provide. Reading the latest proposals on which services are to be transferred in the coming year to the Town Council, it would appear they are not as bad as I envisaged which will hopefully give the Council more time to prepare for the rest which are to come.

This brings me to a most frustrating point. - In spite of writing to the County Council on more than one occasion concerning the lack of consultation on local matters, when Amble Town Council has been bypassed or even totally ignored, and in spite of some correspondence from them that it would stop, it is still going on! How can we expect Councillors to remain interested and active if their views and that of the Council as a whole are not treated with respect? Your Councillors are unpaid volunteers with a passion to get the best for your town and should be seen as the leading players bearing in mind they are the only democratically elected representatives of the townspeople. One could not blame them if they all walked away and left the County Council to get on with

it but then who would be the voice of the local people dealing with local interests and bringing local knowledge to bear on decisions?

Last year I set myself some goals The first being the option of woodland/natural burials at the West cemetery- hopefully this will be finalised later this year thus providing a local facility for the growing number of people wishing for this kind of interment

Two was a Council web site and I am glad that progress is being made on this and hopefully it will be running by mid-summer. We see this as a vital means of communication and along with the publication of the newsletter in the Ambler, we feel more and more of our people will be better informed of Council activities.

Third was the Paddler's play area. Thanks to the tenacity and determination of Councillor Rev Nicholson in pursuing County Council officers with regard to its deterioration, a meeting has now been arranged for next week which hopefully will lead to meaningful discussions of the options available though it is difficult to know where the answer lies. All previous attempts to create a pleasant area where children can safely enjoy themselves have fallen victim to repeated vandalism and it is a sad reflection on our society that the lives and pleasures of the majority are continually blighted by the action of a few mindless morons.

I look back on a rewarding but hectic year during which I have sometimes felt my energy levels flagging causing me to think of retiring. However I very much appreciate all the kind wishes I have received on the numerous occasions when I have been out and about as Mayor. These have given me a boost and along with my wish to see a more settled Council with the handover of County services clarified, I have decided to remain a Member and if given the privilege of being asked to do another year as Chairman and Mayor, I once more promise to serve the people of Amble to the best of my ability.