

Fellow Councillors

When, in 1996, I returned to England after 25 years of working in the more unstable parts of the Middle and Far East, and the last couple of them in dealing with the unexploded detritus left by the Allied forces in Kuwait in the first Gulf War, I little expected that, three years later in 1999, I would be elected to the North Dorset District Council as one of the members for the Blackmore Ward. I even less expected that 20 years later, three weeks before my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, I should have the privilege of being appointed an Honorary Alderman, in the company of the other two remaining '99ers' Victor and Michael and our charming former Leader, Deborah.

Times have been eventful and interesting. Many years ago David Whitehead asked me to join his Cabinet but I declined with thanks, feeling that I could do more useful work in Planning. Over the years I have served on almost every Committee, and as Chairman or Vice-Chairman of most of them, but my main emphasis has been on Planning, which I have chaired for the last 15 years. This has had its amusing moments, such as a person put in an application to divide a curtilage and then when it came before Committee, spoke eloquently against the division. There were also times when the agenda at full council was sleep-inducing. In my early days I could rely on Angus Campbell to dig me in the ribs but when this service was no longer available there was one occasion when Michael Oliver, in the Chair, had to use his gavel to wake me up.

North Dorset has, I think, set a standard for not only the county of Dorset but for how local government should operate. Controversial items have been resolved by sensible discussion between members of all parties and there has been none of the childish and immature 'slanging' which seems to be fashionable in the higher levels of what passes for Government these days.

We have been very fortunate in our Officers. Back in the 1940's, when I was commissioned from Sandhurst, Field-Marshal Sir William Slim in his speech said "Remember Gentlemen, there are no bad Regiments, only bad Officers". Liz Goodall and her 'gang' I think gave us outstanding service – always available and always ready with advice when necessary

To all of you who are standing for the new unitary Dorset I wish the very best of luck and when you are elected, as I am sure you will be, every success in what will be, I am sure, very challenging times.

Thank you all very much for this honour.