IT IS AN HONOUR TO HAVE BE INVITED TO SAY A FEW WORDS HERE TODAY ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION THAT JIM MADE TO THE PUBLIC REALM OVER MANY YEARS; AND A PERSONAL PRIVILEGE FOR ME GIVEN MY ASSOCIATION WITH JIM. SUCH WAS THE REGARD IN WHICH JIM WAS HELD, THAT THERE WERE MANY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS FROM THE COUNCIL WHO WOULD HAVE UNDERTAKEN THIS ROLE TODAY - SO I HOPE THAT I DO THEM JUSTICE.

JIM WAS ELECTED TO COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL ON 6TH MAY 1999 TO REPRESENT THE AVENING WARD. HE CONTINUED TO REPRESENT THAT WARD UNTIL THE MAY 2015 ELECTIONS WHEN, FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW DISTRICT-WIDE WARD BOUNDARY ARRANGEMENTS, HE STOOD FOR, AND WAS ELECTED TO REPRESENT, THE GRUMBOLDS ASH WITH AVENING WARD.

THIS CHANGE GAVE HIM A SIGNIFICANTLY LARGER AREA TO COVER, BUT THIS DID NOT FAZE JIM. HE CONTINUED TO SEEK TO ATTEND AS MANY PARISH MEETINGS AS HE COULD AND ENSURE THAT ALL OF HIS LOCAL FAMILY HAD SOMEONE ON WHOM THEY COULD RELY FOR SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE WHENEVER IT WAS REQUIRED. I KNOW THAT THIS WAS MUCH VALUED BY LOCAL COMMUNITIES - AS WAS HIS WELL-KNOWN AND MUCH-LOVED MUSICAL ABILITIES WHEN HE OFTEN PLAYED AT LOCAL DAY CENTRES AND CARE HOMES. HE EVEN MANAGED TO ENTERTAIN AT A CDC FUNCTION, BUT FREE-OF-CHARGE OF COURSE!

JIM SERVED ON VIRTUALLY EVERY COMMITTEE FORMED AT CDC DURING THE COURSE OF WHAT WAS OVER 18 YEARS’ SERVICE AS A COUNCILLOR. HE HAD HIS PASSIONS AND PREFERENCES, BUT HE WAS ALWAYS PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER WAS ASKED OF HIM, TO THE BEST OF HIS ABILITIES, AND WITH A CHEERY SMILE - EVEN IF, WHEN NEEDED, THIS COULD CONCEAL A STEELY, NO-NONSENSE INTERIOR.

JIM SERVED AS A CHAIRMAN OF THE AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, THE TETBURY SPORT AND LEISURE CENTRE LIAISON COMMITTEE AND THE COMMUNITY SERVICES GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.  ADDITIONALLY, HE HELD VARIOUS VICE-CHAIRMAN POSITIONS.

ASIDE FROM THESE ROLES, JIM ALSO WORKED TIRELESSLY FOR NUMEROUS OUTSIDE BODIES, MANY OF WHICH FOCUSSED ON SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES INCLUDING FOSSEWAY HOUSING ASSOCIATION, GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL, CIRENCESTER AGE CONCERN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE HEALTHY LIVING PARTNERSHIP, AND THE CIRENCESTER CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU.

FOR MANY YEARS, JIM WAS THE CDC REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COUNTY-WIDE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, AND HE WAS PARTICULARLY PASSIONATE ABOUT SEEKING TO IMPROVE THE AMBULANCE SERVICE IN THE COTSWOLDS, AND TRYING TO ENSURE CONTINUED LOCAL HOSPITAL PROVISION. HE WAS ALSO PASSIONATE, AND AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF, THE COTSWOLD CANALS PARTNERSHIP.

JIM WAS THE FATHER OF THE HOUSE AT CDC. HE WAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY WELL-LIKED, HIGHLY REGARDED AND RESPECTED INDIVIDUAL, BE IT FOR HIS UNDOUBTED POLITICAL ABILITIES, OR HIS SUPPORT FOR THE COUNCIL, ITS RESIDENTS AND ITS STAFF, WHERE HE WAS ALWAYS READY WITH ADVICE OR GUIDANCE WHEN NEEDED, OR JUST A HELLO OR KIND WORD (OR FUNNY QUIP!). WHILST IN RECENT YEARS HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP ON CDC, POLITICS WERE NOT AS IMPORTANT AS DOING WHAT WAS RIGHT AND WHAT WAS BEST FOR HIS RESIDENTS, THOSE OF THE DISTRICT, AND BEYOND. SUCH AN APPROACH LED TO THE RESPECT HE RECEIVED ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM. HE WAS ALSO THERE FOR NEW MEMBERS, OFFERING SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE. HOWEVER, IN WHATEVER HE SAID OR DID, HE WAS ALWAYS A TRUE GENTLEMAN.

BUT, AS I HAVE MENTIONED, JIM’S LEGACY WILL LIVE STRONG AND LONG ACROSS ALL TIERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND, INDEED BEYOND, GIVEN HIS HEALTH-RELATED WORK.

WE WERE ALL VERY SADDENED BY JIM’S DEATH, AND EVEN AT YESTERDAY’S COUNCIL MEETING WHEN WE PAID TRIBUTE TO HIM, IT WAS STILL DIFFICULT TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE FACT THAT HE WAS NOT THERE, OFFERING SOUND WORDS AND WISE COUNSEL.

THE NUMBER OF RESPONSES AND KIND WORDS WE HAVE RECEIVED AT CDC TO THE SAD NEWS OF JIM’S PASSING WAS UNPRECEDENTED. HOWEVER, UPON REFLECTION, IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN WE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED AND IS A TRUE TESTAMENT TO SOMEONE WHO TOUCHED SO MANY LIVES.

SO, ON BEHALF OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY, I SADLY SAY GOODBYE TO JIM - AN OLD-STYLE, TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY SERVANT, BUT SOMEONE WHO DID MOVE WITH THE TIMES.

JIM’S CONTRIBUTIONS WILL BE SORELY MISSED, AND HE WILL BE AN EXCEPTIONALLY HARD ACT TO FOLLOW IN EVERY WAY.

IT WAS A PRIVILEGE TO HAVE KNOWN YOU AND TO HAVE WORKED WITH YOU. WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU - OUR FRIEND.

Mark Annett

Leader Cotswold District Council