

Monthly update for parish councils: February 2008

County Council meeting

There was a big council meeting in February. Not only did it cover the budget but it also had to review 3 Cabinet meetings.

The meeting itself was a lot better tempered than previous budget meetings. I'm not really sure why because by the time we got to the budget it was already pretty late. However we got through it as expected with the Lib Dems complaining that the Tories were not really investing in improvement and the Tories insisting that they were.

It took the opportunity at other times during the meeting to raise the following:

- The need to do a better job of new communities planning; it was recognized that both CCC and SCDC are making a mess of Arbury Camps;
- The need for a little less spin in the communication of Audit Commission ratings. 'Adequate' does not mean 'good';
- The need for the Council not to reduce its investment in support for Travellers and Gypsies; and
- The need for a policy with respect to overnight stopping places for HCVs.

Environment and Community Services

Cabinet addressed a recent Health and Adult Social Services Scrutiny committee report on the ASC information system. This used to cover both children's and adults' social care but when these were split the relationship with the provider was not well managed. The report highlighted this and made several recommendations which were accepted. Well done Cabinet!

Proposals have been made relating to the governance and operational management of the CGB. The former include a Management Board which will include representation of the Operators. This Board will *inter alia* set access charges which the operators must pay. This arrangement seems strange.

The first big development addressed by the joint development control committee for the Cambridge Fringes, viz Trumpington Meadows, has been determined.

The South Cambs LSP has committed £85K to upgrade the Rampton to Cottenham dual use Cyclepath/footpath. There is no doubt that this should be improved but this sum is not going to achieve anything like enough.

Children and Young People's Services

2 schools in Fenland have been approved to go to 11-18 provision. These are the secondary schools in Wisbech and Chatteris and this development is an important step in giving Fenland families the same opportunities that are available in more affluent parts of the county.

Corporate Services

The County Council has been rated as 'improving adequately' in its direction of travel. This is a measure of the extent to which the council is getting better and with this rating Cambridgeshire is one of only 8 (out of 34) with this rating. Bear in mind that there are four 4 star councils which are 'improving strongly' and you can see how the gap gets wider between Cambridgeshire and the best.

In future the Council's performance will be assessed according to performance indicators which relate to its Local Area Agreement. A first list of these PIs has been submitted to the Government Office and feedback has been positive.

Local issues

I attended the Histon 'crime' action meeting. This was also attended by members of the CCC locality team. There is to be another meeting in March.

There is a hitch with respect to the return to its owner of the Histon station building. I am meeting with Officers to work out a satisfactory resolution.

I attended a meeting of the Cottenham traffic group to review responses to its recent consultation. This group has done good work and has identified priorities which it will now pursue. I fully support what it has done and its proposals.

I attended an Arbury Park community meeting. There is concern about crime and policing and about SCDC delivery and control of developer commitments.

Forthcoming meetings and events

5 Mar 08	Histon/Impington ASB meeting
20 Mar 08	ECS Scrutiny (including a review of CGB road closures)
3 Mar 08	CCC Development Control meeting
18 Mar 08	County Council meeting
25 Mar 08	Northstowe Development Control meeting
TBA	Cambridge Guided Bus Liaison (Histon North)
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And finally ...I have to confess to being perhaps a stereotypical male in always reading the sports pages of a newspaper first. And in February these pages were full of the debate about the Premier League's 39th game. I'm glad that this seems to have been kicked into touch but I never saw any explanation of how the 39th game would be chosen. At 38 there is a simple symmetry but with 39 what do you do? It was all about money in the end and to me it's sad that the top football teams have become so removed from the fans that support them. That's why it's good to see the continuing success at Histon: well managed, strong community involvement and a real connection with local people. Long may they prosper!

David Jenkins

County Councillor; Cottenham, Histon and Impington

david.jenkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

H: +44 1223 236232

M: +44 7739 758859