

## **Monthly update for parish councils: February 2009**

### **County Council and Cabinet meetings**

There was a County Council meeting during the month. It was the annual budget meeting. It was a long one and was occasionally bad tempered with both sides questioning the economic sense of the other's proposals.

The Lib Dems submitted an alternative budget again and this went through scrutiny in the same way that the Administration's budget did. It's task was complicated by the late changes made in the latter between the Cabinet meeting reported last month (26 Jan 09) and the budget scrutiny meetings (week of 2 Feb 09). The result of this to and fro was that the Administration's council tax increase was reduced to 3.9%, that of the Lib Dems to 2.45%.

I took the opportunity during the review of the Council's partnerships to ask that the County Council, in its role as chair of Cambridgeshire Together, encourage its partners to ensure that they paid their bills on time. Life's tough enough during the recession without having to worry about cash flow. In Oct 08 Gordon Brown pledged that the government would pay private sector suppliers within 10 days; it would be great for small companies in Cambridgeshire if that were to happen here and to be matched by larger companies.

### **Environment and Community Services**

I attended ECS scrutiny where two items relating to called-in decisions from a previous cabinet meeting were called. One questioned the business case for terminating the current partnership with the city council for parking controls. The other asked why the cabinet had acted without AJC support regarding changes to bus parking arrangements. At the same meeting it was agreed that the Council's gritting policy and performance would be scrutinised at its next meeting

The guided bus sage continues with the strange announcement that the Arbury Link is being taken away from BAM Nuttall and awarded to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party. It had been expected that this link would have been finished by now but BAM Nuttall has been dragging its feet and doesn't even seem to have started. Strange.

### **Children's Services**

There is another issue with regard to education provision in the City. It seems that demand for primary school places is significantly higher than expected. This may require that capital expenditure be reconsidered and could have a knock-on effect on schools outside the City. And of course there is a related concern: as the recession bites cash strapped parents are withdrawing students from private schools increasing the demand on the state sector. This would of course be exacerbated if such schools themselves close because of declining rolls.

## Corporate Services

I participated in interviews for existing CCC employees to fit into the new top level jobs in the organisation. These are challenging roles and we are fortunate to be able to fill them without going outside with its associated expense.

I recorded a podcast to encourage people to stand for the council in the elections in June. I'm not a natural at such things but as a group leader I was one of the chosen. It'll be on-line at [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) from 4 Mar 09.

The Council has just announced the results of its 'place survey'. All councils have to run such surveys now and it's about finding out what people think of the council. It's not clear what the numbers really mean without being able to compare them to other councils on the same basis or to history to deliver a trend. I'll add a copy of the results of the survey to my web-site.

## Local issues

I met Bob Menzies on site at the Guided Bus crossing in Histon/Impington to look at parking concerns. There are limitations to what can be done in advance and I will submit a short report to the parish councils.

The Northstowe JDCC meeting for February was cancelled.

## Forthcoming meetings and events

4 Mar 09	Transport Commission open meeting (Guildhall; 1800)
16 Mar 09	Northstowe JDCC meeting (to be confirmed)
17 Mar 09	CCC full council meeting
17 Mar 09	CGB local liaison forum (Meadows Community Centre, 1930)
23 Mar 09	CCC Development Control

And finally ... I attended two events at Impington Village College (where I am Deputy Chair of Governors). The first was its annual 'Stars in their Eyes' 'talent show where I was one of the judges. That was a tremendous evening with an array of amazing talent on display. And then last Friday I went to Fuse which was a modern dance show featuring original work developed by students with Wayne McGregor | Random Dance. This was not just another incredible display of talent but it also showed, through a dance which combined students from year 12 students with those from the IDEAL unit, exactly what inclusion and mainstreaming is all about. That dance on its own was worth the price of the ticket: truly inspirational. Go to [j davidjenkins.wordpress.com](http://j davidjenkins.wordpress.com) for more information about both events.

Both this monthly report and the ones for previous months are on my website.

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