

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

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

There was no Council meeting during January; there were two Cabinet meetings. At the first the extension of the school age range at Cottenham Village College was up for approval and I spoke in favour. Technically the Cabinet had no power to block this change but the proposal is good and the focus on a vocational sixth form will allow the school to differentiate itself from others in the area.

The second Cabinet meeting addressed the budget for 2009/10 and a council tax rise of 4.7% was approved. This will go to full Council in February. The Lib Dems have posted an amendment which would result in the increase to council tax being limited to 2.9%. Both the budget proposal and the amendment will go through scrutiny this week.

### **Environment and Community Services**

The A14 development is moving back towards centre stage and the Highways Agency made a brief presentation at CCC before the Growth and Environment Policy Development Group meeting. What's worrying is that the plans which are in place were first hatched in 2001 when climate change was not on the national agenda in the way that it is now. In the papers for the PDG there were references to the requested cycle provision at the B1049 junction and I made the points that (1) the CGB related route is not a sensible alternative for cyclists wanting to go straight in to town; and (2) the junction is dangerous and no amount of tinkering with its approaches will make it safe. Either a bridge or a tunnel is necessary.

I was unable to attend the South Cambs AJC but I did send input (1) progress with respect to the HCV parking ban in Impington is disappointing and we must find a way of speeding matters up; and (2) the program to reconsider the strategic freight routes in the County should include a 'declassification' of the B1049 so that it is not a natural choice for Northstowe etc construction traffic.

### **Children's Services**

There's been a minor scandal in the City where the Parkside Federation has been found 'guilty' of running an illegal admissions policy. This unfairly favoured siblings of other federation schools over children living within the catchment.

Note that there was an article in the CEN suggesting that a broad range of school upgrades were being axed because of a lack of funding. This is not correct although there has been some re-prioritisation.

### **Corporate Services**

The Appointments Committee continues to meet to agree and implement the new Council structure. We have now agreed the job specs etc of all the new Directors (strategic, service and corporate). We need to be very careful that this does not

result in 'grade inflation' which the abolition of the multiple deputy chief executive roles was intending to prevent.

I attended a meeting of CMEEN, the Cambridgeshire Minority Ethnic Employees Network, as a part of a Corporate Service Scrutiny member led review. This has been reported to the committee and will be reflected in its final report.

### **Local issues**

I attended a meeting with residents of Melvyn Way, South Cambs planning and the Guided Bus team. During the inquiry the Inspector imposed conditions relating to noise which will result in a 2m wall at the bottom of residents' gardens. The problem is that this will 'visually intrude' and the residents don't want it. It is proving a challenge to find a way though but at least we're talking!

There was a very useful neighbourhood panel meeting. Firstly we got a good look at the speed cameras which are used within neighbourhood speedwatch schemes. And secondly we had a very constructive meeting which moved us on from the fractious nature of the last one. Well done all round.

Northstowe development has to some extent come to a stop. The developers were due to respond to comments about their first submission but have now said that this will be delayed pending internal discussions.

### **Forthcoming meetings and events**

5 Feb 09	CGB meeting: Longstanton all the way to the City
12 Feb 09	Cambridgeshire County Council meeting
23 Feb 09	Orchard Park action group
23 Feb 09	CCC Development Control
24 Feb 09	CCC Cabinet

And finally ... in the spirit of cross party co-operation I spent a half day with Jill Tuck, Council Leader, in South Cambs visiting the Sawston medical centre, from which adult and children's social care teams operate, and Duxford CofE Community Primary School. The latter was especially splendid and although I have some reservation about 'faith' schools it was good to see such a thriving school supporting the local community with 'only' 172 pupils. Too often we are told that schools must be big to work. Sometimes (often?) small is better. Now that I've visited my patch (South Cambs) with her I've asked Jill if we can make a similar visit to hers (Fenland).

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

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