

Monthly update for parish councils: November 2008

It should have been a quiet month with no council meeting, that's why I planned my holiday for November. However there were the small matters of 2 by-elections: in Teversham for SCDC and in Hardwick for the County. The latter especially was redolent of the proxy wars of the last century when the Russians and Americans poured disproportionate fire power into minor local conflicts. This time it was the Lib Dems and Tories with the latter fielding at least 2 MPs. Anyway that livened up the month!

County Council meeting

There was no council meeting but there was an interesting cabinet meeting at which I spoke as local member on the item regarding the cycling town monies and the priority being given to the B1049 cycle route. I made the points that we must look at the complete route and not just bits of it and that we must not compromise on established national standards. I'm pleased to say that these points were minuted and are in the cabinet report going to full council.

Environment and Community Services

Despite best efforts it seems that necessary work was not possible at short notice to enable the proposed Impington HCV ban to go to the Jan 09 AJC. This means we have to wait until Apr 09 which is just about a year since the issue was first raised. Sometimes we allow process to defeat democratic will!

There will be an item on the 16 Dec 08 cabinet agenda regarding the cost of the guided bus. It will be interesting because we can expect to finally find out what the project is going to cost and how much CCC is going to have to pay for it.

The County Council's Adult Social Care service finally got its second star and is no longer 'adequate' but 'good' with 'promising' capacity to improve. It's been a long slog but at last we're up with the pack. The Council has advertised for a new Director of Communities and Adult Social Care and the Appointments Committee will be meeting to agree a short list in December.

Children's Services

The County Council has announced that applications for children wishing to start primary school next September must be submitted by 5 Dec 08. I fully understand the challenge of capacity planning but am surprised that the process is so long and must surely result in more problems of the sort encountered at Orchard Park primary school earlier this year.

Following the tragic events in Haringey, the local Safeguarding Children Board has requested that area teams review the cases of all under 5s subject to a child protection plan; this work is underway.

School inflation and demography forecasts have been updated for 2009/10. The 3.7% per pupil uplift for 2009/10 is estimated to be insufficient to fund the inflationary pressures predicted for schools; a 0.7% real terms cut is forecast.

Corporate Services

A final restructuring proposal has now emerged and is to be presented to the Cabinet for its approval in December. Strangely it will be a confidential item on the agenda and then be publically aired at full council. Note that initially it had not been intended that it follow such a process but thankfully good sense has prevailed and the changes will be open to full public scrutiny.

The government has announced a 1.95% increase in its grant to Cambridgeshire for 2009. This is based on its formula which doesn't fairly account for the county's growth challenges. There will be challenges.

Local issues

As a follow up to the 20's plenty event in Histon last month local activists ran a public meeting which I attended. It was a cold November evening but the meeting was well attended with a range of views being exchanged. Although there is not unanimous support for specific speed limits there is support for better enforcement and for generally safer roads for all users.

I have heard that, since the opening of the Butt Lane Park and Ride site, traffic has increased through Impington to the site. I have asked for an officer opinion.

There was another accident on 20 Pence Road at the entry to Cottenham.

Forthcoming meetings and events

| | |
|-----------|--|
| TBA | Orchard Park action group |
| TBA | CGB meeting: Longstanton all the way to the City |
| 9 Dec 08 | Cambridgeshire County Council meeting |
| 10 Dec 08 | South Cambs 'in your patch' meeting |
| 11 Dec 08 | CCC Development Control Committee |
| 15 Dec 08 | Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee |

And finally ... you may be aware when my wife and I were on holiday we were robbed but that fortunately our passports were recovered. I spoke to the British consulate subsequently and was surprised at how limited their help would have been if I'd needed it. I had 'assumed' that emergency passports would be issued just about on demand. No way! Forms have to be sent off to the embassy and you then need to wait 10-15 days. So any subsequent international travel is impossible and any pre-booked low cost flights are simply foregone. So, everyone: be warned. Whatever you do with anything else of value keep your passports especially guarded.

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

David Jenkins

County Councillor; Cottenham, Histon and Impington

ccc@davidjenkins.org.uk www.davidjenkins.org.uk

H: +44 1223 236232 M: +44 7739 758859