

Monthly update for parish councils: September 2008

County Council meeting

It was back to formal council work in September but still no council meeting. But there was a full cabinet meeting (and another one next week, see below).

The IDeA report which had been delayed was finally published last week. It's a good report but can be 'spun' either way. The Council's view is on its website under news. There is no link to the report itself but I do have a copy

Environment and Community Services

The Council has advised that it will not be funding any 'new' street repairs. This is not unexpected; it happens every year but this year seems earlier than most.

The latest date for the handover of the central library is 22 Dec 08. This project has been difficult and much remains to be done. It should open late February.

Appointment of the chairman of the 'independent commission' to assist with developing TIF proposals has now been advertised. It is expected that the commission will report in the summer of 2009.

The government is asking for regions to review the regional plan (which took years to develop) within the next months. Given the state of the economy which is changing lots of the assumptions on which the current plan is based this seems to be a largely futile exercise. At the same time South Cambs is developing proposals whereby it can meet its housing numbers given the slippage in Northstowe. This worryingly includes quite a lot in the south of the division but note that these are only suggestions at this stage.

Children's Service

Recommendations have been made regarding the new secondary and first new primary school in Northstowe. They go before the cabinet next week. The secondary school is recommended to go to the Swavesey VC bid and the primary school is recommended to be a church school.

Diligent readers will recall mention of the new Thomas Clarkson school in Wisbech (it replace the failing Queen's School). It's proving a challenge getting the new school up and running and there are concerns about its finances and its ability to attract and retain staff.

Corporate Services

Another restructuring of the council is being proposed and is now out for consultation. This was initially driven by the need to give more prominence to the position of the director of adult social care (they are now advertising for a 'corporate director') but has been extended to rationalize and potentially save money in Corporate Services and to tidy up the area/locality structure in CYPS. A new structure should come into place 1 Apr 09.

Local issues

Sadly we have lost Impington post office. It is not surprising and simply reflects the crude numbers based approach which the Post Office has taken.

At the South Cambs AJC meeting in October I will be challenging officers on the lack of progress regarding the HCV overnight parking ban agreed for Histon and Impington. Nothing has been done yet and I worry that this may become another 'promise not yet kept'.

At ECS scrutiny in October the lack of progress regarding the closure of Longstanton Road in Oakington will be addressed. This is another AJC promise which has not yet been kept.

I attended the Crime and Disorder Partnership annual meeting and took the opportunity to ask the chair to specifically take a look at Arbury Park. There has also been press and TV coverage of the impact of the credit crunch (more below) on the development and the potential for low level crime and anti social behavior.

On a more positive note I visited Orchard Park primary school and met the head (Jenny Russon). It really is a splendid school and needs to get full support both from the community (which it largely has) and the county council (which has lacked). As you drive off the A14 you can now see its wind turbine operating!

Forthcoming meetings and events

6 Oct 08	South Cambs AJC
6 Oct 08	Orchard Park action group
8 Oct 08	ECS scrutiny (Loongstanton Road, Oakington issue)
9 Oct 08	Cambridgeshire County Council Development Control
13 Oct 08	Histon etc police panel (check date)
13 Oct 08	CCC budget roadshow in Cambridge
21 Oct 08	Cambridgeshire County Council meeting

And finally ... we are certainly sliding into a recession as the credit crunch bites. I see less traffic on the motorways and what there is is driving more slowly. I use www.activehotels.co.uk to book overnight hotels for business and have got some very attractive deals recently. This will all translate into more conservative buying in the shops and before we know it we'll have the January sales early in December. I recall the recessions of the early 90s (was that Nigel Lawson and his 'green shoots of recovery'?) and the early 80s (I was a purchasing manager then; a great job to have in a recession) and they went on and on so I don't expect this one to be over until 2010.

Both this monthly report and the ones for previous months are on my website. You might also like to check out www.b1049.org.uk.

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