

Matt Bradney Parish Report for February 2009

I had a technical glitch this month and lost the report I had typed, so I am having to redo post haste...

I will start with the weather issues, as this has been by far the dominant subject this month, for my portfolio anyway.

Gritting, Snow and Cyclists

As you may have noticed it has been a pretty cold winter this year, this has resulted in us gritting far more times than at this time last year. This was the start of our problems. Early Feb brought us the worst Snow we had seen for 20 years. Cambridgeshire gritters were out and about gritting and on the whole did an absolutely fantastic job. The prolonged weather meant that we had to keep going out and that we had to start gritting some of our secondary routes etc. Normally this is not an issue, however because the whole Country was in the same boat, grit supplies very quickly became an issue. It started off in Essex with them having to cut their runs by 50%, we followed a few days after by reducing ours by 25%. The Government stepped in to manage the existing stocks and distribute them where the need was the most; of course we only got a few deliveries. But it has to be said that by managing the process carefully we only had a couple of nights of reduced gritting. Having said that stocks are still not as high as I would like, but with a fair wind behind us we should be ok for the rest of this winter.

Rumbling on along side the grit shortage was the issue of gritting cycle paths in Cambridge. I have some sympathy for that, but recognise resource issues etc. So I wrote to Geoff Hoon MP, to ask him to look at this on a National basis, no reply as yet. I also announced that I had asked for a review of the policy in the Summer, when we can take this and all the other issues that arose and have a good look at whether there needs to be some adjustment to the policy, my guess is yes.

Full Council

We had a lengthy full council this month. The reason was it was the budget setting Full Council and we had a couple of Cabinet papers to go through too. The budget debate was a slightly odd one, as there was little debate on the administrations budget proposals, in fact only one question on my budget. The main part of the debate focussed on whether the opposition's budget was feasible or not. It was a little ill tempered at times, but the net result was a Council tax rise of 3.9%. It has to be said that after looking at the District Councils (all of them) tax rise, I think we did a very good job of keeping it low and investing in services.

As usual I was on my feet a lot in the rest of the meeting answering questions on Highways. One subject which had several points raised about was the October list or the medium sized traffic improvements. It was pretty clear that there are some issues with the scoring mechanism, so I agreed to review the mechanism for next year.

Scrutiny

The Scrutiny session was held at the end of last month. There were 3 called in items, (one called in twice, both to do with bus stops in Cambridge city). The other called in item was about parking enforcement and the decision to terminate the agreement with the City Council in order to roll out a wider service for the County. This will, in the end benefit the residents of South Cambs, but will not detract from the efficient service in the City. The discussion was lengthy, but the end result was to accept the decision with some comments on the process that was undertaken.

Scrutiny also scrutinised the budget, or as it is called these days the Integrated Plan. It was a lengthy session.

In all I was there for around 4 hours in the hot seat.

Guided Bus

To allow the Guided Busway contractor, BAM Nuttall Ltd, to concentrate on delivering the main part of the scheme between St Ives and Trumpington Balfour Beatty, an experienced national contractor, will build the Orchard Park link. It will not cost anymore for Balfour Beatty to build the link and it will be completed before the busway opens in late summer.

Although a small part of the scheme the Orchard Park link is important, as it will give residents living in and near to Orchard Park and Kings Hedges Road an express bus service in to Cambridge and a traffic free public transport alternative to St Ives which will take just 20 minutes.

BAM Nuttall is making good progress on the busway between St Ives and Cambridge for it to open in late summer and the quality of work is good.

Cambridgeshire Transport Commission – 1st Public Hearing

The independent Commission is already receiving evidence through its online survey and over the next few months will be inviting key organisations and local people on all sides of the debate to give evidence directly at public hearings.

Cambridgeshire's Transport Commission is holding the first of a series of public hearings to look at congestion in and around Cambridge from 6.00 – 8.30pm on 4 March at the Guildhall (Cambridge). Anyone is welcome to attend the sessions.

Place Survey Results

We got the results of our new Place Survey this month. It showed a very pleasing result of over 86% of residents said they are satisfied overall with Cambridgeshire as a place to live.

The results of the [Place Survey](#) is an important barometer of residents' views. The information will be used to monitor changing perceptions to see whether interventions made in an area have had the right outcomes.

The Place Survey replaces the Best Value Performance Indicator Survey (BVPI) and has 18 National Indicators, which will be used for monitoring performance.

UK figures for comparison are due to be published by the Audit Commission in early March and will be published at www.audit-commission.gov.uk

A14

I mentioned that I was due to meet with Lord Adonis, Andrew Lansley, Jim Paice and Jonathon Djanogly on Monday 2nd Feb to talk about the A14. The snow scuppered that. So we had a conference call instead. The long and short of it is that the money is there. There was also a commitment to building the access roads for Northstowe, and I took the opportunity to have a go about a cycle bridge over the roundabout at Histon.

If you have any queries or issues you would like me to deal with then please feel free to email or call me.

Regards

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Monthly Report for Parish Councils January 2009

It gets a bit repetitive saying another busy month, but it was.

I had a very enjoyable trip to Oxfordshire this month. I was the guest of their Leader, Keith Mitchell. The similarities other than having a world renowned University are quite incredible. It was interesting to see how other councils operate and deal with the issues. I came away with a number of good ideas, but let some there too.

There was no full council but I had a couple of busy Cabinet meetings.

The first Cabinet meeting on the 15th had items like some additional funding being put towards the voluntary sector to help out over the next few turbulent financial years. A lot was made of this in the press and quite rightly so, some £500k will go to those organisations to help families etc.

Cottenham Village College has applied to introduce a Sixth Form for vocational studies. I was very pleased to support this application, but then am slightly biased.

Also at this Cabinet meeting I introduced items on the Abington to Sawston Cycle way, the plans to introduce a county wide parking policy. The first steps were to bring the parking enforcement contract in house from the City Council. This is the first step, next is to sort out what all the different districts want and need. I also introduced the plans for the bus stops in Cambridge for the Guided Bus.

The next Cabinet was all about the budget, or integrated plan as it is now called. Although a short agenda there was a lot to go through. I have had so many meetings about this budget. It was resolved to set the Council Tax at 4.7% this year, which will still leave us as one of the lowest Council tax authorities in the country.

Guided Bus

The month started off with the news that there had been some delays on the Guided Bus and that the Northern section will now be ready in the Summer rather than the Spring. I also spent an afternoon out with Ben Webster from The Times, showing him bits of the guideway. He ran an article later in the month, although he did get the quotes around the wrong way!!

Transport Commission

The website was launched this month. It is available at <http://www.cambstransportcommission.co.uk> please take a few minutes to visit the site and fill out the questions. As you know the Commission will be looking at congestion in the Cambridge area and looking at the causes and suggesting some possible solutions. Sir Brian and Tony will be receiving the

online views and then hold some public evidence gathering sessions before reporting back to the council in the Summer.

A14

We had a very useful presentation from the Highways Agency and Costain/Skanska about how things are going on the A14 project. Nothing really new to update you on. I am due, weather permitting, to have a meeting with Lord Adonis, Andrew Lansley, Jim Paice and Jonathon Djanogly on Monday 2nd Feb to talk about the A14. I haven't seen an agenda for the talk, so my guess is as good as yours.

South Cambs AJC

As the chair of this committee I was very disappointed not to be able to make it. David has mentioned the HCV Parking Ban in Impington. It was resolved at the meeting to delegate this to me (as the Chair) and the vice chair. I have already been onto officers to ensure this happens quickly.

HCV Movements Through Our Villages

A topic I have been asking about and nagging at Shire Hall since I was first elected. JAG have done an excellent job of lifting this further up the agenda, and I was very pleased to attend a meeting this month. I was accompanied by Mac Mcguire, deputy leader, Steve Criswell (new Cabinet member and member for Earith) and Bill Hunt (member for Haddenham and Wilburton). I thought the meetings was a good start. One of the things to come out of it is the need to have JAG involvement as we work through the challenges and draw up future policy.

Consultation on Extra Minerals And Waste Site Proposals

A new consultation was launched on Monday, 26 January, on additional proposals put forward for waste management and mineral extraction in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Council is launching a six-week public consultation in partnership with Peterborough City Council on the extra proposals suggested by stakeholders.

The consultation is a follow up to the series of public events held in September and October 2008 when communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had their say on the emerging Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Plan.

The Plan proposes the location of future waste management facilities and mineral extraction sites up to 2026 and has a number of key principles including making minerals available for the construction of new housing and infrastructure, including the upgrade of A14 and A1073, and encouraging recycling through conveniently located, modern, enclosed recycling centres.

In response to the 2008 consultation, stakeholders have suggested 36 new sites for mineral and waste development.

Even though these new proposals currently have no formal status, Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have to consider them and decide whether they should be included in the next version of the Plan.

Members of the public can access information on the new sites and have their say by going to:

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/mwplan

The consultation ends on Monday, 9 March.

Inspection Ratings

We had quite a bit of good news this month

Government inspectors from the Audit Commission named Cambridgeshire as the most improved County Council in England based on its performance over the last three years.

We were ranked the top county council out of 388 local authorities with 86% of its performance indicators showing improvement – against a national county authority average of between 67.5% and 72.5%.

Some more good news this month with Adult Social Support Services have been given a two star rating by Government inspectors – doubling their score.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has judged the service to be delivering good outcomes for service users, with promising capacity for continued improvement and awarded an overall performance rating of two stars – up from the previous year's one star rating.

We also had a report from OfSTED which said Cambridgeshire County Council provides services for children and young people that are consistently above required standards, say inspectors.

In the Council's Annual Performance Assessment (APA), standards of education were found to be good, and inspectors praised the way the Council used the views of children and young people in developing its strategic plan.

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