

Monthly Report For Parish Councils - December 2007

First of all a Happy New Year to you all, I hope 2008 proves to be a really good year.

Apologies to Rampton and Oakington for the lateness of my report. I was away for Christmas and my desk and emails really piled up. December was a strange month, quiet yet extremely busy. I spent every working day up until the 22nd at Shire Hall having various briefings etc. I had so much reading to do over Christmas I think I need another eye check! However there were a few meetings I went to and those are detailed below.

FULL COUNCIL

We had a full council meeting this month. On the agenda were several items, but most important of all (to me anyway) was my appointment as a Cabinet member. I have been given the Planning and Regional matters portfolio, vacated by Cllr Reynolds when he took the Corporate Services portfolio.

On the face of it the agenda was pretty light, but as always when you get into the nitty gritty there was much to debate. It was interesting as David was unable to attend, leaving the opposition with no leader.

We debated the previous Cabinet meetings (when I was not a member of Cabinet). There were no Key decisions in any of them, except for the decision to proceed with the Waste PFI scheme with Donarbon. This will give us a world class recycling centre and everyone agrees a very worthwhile exercise.

The motions submitted, David has already commented on. I have said before that I do not want my reports to be any sort of political posturing, and I will stick to that. The motion supported was to do with Schools not having their budgets cut to handle maintenance – everybody agrees on this and the motion was successful.

CABINET

I had my first Cabinet meeting this month. The meeting clashed with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) meeting at South Cambs, of which I am a member of now too. I opted for Cabinet as Brian Smith (Deputy Chief Exec) was going to the LSP (more on that later). Cabinet had various items on the agenda regarding Rural Transport (a scrutiny report), Drug and alcohol education for younger people (another Scrutiny report), Council Priorities, Budget (see later), the new Integrated Planning Process (the new name for budget setting, but setting targets and priorities at the same time), Accident Remedies and Traffic Management Programme, Home to School policy, Waste Disposal Policy (my area – nothing really exciting other than the home recycling centres being a bit stricter on business waste, landlords etc).

I can provide more details of any of the items if members wish?

LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (LSP)

There was an extraordinary meeting of the LSP this month. It clashed with Cabinet, so as mentioned above I opted for Cabinet. The reason for the meeting was to discuss the reward grants given for good performance in certain areas to the LSP's, and to allocate the monies. It is not massive amounts of cash, but it can achieve

improvements for our local area. After much debate it was decided that the path between Cottenham and Rampton should be improved, which I welcome. The money available was agreed to spent on:

Cottenham to Rampton shared use path - £84,490

Survey of potential renewable energy resources - £6,000

Climate Change Web-page Suite - £3,000

Dial-a-Ride - £6,510

IN YOUR PATCH

Every few months we County Councillors have a briefing session to talk about County issues in the South Cambs area. We had one of these meetings in early December, and for the first time South Cambs Councillors were invited to attend. The meeting was well attended and I felt very useful. I think it was extremely useful to have the District Councillors there, and I hope and I have suggested that this continues.

The main topic of conversation was the arrangements for the changes in Local Government coming later this year (2008), specifically the new Local Area Agreements (LAA). For those that don't know about the LAA, I have included at the end of this email a few notes about it.

BUDGET SETTLEMENT 'A KICK IN THE TEETH' FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire County Council will be given its lowest grant increase in 10 years - just 2% for 2008-09. This compares with a national county average increase of 5.6%. In 2009-10 the increase will be another 2% (county average 4.2%) and in 2010-11 it will be 2.2% (county average 4.1%).

It is early days and we need time to analyse this settlement and its implications, but on the face of it, this is another kick in the teeth for the residents of Cambridgeshire. What is clear is that Cambridgeshire's grant increase is well below inflation for the next three years - in real terms this actually represents a cut in grant. At a time when Cambridgeshire is trying to cope with unprecedented demand for its services, the Government gives us yet another hopelessly inadequate settlement, which is going to put us in dire financial straits for the next three years. The rising demand for social care, rocketing oil prices, the increasing numbers of elderly residents and the wide-ranging pressures resulting from the massive house building programme are just a few of the pressures we are facing now and will continue to face over the coming years. This settlement is wholly unfair and places a quite unreasonable burden on the County Council and its taxpayers.

KERBSIDE PLASTICS' RECYCLING - IT'S ON ITS WAY

South Cambs District Council is now planning to introduce a kerbside plastics' recycling collection. This is in response to many requests since the wheeled bins were introduced. The plastics' collection bins placed in supermarket car parks, for example, have proved successful, but are regularly full to overflowing. This has led to plastic bottles littering the surrounding areas. The main problem against a comprehensive

plastics' recycling scheme has been the many different types of plastic bottles and the high cost of sorting them. Progress has been made in remedying this, which makes it possible to introduce a kerbside collection.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

December saw a few changes to the person at the top. Gordon Jeyes was appointed Acting Chief Executive Officer. Which I personally think was a good thing to do. Gordon is a very impressive character and has done a fantastic job in Children and Young People Services. It means that he will also be taking the overall look at Adult Services. This can only be a good thing and I am very sure we will see the continuance of the recent improvement and an increase in the pace these improvements come.

Having said all of the above, you will have read that the Appointments Committee agreed unanimously to appoint Mark Lloyd as the new Chief Exec for Cambridgeshire. Cabinet were asked to comment, and the whole of Cabinet agreed that he should be appointed. All that remains is for Full Council to vote on it, so a special meeting has been called for that to happen.

PARK AND RIDE

The works are well and truly under way. Work starts on the Butt Lane A10 junction this month. I have been told these works will be completed overnight and off peak – but the usual caveat was put in place, wherever possible. The scheme is still scheduled to be finished and open in the autumn.

GATEHOUSE LANE

This road was open for Christmas. I have had some say it was good and others say why bother. It goes to show that whatever you do it will not suit everyone. There have been many comments about volume of work and I have asked the Contractor to give me an update rather than officers.

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LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)

I have written a brief outline of what the LAA is, and what it will do. I hope it is helpful, if you need any further information I would be grateful if you could ask me before the Parish meetings, so I can have an answer ready.

What is The Local Area Agreement all about?

It is about delivering a vision for better outcomes and services for Cambridgeshire by ...getting public bodies to work together to deliver improvement, with clear targets agreed with government

In Cambridgeshire we have called the local area agreement 'Cambridgeshire Together', (CT). The board of CT are made up of:

Cllr R Manning - South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cllr I Bates - Huntingdonshire District Council
Kirsten Bennett - Chief Executive - Cambridgeshire ACRE
Cllr P Moakes - East Cambridgeshire District Council
Jez Reeve - Voluntary Service
Maureen Donnelly - Chairman
Cambridgeshire PCT
Selwyn Image - SDI Consultants
Cllr I Nimmo - Smith - Cambridge City Council
Julie Spence - Chief Constable
Cllr F Yeulett - Fenland District Council
Cllr K Walters - Cambridgeshire Police Authority
Cllr V Lucas – Cambridgeshire County Council

The board are there to ensure that Cambridgeshire achieves the outcomes and priorities set for Cambridgeshire. The vision for Cambridgeshire is:

'Our Vision is for Cambridgeshire to be a county of strong, growing, prosperous and inclusive communities supported by excellent services where people can fulfil their potential, live longer, healthier lifestyles, and influence decision – making'

The priorities have been drawn up by consultation with all the major partnerships (e.g Children and Young People Strategic Partnership), LSP's, Parish Plans, Neighbourhood Panels, Quality of life survey (2006)

The Priorities are:

- Growth
- Economic Prosperity
- Environmental Sustainability
- Equality and Inclusion
- Strong Communities

The new LAA is to be agreed by June this year (2008). It is a 3 years delivery plan to deliver the long term vision for our county. The plan will focus on outcomes,

performance indicators, targets and interventions like reducing Child Obesity and employment for young people.

This plan will be how we are judged by government, it will be the key mechanism to agree county wide priorities and the effectiveness of local bodies will be judged as a whole, not piecemeal.

The LAA priorities are supported with funding from local bodies such as Districts, County, Police etc, and a grant from government which is not ringfenced (wonders will never cease) save to say it must be spent on these local priorities.

To judge the effectiveness of this LAA the board must select 35 performance indicators from a basket of 198. There are already 17 compulsory indicators based on children and young people. In addition to these 52 performance indicators we will be judged on there can be local specific indicators too.

It is important to say that Partnership working is not new and it has been working in Cambridgeshire for some time. This new LAA formalises the process and gives it some governance. The whole process will be building on the successes enjoyed by Children and Young People Services and the fantastic job done with recycling in this County, to mention just 2.

The job of this new plan and board is to increase the partnership working, and ensure working across boundaries continues. It must ensure that targets are more customer focussed and certainly more outcome focussed. The board will be able to deliver better efficiencies through joint working which will also result in a much more local focus.