

Monthly Report for Cottenham Parish Council- May 2008

In my report to you in March I put that February is a crazy time. That was before I was given my new portfolio. Some have said it is a good thing others have said it is a curse – it is too early for me to tell just yet. My new portfolio is called Growth and Infrastructure. The long and short of it is that if it doesn't have a pulse then I look after it, just kidding. I am now responsible for all the growth in Cambridgeshire, the Section 106 negotiations, working with Horizons etc. I am also responsible, and here is the hardest part, transport. This includes passenger transport and our old friend maintenance and network management. Along with this comes the Guided Bus and Congestion Charging – the 2 biggest projects being undertaken at present. I am still finding a plethora of committees I either sit on or chair, so far I am well into double figures!

Before anyone asks, there have been no decisions on Congestion Charging yet. I have been getting myself up to speed on the subject. We are taking a paper to Cabinet in July – that will be when we know what is happening, or at least if we are to take it all to the next step. But we did have the results of the consultation announced this month; they didn't exactly paint a totally clear picture. 60% of respondents were totally opposed to the idea of congestion charging, however when asked if there was a good alternative 60% of the same people would support it!! Now it just rests with us on the Cabinet to figure out the best way forward.

Full Council

On top of getting to grips with my new responsibilities, we had a full council meeting. It felt a little like the Matt Bradney show, as was dealing with questions on my previous portfolio and getting new ones on my new one.

In an almost unheard of show of solidarity a motion was supported by all parties on how bad for Cambridgeshire the new Eco Town of Hanley Grange would be. On a slight side issue, I attended a Q & A session with the promoters of Hanley Grange, I learned very little other than the plans are actually for 10 000 homes, previously it was 7 000 and that they are woefully under-prepared. They had no response to traffic concerns, other than to say they could use the train, that would be over 5000 people trying to squeeze onto Whittlesford platform to wait for the 1 train per hour! They also had no idea where or how they would source the necessary aggregates for the new town. Their figures regarding Employment was also very concerning. So all in all as we suspected. We also had the **Regional Spatial Strategy** signed off by Government this month. The disappointing thing was government had changed the limit on housing for the region from a maximum to a minimum! Leaving the door wide open for an Eco Town perhaps??? Or am I just being a little cynical?

Back to the Council meeting – The new leader and her cabinet were approved and the opposition leaders were approved too. I have already mentioned a motion that was supported on Hanley Grange. A further motion on building in break clauses on long term contracts was not supported – this referred specifically to the excellent Building Schools for the future project going on in Fenland. The whole county will benefit from future waves of funding for this project.

We thought it might be a quickish meeting – but this was not the case and we finished up sometime in the afternoon.

High Street, Cottenham

Continues to be closed. Anglian water have not been the quickest at trying to help out. Eventually I asked the County to order the signs necessary and charge AW. This whole thing has been very disappointing to me, as I felt we had all prepared very well for such a long closure. There is a HGV ban in place on Lambs Lane, but some companies are flouting this. They have been written to and informed of the closure, however they continue to break the law.

Home to School Transport – Oakington to Impington Village College

The ongoing saga of school bus route cuts took a very interesting turn this month, in fact 2 interesting turns. First of all this now falls under my wing as the Portfolio Holder, obviously I am inheriting some issues that are in the process of being sorted, so there is no magic wand I can wave at this point to fix it all! The most interesting turn of events was the appeal for the Oakington/Girton route to Impington Village College. I am very pleased to say that after some excellent presentations from 3 parents the panel found in favour of the appellants, meaning the route is re-instated. I found myself in a very interesting position of speaking for the parents at the appeal. I must add that I was speaking specifically about the dangers on the route, not the policy itself. I personally feel this is nothing but good news for the parents in Rampton. The date has now been set as the 19th June, in the Kreis Viersen Room, at Shire Hall. The room is much better than the hall used for the Oakington appeal; for starters we will be able to hear properly!

Guided Bus

I had a tour of the guided bus factory and the completed sections of the guide way this month. Our New Leader and our New Chief Exec joined me. The tour was absolutely fascinating; the scale of the operation is unbelievable. I took the opportunity to question about the cracks that have been reported in the Cambridge Evening News. I was shown the cracks and informed they are on the edge of the guide way, where the gantry wheels put extra pressure, and that Nuttalls will make them good. I have also been informed that

although work is a little behind schedule at present, they are still on course for the guide way being operational next Spring.

Interactive Signs

I have been exerting my newfound influence to get to the bottom of these signs. I have made some very big noises and have got officers running around now finding out information for me. I am not promising to get the fixed post haste, but the least we can expect is some idea of what is going on and when we can expect them to be repaired. I will have more information on these by the time I come to the meeting (he says).

Northstowe Joint Development Committee

With my new role at Shire Hall I now have a conflict of interest and feel I could open up the committee to challenge from the promoters of Northstowe. SO I have asked to be removed from this committee. However among my numerous new committees I will be sitting on an Horizons advisory committee, so I will still have my finger on that particular pulse.

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