

Report to Cottenham Parish Council from Nigel Bolitho January 2009

Street Lights

I am undertaking a survey of street light duds in Cottenham but there don't seem to be many.

Housing Futures

I am a member of the shadow board of the proposed South Cambridgeshire Village Homes housing association (HA). It's proposed that SCDC's 5,800 or so council, shared equity and leasehold residential properties be transferred to a new and local housing association. Last Thursday SCDC's full council gave the go-ahead for a ballot of tenants. The economics at least seem obvious:

- at the moment SCDC can only keep 50p in the £1 from rents received with the balance going to central Government. If a HA is set up, every penny of rent money can be used in running it. Under a HA, 100% income from right to buy sales is kept (25% under the present arrangement) and the HA has much greater freedom to borrow as long as loans can be repaid from rent income.
- Tenants' rents rights are unchanged. More income means there's much more money to spend on improvements: a 5 year budget suggests 1,450 central heating systems could be replaced or upgraded against 500 if tenants stay with the council; 1.450 new kitchens against 920, £5m for complete property upgrades against £1m.
- With caution the new HA will be able to be a developer (probably in partnerships) to build affordable housing. SCDC has committed at least £2m from the capital receipt for such development work.
- The indicative gross value of the SCDC housing stock is £51m and net receipts after the £2m development contribution, £3m for

environmental improvements and to fund HA setting up costs and a £5m estimated pensions deficit is £30m. If the transfer goes through, there will be a lot of interest on where and how that money can be spent or invested.

Unit J

Councillors will know that Whitfield Estates won their appeal to keep extractor fans and fume cabinets on the side and back of this industrial building. I, Councillor Wotherspoon and your chairman attended the first day hearing at Cambourne and I understand that a number of residents attended the second day in the church hall.

Dog mess

I am considering the purchase of a jet pump to force dog shit off the pavements and into the gutter. But I do like the German idea which is to DNA every dog in a district and then (as the

Sunday Telegraph says) “test the offending material and trace it to the pet’s owner”.