

Report To Cottenham Parish Council from Nigel Bolitho in June 2008

Elections

After some closely fought elections, the make-up of the new SCDC is 32 Conservative, 15 Liberal Democrats, 9 Independent and 1 Labour. Simon Edwards recorded the biggest vote in any election and remains deputy leader of the council and housing portfolio holder. Tim Wotherspoon continues as a member of the Corporate Governance committee and remains chairman of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee. I remain as a member on the Corporate Governance Committee and remain on the Electoral Arrangements Committee. I am also a member of the new shadow Housing Futures board to help determine whether SCDC's near 6,000 council houses should be transferred to a new or existing housing association or not: the tenants will decide.

To help them make that decision (and having been chairman of a small housing association in Islington many years ago), I have asked head of property services to provide a spreadsheet of all types of repairs carried out in a reasonable period so that all tenants know exactly what is being done for them under the current funding available – and in terms of jobs done, not money terms. It may then be possible to extrapolate what might be done or not done in job terms and on what lengthened time scale under a reduced funding regime.

I have also been appointed as the member appointed to Age Concern which meets in Chatteris. At a time of rising inflation, I think it's most important that I know as much as possible about state benefits and who can claim for what and when. With state benefits the general rule is "if you don't claim, you don't get".

ORCHARD CLOSE DEVELOPMENT

I attended a meeting of the Orchard Close residents last Thursday and of 7 people present, 6 did not know anything about it!

My concerns are not necessarily linked to the development of affordable housing per se but to 3 matters:-

- should SCDC give away and without compensation assets or allow the use of them for free? It appears to be a tradition in the Planning Department that this happens but, as in this case, a ransom strip is of value. The last ransom strip I know about in Cottenham earned the lucky householder £500,000 and a nice new brick garden wall;
- in this case use of the ransom strip as vehicle access means that a quarter or so of existing SCDC car parking spaces for local residents will be lost- as well as

possibly a maturing Royal Red Maple on SCDC land. Should even affordable housing developments reduce the amenities for existing residents without compensation?;

These are two matters I want to discuss at the next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee.

In addition:

- This area has a particular problem with sewage and adding on 13 more properties to the existing sewage scheme is asking for trouble. I quote from a resident's letter with her permission: "another potential problem is with the sewage. From bungalow 36 down to bungalow number 2 there are lots of problems with blockages. We often have to keep flushing extra water down to clear these blockages, and it's not ideal when on a water meter".
- I am also concerned that if the development of the site may be followed by 700 houses developed by Beazer Homes between Rampton and Oakington Roads, the local residents will have lost an important green lung. The likelihood of the development has increased by the decision not to build 2000 houses on the north west fringe site and by the news that the two inspectors who viewed 140 exception sites in SCDC between November and March have :-

a) ruled none out

and

b) demanded that SCDC finds space for another 1600 units. The timetable seems to be by Christmas 2008.

Cottenham Club

I am now both treasurer and secretary because nobody else would take on the jobs. If nobody does the jobs, it's likely the club will fold (although stopping paying bar staff is a big help in cutting costs), the building will revert back to the ownership of the Conservative Party who will sell it for party funds. Catch-22 situation for me.

Relaunch of Conservative Party in Cottenham

I shall be having a re-launch summer party at Mitchell House on Saturday 5th July in the early afternoon. If any councillor would like to come, please let me know: £10 a ticket going to party funds. There will be an alternative location if it's wet – and you can guess where that will be!