

A View from the District (March 2011)

The Climate Change Working Group (CCWG) has had a troubled year. Its chairman has rarely been able to attend meetings, and many of its initiatives have been sidelined. It met yet another problem at the recent Council meeting, where a motion was proposed which effectively outlaws groups of two or more wind turbines in South Cambs. The Chairman of the CCWG spoke in favour of the motion, which was passed by 22 votes to 17.

At the Council meeting of 24 February the major item was the approval of our budget for 2011/12. This involved detailed study of the many, many pages of complex financial detail. The Finance Portfolio Holder told us that he held three issues in mind: the impact on residents; value for money, and the impact on the Council and its staff. Local councils have been offered what seems to be a bribe by central government: freezing this year's precept in exchange for a 2.5% increase for the next 4 years (I should say this does not apply to Parishes). For most Councils this seemed to have worked, and we were presented with a zero increase in precept and a large number of cuts. With no alternatives on the table we had little option but to approve; we now need to ensure that we do not follow the path of previous years where actual spending has been massively at variance with the budget; and that the cuts when implemented do not create intolerable disadvantage or hardships.

Progress on a number of issues continues to be painfully slow. There is none on the Wellbrook Open Space despite my attempts to get the Council and Taylor-Wimpey to move on the various outstanding factors. I requested that the Planning Application for 5 flats at 11 Mayfield Road be postponed when I discovered the Planning Committee was intending to decide it without a site visit, which I deem essential for the Committee to understand the issues fully. So this will now go to the Planning Committee in April. I am to have a meeting with officers on 24 March to discuss the lack of progress on rectifying the Planning website.

A year ago I reported on the confusion within the Cabinet over the future of recycling centres following the introduction of the blue bins. Amidst further confusion SCDC has now announced, without consultation, the removal of all but the paper bin. I have asked for clarification.

On 9 March I had a meeting with Roger Taylor, Director of the University's NW Cambridge project. We discussed 4 main issues: Traffic and transport; Carbon footprint, Benefit to Girton, and the Timetable. The University has to keep its projected traffic figures down in the light of the A14 postponement, and is looking to subsidise bus services as far as possible. I am still concerned about traffic levels on the Huntingdon Road. The Evening News had recently run a story on the wonderfully ecological nature of the proposals, and I told him I did not think much of it. He agreed the story was not well written and assured me there was much more than that in the plans, with Solar PV on every roof and some Ground Source Heat Pumps. On the benefit to the village all he could say is that we shall be welcome to use the facilities; little thought appears to have been given to integrating new villagers (half the site is in Girton) with the rest of us. But it is not anticipated that there would be pressure on our own facilities, for instance the Glebe School. As for the timetable, it is hoped to have a Planning Application ready around the middle of the year.

SCDC is planning to sell its parcel of land at the entrance to Wellbrook Way for housing. This land is adjacent to the proposed bowling green, and I have objected that we should have been consulted on using it to extend recreational space in the area. I have achieved a short postponement of the item which the Parish looks at its options I am now exploring options to raise grants for recreational space.

On 4 March the Cambridgeshire Rotarians opened what is intended to be a permanent project to support people with memory loss and their carers. The 'Memory Café' will function every first Friday of the month in the Girton WI Hall, and there was a good crowd for the inauguration. Andrew Lansley MP formally declared the project open and Mike Petty invited discussion based on photographs of yesteryear. I was pleased to represent the Village at this event which should offer value well beyond the Village boundaries; and, if a success, may be augmented by other such cafés in other villages.

If you would like a fuller monthly report emailed to you please contact me at scdc@de-lacey.org and I shall add you to the list of recipients. If you have any District Council issues you would like to discuss please don't hesitate to ask me.

Douglas de Lacey
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