

A View from the District (April 2011)

As I am now on holiday until 17 April, this report is written at the end of March. I shall unfortunately miss the Council meeting scheduled for 14 April, but there have been a few other happenings.

The Climate Change Working Group hosted an 'Expert Forum' on 24 March, bringing together some two dozen experts and practitioners from a variety of organisations in S Cambs working on sustainability and carbon reduction. Girton Parish Council is part of the Sustainable Parishes Energy Partnership though we have had a very low profile. It will be for a new Climate Change Group, after the May Annual Council meeting, to translate the aspirations expressed at the Forum into reality, but perhaps Girton would like to play a more active role in the future.

I have mentioned several times the debacle of the new Planning website <plan.scambs.gov.uk>. It is good to report two significant developments. First the SCDC webmaster has been able to make a number of improvements, and Swift the supplier appear to have fixed a few (though not many) of the problems at their end. More significantly, SCDC have added a mapping module, which both makes the site much more useable and adds extra information. You can choose the map and zoom in on any area then click on a property to see its planning history, rather than having to fill in a lot of detail on the search pages and still have no guarantee of accessing the information. I joked with the officers that I would be delighted to test it to destruction, but so far I have not yet managed to break it. I hope members of the Parish Planning Committee will explore this tool and find it valuable.

Following my discovery that transfer of the SCDC-owned land at Wellbrook Way to the Parish for recreational purposes should at least be considered, I am now working with officers to present a case for such a transfer and am cautiously optimistic. The big problem will be the effective loss of income to the housing budget.

Another site of concern is 11 Mayfield Road, where there is a Planning Application to build 5 flats. Not only is this inappropriate for this part of the Village, but there are a number of concerns about the application, not least the state of the road itself. The application will probably be decided while I am away so I have written to the Chairman of the Planning Committee to express my own reasons for opposition.

The Corporate Governance Committee met on 28 March with its usual long agenda of reports from internal and external auditors. It also included for consideration the Council's Annual Governance Statement, a long document well stuffed with sound and fury (and with some rather dubious statements): we shall have to see just what it signifies. One or two members voiced concerns that it does not give a wholly accurate impression of the Council's year, as it only mentions positive achievements, but we were given short shrift.

It is highly unlikely that any of my committees will meet again before the May elections, after which the Council may well have a different complexion; next month is therefore likely to be a fairly light one at the District.

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.

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