

A View from the District (October 2011)

At September's Council meeting we were asked to suspend Standing Orders to permit blogging and tweeting from the chamber. I objected, arguing that it is extremely disrespectful to the Council, and that Councillors should be following the arguments, not distracted by electronic gizmos. This caused consternation; eventually a motion was properly put and defeated. I subsequently looked at the Standing Order in question, which forbids 'audio and / or visual or photographic recording in any format'. It seems to me that if tweeting violates that, so does the note-taking that I do – and indeed that of the official Clerk of the meeting. Plans are now being drawn up to revise the Standing Orders.

On 23 September I had a site meeting with Brian Bromwich of Girton Parish Council and the Highways Engineer responsible for Girton, together with members of his team and a representative from the Environment Agency, in the hope that we could establish the causes of the periodic flooding in the Thornton and Fairway areas. A very useful morning's work was done with much water and green dyes, which will be followed up by Highways and the EA.

On 28 September the Planning Committee had a 'day out', looking at some examples of big developments in S Cambs over the past decade, good and bad. As Wellbrook Way was on the list (I have to say, in the 'bad' category), I joined them there, and was invited to talk about the problems we have faced.

On 30 September the Corporate Governance Committee met, with an advertised start time of 0830. Since however this was a mistake, and neither the Chairman nor officers were around, members of the committee had a very useful time discussing how we would like the committee to work. At the meeting we congratulated our auditors for a fine picture of North London on the cover of a report supposedly dedicated to South Cambridgeshire, and wondered about using our investment expertise (which has been very good) to set up a quasi-bank for Parishes. I asked if members were aware of the legal restrictions laid on Parishes for investment: that is one of many issues which must be investigated.

The Planning Application for NW Cambridge has been lodged with SCDC; at the same time we are being asked to respond to a consultation on new areas for strategic housing: six sites have been identified within Girton as possible developments for 10 or more homes. It is annoying that the Girton Village Plan has still not been adopted, largely because of foot-dragging in the City over the Local Strategic Partnership (an amalgam of SCDC and Cambridge City) which has generally approved such Plans. I have asked the Leader if we can take this in-house, and he has agreed. But it all adds to the pressures on us with too many deadlines looming.

The major news of the month is the defection of the leader of the Independent Group to the Conservative Party. We were immediately informed of a revision to all the committee sizes, though the sums done seem to be rather inaccurate and will be challenged. For myself I am sufficient of a democrat to believe, although I think I have much to contribute to the Council on Girton's behalf, that if the electorate prefer a representative of a Party to a representative of the Village, so be it.

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
South Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Girton