

A View from the District (March 2012)

This has been a fairly quiet month at the District, which is just as well since the disasters at Woodlands Park have taken all of my energies for most of this month. For those not in the know, the County's project to resurface the pavements and replace the kerbstones in Woodlands Park has turned into a nightmare when it was discovered how much damage they were doing to the silver birches which line the street, six of which have already had to be felled as a result. I have successfully called for the tree works to be halted, and am still trying to mediate an acceptable solution.

The District Council had its annual budget meeting on 23 February, and I had a number of arguments which I felt needed taking into consideration before we simply accepted the plans announced in the premature press release. Unfortunately I woke (at 3am) on the morning of the debate with a severe attack of norovirus, and was too ill even to get my points to another councillor for presentation. (This also meant that I had to miss the opening night of Girton Operatic's production of Princess Ida, and I was not alone in this, reducing the male chorus to one.)

For several years I have been trying to get the speed limit along Huntingdon Road reduced to 30mph, and support has slowly been growing. In January I received a proposal from the City Council to extend the 30 limit to Girton Corner. After consulting the College I requested that it be extended to the north end of the College. There followed a somewhat confused interchange of emails with the City and the police, and to clarify the issues I have called meetings of police, College and City officers, the first of which has been very productive in plotting a way ahead.

The Climate Change Working Group met on 6 March. Much of our time was spent usefully trying to recoup on the losses inflicted by the Sustainability PFH in his refusal to endorse our plans for renewable energy. The plan now is to take a lower-risk (and lower revenue) strategy of leasing the roof of South Cambs offices to the Parish Council which has funding to provide PV on public buildings. We shall benefit with free electricity and the Parish will get the FiT payments. We briefly looked at other buildings which could benefit from PV including local churches. We also discussed issues of waste recycling, and the new Green Deal which I mentioned last month. Large players such as E.ON are already on board and E.ON is apparently happy to give us a presentation.

The Northstowe and NW Cambridge planning applications are now out for consultation and for anyone interested there is a large box in the Parish office with the summary documents – the whole thing is online at <http://tinyurl.com/6uysmsv> (Northstowe) and <http://tinyurl.com/7rbekcn> (NW Cambridge). Absurdly, while the Northstowe deadline is given as Monday 16 April for comments (though you will not find that date on the planning pages) NW Cambridge responses were supposed to be in by 4 November 2011. I have asked for the page to be corrected: the correct date should also be around mid-April.

The University has hosted a series of Forums for Councillors and other interested parties, and on 15 March the topic was Sustainability. I was impressed both at how far the University's thinking has moved since the start of this project, and at how open their consultants seemed to be to the critiques and comments from around the table. The Landscape Architect presented some very thoughtful proposals for the green spaces (which comprise more than half of the development) and a keen awareness of the sensitivity of Washpit Brook to Girton's own flood defences. I took the opportunity to invite the University to ameliorate the bottleneck at Oakington Road bridge.

This is the last report you will receive from me before the District Council elections. I urge you to use your vote on 3 May. 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