

## A View from the District (May 2012)

Before all else I must thank all of you who supported me in the recent election. I shall endeavour to earn the confidence you have placed in me.

The final Council meeting of the session was originally cancelled, and then reinstated after many protests. The main item was responsibility for our Risk Register, which had been taken away from the Corporate Governance Committee and given to a Portfolio Holder. I argued that this was a regressive move and I was pleased that the Leader immediately agreed to withdraw the motion and refer it back for further appraisal. A second motion concerned the inequality between villages in street cleaning and public waste and dog bins. Members wished Parishes to have greater power over the provision, but the motion was modified simply to reiterate the current policy, which does not allow Parish Councils any say at all in provision.

Members' questions elicited the responses that the Leader could give no assurance that Localism would allow us to reject possible proposals from the Housing Minister about housing targets; and that he could give no assurance on the future of community rooms in Council-owned sheltered developments such as Orchard Close and St Vincent's Close. These are issues which will need close monitoring.

At the end of April the County hosted a meeting for SCDC Members to discuss issues relevant to both Authorities. On the agenda were the following:

*Minor Highway Improvements.* Girton Parish Council has bid for yellow lines at the Co-Op and improved cycle facilities at Girton Corner and Thornton Road. More bids than expected had been received and the Council has delegated the final decisions to its CEO. Concerns were raised at the inequality of treatment parishes felt they had experienced.

*Connecting Cambridgeshire (Superfast Broadband).* The process was outlined: areas are designated according to the current market (good, poor or failed) and intervention will only be possible in failed areas. It is not yet clear if the 'area' will be as small as Wellbrook Way (failed) or as large as Girton (good); and the money will not in any event stretch to all failed areas. It was noted that the subsidy model effectively removes all incentives from telcos to do any development in the interim. I am afraid therefore that I cannot hold out much hope for Wellbrook Way, though I am encouraged that the Residents' Association is also campaigning actively for better provision. Residents can register their desire for better broadband provision on the County Council website at <http://tinyurl.com/dx2lkl9> (which takes you to the registration page).

*Cambridgeshire Future Transport.* The withdrawal of subsidies has been brought forward to June and Stagecoach has announced various service changes. Members noted the difficulty in finding details on Stagecoach's website and wondered what the Traffic Commissioners were doing.

The Climate Change Working Group on 1 May looked at the criterion of 'sustainability' in new developments. It is disappointing to discover that this has to entail reference to local housing targets and developer profits well before it considers issues such as carbon footprint. Quote of the month for me: 'PV Panels are the ugliest things in the world'. One interesting question was raised: could we allow developers to choose not to provide our target renewable energy requirements if they build instead truly zero-carbon homes?

On 14 May I met with the leaders of the two parties to agree committee sizes and allocations. We amicably agreed all details with one exception which remains open at the time of writing: the rules do not give the Independent Group a seat on the joint Committee which will decide the future of NW Cambridge. Since Cllr Bygott is not taking a seat this would leave no Girton representative for a development half of which is in Girton Parish. The Council Leader has agreed to ask his Group if they would award me one of their seats.

If you would like a fuller monthly report emailed to you please contact me at [scdc@de-lacey.org](mailto: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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