

A View from the District (October 2012)

'You deal in risk; we are looking for assurance'. That comment, heard at the Environment Agency's session for Girton residents on 4 October, encapsulates many of the issues surrounding flooding. The meeting was well planned and answered many questions. The Agency is already undertaking feasibility studies and plans to install automatic measuring of levels and flows in Bin Brook and Washpit Brook. I have asked to be given immediate notice of all flood warnings and flood alerts. Everyone seemed satisfied that the Agency and the Councils are doing all they can, and we shall continue to work together. But what assurance can be offered remains to be seen.

On 24 Sept the newly-formed SCDC Civic Affairs Committee met for the first time. I struggle to understand what the committee is meant to achieve as we were denied the information necessary to comment on agenda items; and were informed that, in effect, the greatest sanction we now have against breaches of the Code of Conduct (by District or Parish Councillors) is to invite them to opt for some training. We cannot even insist on an apology.

On 27 September Council met with almost no agenda other than turning the Climate Change Working Group into a full Committee. It is difficult to know whether this will be a good thing in increasing the Group's clout, or whether it will stifle it in red tape. We were also reminded that Portfolio Holders are not required to consult on their decisions, which are increasingly being made outside the formerly customary meetings; and that the remit of the Scrutiny Committee will henceforth be to advise through 'workshops' rather than to critique, a change which risks making it quite pointless.

The following day the Corporate Governance Committee met and approved the annual accounts. The £200M debt the Government has forced on us is being managed very nicely and thanks to our financial management is on course to free up funds for new building. We were again congratulated by our auditors, and in return the Chairman enthusiastically congratulated the internal auditors on their report as a splendid example of less being more: a mere three pages, and presented in black and white.

Also on 28 September SCDC announced its Village Hero Awards, and I was delighted that a young Girton resident, Shane Holland, received a gold medal for his work in reviving Sustainable Girton. This is a much-deserved acknowledgement of an important and ongoing project.

After a long campaign the proposal to make a 30mph speed limit along the whole of the Huntingdon Road is now being advertised and should soon be a reality. And the modifications I pushed for at the NIAB junction have now started.

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