

A View from the District (November 2012)

On 18 Oct the University's NW Cambridge Forum met. This is an opportunity for us to interact with the Project Team, and offers real influence on the University's thinking. The architects explained their current thinking on the Community Hub and invited input on likely needs. While we were on community issues City Cllr Hipkin and I separately raised concerns about possible conflicts across the city/parish divide. I requested that the boundary should be shown on all maps, and the reaction was telling – that would be absurd, since it might cut right through blocks of housing. I subsequently made the point in the University Discussion on the NW Cambridge project, that potential community problems arising from this boundary cannot be ignored (see www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2012-13/weekly/6285/section9.shtml)

The Climate Change Working Group is now the Sustainable Energy Committee (SEC) which met for the first time on 26 Oct. We discussed the Green Deal, intended to provide loans for improvements to homes which would be repaid from the energy savings they produced: we noted that these are of little use to those in or near fuel poverty as their spend on energy is so low to begin with, even though they need the improvements.

On 5 November I had to choose between a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and a joint meeting with County officers and members to discuss matters of mutual interest. Since a major item on the agenda of the latter was 'Flooding in Girton' that took precedence. The County has commissioned a report on the Surface Water Management Plan with specific reference to the recent flooding, and we discussed a number of the issues. It was implied that the provision of the report had already served to prevent flooding in the Thornton Road area; I did note that a report whose implementation had not yet begun was not likely to have achieved that, and the cause probably lay elsewhere. Officers agreed, and assured us that the report will be implemented as and when possible. We also discussed other issues including road maintenance, where we were given assurances that the new programme for maintenance should mean that potholes should be fixed more speedily, with crews being given much greater freedom to be proactive and go beyond the specific job allocated and repair other road problems nearby if they spot them. This should result in a much better use of human resources and is to be applauded, though among the list of criteria we noted 'economic value' which could suggest that rural roads would be way down the priorities list. I asked that potholes likely to endanger cyclists should be given greater priority and this was agreed. The NIAB junction was touched on: despite press reports, this is still a work in progress.

The Environment Agency generously provided a further meeting to the one on 4 October specifically for two residents who had been away on that date. It was a welcome opportunity to be updated on what the Agency is doing and a report on it is published elsewhere in GPN. The Agency is issuing frequent newsletters to keep residents informed and anyone is welcome to sign up for them. The impression was given of an understaffed office, with members on sick leave adding to the problems of general cuts, which nonetheless is pulling out all the stops for Girton.

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