

A View from the District

In advance of the Council's Budget Meeting (on 28 February) we have had a number of briefings about the rapidly changing local tax legislation. Tax support is being cut by 10% but local councils will now decide where the axe is to fall. Parishes are so far exempt, and Girton PC has decided on a 2.8% increase in its share of Council Tax, or about the cost of a cup of coffee. To put this in perspective, Longstanton is planning a 71% increase from £67.55 to £115.28, and Great Wilbraham's will double (these are the figures for the Parish portion of the Council Tax bill, for a Band D home).

The Scrutiny meetings on 10 January looked at the work of two portfolio holders, but one failed to turn up and the other rather failed to answer our concerns about the new Call Centre, the new website and arrangements for delivering the SCDC magazine. An officer then explained the status of the 'Terminator', the black waste sorting machine at AmeyCespa which looks set to remain out of operation for the rest of this year, so all our black bin waste now goes straight to landfill. I urged an advertising campaign (e.g. on our website) to encourage greater vigilance over separating recyclables, but as I write nothing seems to have happened. Please ensure that no recyclables go into your black bin!

On 23 January the NW Cambridge team briefed the Joint Committee responsible for fringe sites. I am impressed at many aspects of the plans, including a pumped grey water main for toilets and outside taps. I am also pleased that a plan to charge site residents the equivalent of a separate council tax for the maintenance of open spaces has been rescinded.

The Independent Remuneration Panel is considering whether Members' allowances should increase. I have made clear my own view that they should not, at least as long as our employees' salaries are frozen.

At the Council meeting of 31 January we approved the draft (the word is important!) Localised Council Tax Support Scheme mentioned above. We also passed a number of amendments to our Constitution largely designed to make even more irrelevant the position of non-Cabinet members; in the words of one enthusiast the only purpose of committees is to save the Council time in debating things of relative unimportance. Not that Council has many teeth either, now.

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