

A View from the District

The Scrutiny Committee met on 13 March. Perhaps the most significant item was that we were told that a meeting specifically arranged to suit Sir Graham Bright our new PCC would not now be attended by him, but he would send a deputy. We decided instead to instruct officers to reschedule the meeting. We received an update from AmeyCespa concerning the black bin waste which mentioned that the most economic solution in the interim is to send it all to landfill, at no cost to the Council. We agreed to respond saying that on principle we wished for the most ecological solution rather than the most economic. We received a report that there were still 'teething problems' with the council housing repairs service and that 13 formal complaints have been received; we were not in general impressed. My sub-committee looking at IT provision will be meeting shortly.

The Civic Affairs Committee met on 14 March. The main issue before us was local governance; of Northstowe, of Hauxton and of Trumpington Meadows. Hauxton wishes to increase the size of its Parish Council: that was the easy bit. Northstowe is a problem in that it will start small but grow to a very significant size; Trumpington Meadows straddles the City–County boundary (as does the NW Cambridge development). Parish boundaries can be altered by SCDC, but any changes to District Wards would require a decision by the Boundary Commission, and any review it undertook would be out of our hands. We noted preliminary reports of the issues. We also looked at the revised Nolan principles which Councils are obliged to adopt, and I was glad that I was not the only one to be severely critical of the sloppy language in which they are embodied.

Corporate Governance on 18 March was again a valuable session. We noted with concern issues in our council housing repairs service remaining from our previous meeting, and that the IT review was proving more complex than had been anticipated. We noted that in both areas Scrutiny and Corporate Governance would be exploring different areas of concern. We looked at the Risk Strategy and, after I again complained on the loose language, called collectively for the format of such reports to be more carefully considered. In particular we deplored passives and the use of a variety of modal verbs (should, must, ought to &c) with apparently the same meaning.

The JDCC meeting was cancelled for lack of business, but the next one will consider several major items relating to NW Cambridge.

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