

## **A View from the District**

On 17 March I attended a briefing on the state of affordable housing. It was presented by City officers, and the picture might be a little different in SCambs, but overall it was not encouraging. There are about 500 sales per annum, of which perhaps as many as 40% are buy-to-let. The number of people on the Housing Register (effectively the waiting list for affordable housing) is about 9000, and in 2011–12 the number of affordable homes built in the City was – twelve.

Our Sustainable Energy Committee has had a tour of the Taylor-Wimpey show houses in Cambourne. We have persuaded TW to equip them with a range of sustainable features from grey water to PV panels as optional extras, though it was disappointing to learn that there had been so far no take-up. We noted that double-glazing and fitted kitchens are now the norm, in contrast to 50 years ago, and the same should be true of basic sustainability items.

Council met on 25 April. There was not a lot of business. We formally adopted the Nolan principles (as we are legally obliged to do) though there was much criticism of the way in which they are worded. We voted not to ask Network Rail to ensure that embankment clearance work should “be better advertised in advance to the communities affected and that more effort will be made to reduce noise levels when working during unsocial hours”. Why should such an anodyne motion be voted down? Only, I surmise, because it was proposed by a member of the opposition. We then had another opposition motion, that “this Council cannot support the new funding proposals [for the A14] which require a substantial financial commitment from South Cambridgeshire District Council”. After a heated debate the Leader ruled that this should first have gone to Cabinet so the motion was deferred.

On 30 April Scrutiny met, mainly to receive a presentation from the new Police and Crime Commissioner. He gave a long introduction in which he claimed his approach was evolutionary rather than revolutionary, but that he had made a “huge number of changes” in his five months in office. He had big ideas all to do with IT and smartphones, and new software for the central NHW exec to “smarten it up”. CI Darren Anderson then informed us that crime has reduced by 4.7% although dwelling burglary is up, domestic abuse is up a massive 30%, drugs offences are up 26%; and almost every business in SCambs has been hit by crime this year. I asked Sir Graham about his priorities and was told that everything is a priority. but it is Sir Graham who is “setting out the priorities in a systematic way” You may be able to understand that, I couldn't.

A rather more pleasurable session was a soirée to welcome the new artists-in-residence for the NW Cambridge project on 2 May, a good opportunity to meet some of the key people in the development.

The elections on 2 May also included three District Council seats, and this necessitated a meeting of the Group Leaders at SCambs to agree the committee structure and membership for the coming year in light of the slightly changed balance of power. At this meeting the Leader of the Council announced his intention to reduce the number of committee places (which is inconsequential) and to scrap the Sustainable Energy Committee (which will have great repercussions). We have protested, though are unlikely to be able to save it.

If you would like my 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.

*District Councillor Douglas de Lacey*

## **Tom Bygott**

### **Continued economic success and quality of life at heart of growth plans**

Three local councils have announced plans that put new jobs, the economy and quality of life at the heart of development plans to maintain Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire as one of the best areas to live and work in the country.

Growth plans for the next 20 years would see a new town built at Waterbeach, a new village on a brown field site at Bourn Airfield, an extension of Cambourne, and homes on the edge of Cambridge to provide well-connected and much-needed housing to support around 44,000 new jobs forecast to be created in the area up until 2031.

Most of the proposals put forward for development on the green belt have been ruled out for the draft Plan including a possible community stadium. Both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils have said that evidence of a need for the facility wasn't found and a number of the options considered for the facility would significantly impact on the green belt.

### **Business rates returned to South Cambs**

A nationally significant multi-million pound tax avoidance scheme has been stamped out after South Cambridgeshire District Council teamed up with two other local authorities to take High Court action. The High Court ruled that £350,000 must be returned in business rates to South Cambs from a scam Charitable Trust and they have to pay the costs.

*District Councillor Tom Bygott*