

## **A View from the District**

Let's begin with the really good news. The Corporate Governance Committee organised a workshop on 13 May. Following the success of our 'Plain English Accounts' we wanted to look at the multiplicity of our formal Reports, and to see if we could reduce their number and make them more readable. We had asked our internal auditors to come up with a possible draft combining them all bar the accounts. As soon as they began to present the result the Chairman said, 'The title's wrong: no-one will read anything called a Combined Report.' We criticised almost every part and to our delight they began to realise just how radical we want to be. We are hoping for something which will actually be read, at least by District Councillors and Parish Chairs, and perhaps ever by the public. This could be a ground-breaking development for all local councils if it succeeds.

23 May was a very full day. In the morning Cabinet members discussed Support Grants for organisations in the Service sector for the next two years (2013–15). The Leader has taken most of these into his own Portfolio, and whereas before they were largely decided by officers according to a schedule of criteria, they are now entirely in his gift. This was followed by the Council's AGM. Its major business is the establishing of committees. The Leader has decided to remove the Sustainable Energy Committee, meaning that we have lost the only ecological/sustainability/climate change watchdog we had. He also decided to split the former Scrutiny Committee into two, creating two new (paid) posts of chair and vice-chair. We tried to argue that as each committee only has 50% of the workload its chairs should only receive 50% of the remuneration, but this cut no ice.

At the beginning of June the Council released its long-awaited Local Plan proposals, which will soon be open to consultation. It is a long and complex document (about 1200 pages plus appendices) and I have not yet had time to read it properly. As far as I can see there are two major issues which will concern Girton. The proposal to remove the field at the end of Cockerton Road from the Green Belt for development has been dropped; but it is proposed to upgrade Girton's status from Group Village to Minor Rural Centre. The terminology need not worry you but the significance is that it implies that Girton will in the future be able to sustain significantly more development. With the Post Office Store gone, the Post Office in an uncertain state, and the school bursting at the seams this strikes me as unacceptable, and I shall fight hard against it. Please do respond to the consultation when it happens.

On 4 June our Sustainable Parishes Energy Partnership ran a workshop in Girton Glebe School, hosted by Sustainable Girton. The topic was the Green Deal which it is hoped will stimulate residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes for no increase in their outgoings since the work is paid for via reduced energy bills. At the end of the evening we were shown the prize which SPEP has won (see my March report) – an interactive demonstration of various energy-saving ideas which was hugely more exciting than the reports presented in the meeting.

At the end of the evening we presented a card, and our very best wishes, to Dr Richard Hales, SCDC Sustainability Officer, who has put a huge effort into every aspect of SPEP, the Sustainability Energy Committee, and all our other sustainability enterprises, but who is now taking up a post at Addenbrooke's. He will not be replaced, and leaves us much the poorer.

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*