

A View from the District

In my previous report I was enthusiastic over the possibility of a Plain English Annual Report which might actually be readable. Perhaps a little too enthusiastic: the next draft produced was shorter but dreary; the subsequent one even worse. I proposed a rather different approach but the chairman did not like it. So the result, at our 28 June meeting, was a compromise; and if not a perfectly happy one it is at least miles better than its predecessors. I hope you will read it when it is published (watch this space!) and send comments back to help us make next year's even better. The Committee discussed other issues but (like parts of the Report) they are unlikely to interest you – details if you ask!

I have attended a fascinating day of Licensing training (11 June) which highlighted many of the problems we face. For instance, in a breach of licence conditions, our concern should be the safety of the public, not the licensee's circumstances (e.g. a driving ban may cost a taxi driver's job). But if the driver appeals, a magistrate *may* take personal circumstances into consideration and that is a factor we *do* have to consider. The following day's Licensing Committee meeting was much less interesting, largely a formality to approve a new draft licensing policy.

The work of the JDCC is becoming more significant to Girton as the NW Cambridge development gets underway. On 19 June we met to approve the Surface Water Management Plan, which is in part designed to ensure that Girton is not (literally) flooded out by this development. The pile of documents is about five inches thick and I was grateful to have the help of local water engineers in appraising it. I don't know how many other members had looked through the documentation but in the event we speedily approved it. Which was just as well as the University had arranged a groundbreaking ceremony for the following day.

On 5 July the JDCC was taken on a day-long site visit to the various areas of our responsibility. We began at Trumpington Meadows Primary School, and spent the whole afternoon at the NW Cambridge site, where the head of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit gave us an excellent introduction to the archaeology which has been undertaken there. He pitched the talk just right: amusing, entertaining, informative and relevant to the development which is just about to start; and illustrated by a hand-axe which had been found only the week before. We then noted where the various bits of the development will be fitted in before dispersing after a very useful day.

On 25 June Girton Flood Action Group was constituted. Unfortunately it was necessary to call a GPC Planning Meeting at the same time, but I gather various helpful ideas were shared, and subsequently a letter has been drafted for members to send to our MP, Andrew Lansley, to keep the pressure on for substantial change to alleviate the flooding risks.

Councillors (I among them) have received a number of complaints about the quality of our repairs service for council housing, which we farmed out to a private company last year. Yet the reports from the company indicate an excellent record in terms of response times and resident satisfaction. So the Scrutiny Committee invited a representative to attend and explain the discrepancy. I was not able to attend but a report from the meeting suggests that there are a couple of links in the chain which may be over-weak: I am investigating.

On 3 July Anglia Ruskin University held a consultation day on their plans for the sports field just south of Howes Place. I could not attend but am delighted that a former Parish Councillor attended and sent back a very full report. This is I hope only the start of a conversation about

the field's development for more formal sports uses, and I am in conversation with the University.

The other University is making good its promises about full consultation over NW Cambridge. I recently spent nearly two hours with the Project Director. Time has moved on since the original parameter plans were drawn up, and there are now a couple of issues where for good reasons the University would like to change the design. One is on the heights of certain buildings and we discussed the appropriateness of this and other changes. I also had a number of concerns from the village which we discussed and I am delighted that in each case they are to be taken on board. The most significant were flooding, the relationship between their primary school and the Glebe, the design of the Huntingdon Road accesses, and transport.

Finally, please note that our Local Plan is now out for consultation. As I have said before, the major issue for Girton is the proposal to upgrade our status to allow for greater future development. Details are available on the Council's website (there's a link from the home page which may change when the consultation 'goes live' so I'll just say go to the bottom of <http://www.scambs.gov.uk> for now) and I do hope you will comment on this. The grounds are: our proximity to Cambridge and public transport access; an ATM and full-time Post Office; a surgery with full-time doctors; primary school; public house; village hall; and a 'range of other shops and services'. You may feel that this gives a rather over-optimistic view of the status of the village.

The proposals for the NIAB site will also affect us, of course: more on that next month.

If you would like my 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.

District Councillor Douglas de Lacey