

A View from the District

Our Planning and Conservation departments are under review. I was briefed on the issues and was able to feed in suggestions and concerns over specific planning applications in Girton. This was then a major part of the Scrutiny Committee meeting. We noted a real lack of clarity over the policies we are trying to pursue. One councillor helpfully contrasted the goals of preservation and of re-creation, as I had pointed out that one condition on work in Girton had amounted to the construction of a ‘folly’ – a new item which just **looks** old. Things should change soon.

On 29 October our Drainage Manager Pat Matthews hosted a meeting with the Environment Agency to gain an update on the issue of flooding in Girton. Parish Councillor Brian Bromwich presented a paper including a costed proposal for a new bridge on the Oakington Road (approximately £300K). Government funding policy has changed to one of ‘the beneficiary pays’ and we shall need to seek local funding for improvements. Meanwhile all the service providers whose pipes run under the bridge are now round the table with the EA discussing options. We discussed a number of possible funding sources which might be approached as well as other actions worth considering. On a comparatively small budget Mr Matthews could offer significant maintenance and re-grading of parts of the channels. So there are a number of potential ways forward at this stage. It is good to see that Cllr Bygott, who attended much of the meeting, is also interested in these issues.

Yet another Northstowe meeting has been cancelled and it is becoming clear that major problems are arising in the delivery of this development.

I have been in correspondence with our Electoral Registration Officer over the new registration forms which recently arrived through our letter-boxes. In previous years if you had opted out from the published register (which provides useful details for marketing by all comers) then your opt-out was filled in, but this year following advice from the Electoral Commission this has not happened. I am concerned that this conflicts with DPA legislation and am interested to learn that some councils have risked prosecution and pre-recorded opt-outs. It is all somewhat academic as the system will change next year when each elector will individually register and opt-outs should then be permanent. I was grateful that SCDC included a very clear letter explaining the situation and would encourage all residents to think carefully before allowing their details to be made public.

I have received a large number of complaints as the effects of the new street lighting regime become clear, as has the Parish Council. Because the spacing of lamps has not changed, areas where lamps have simply been removed are now unacceptably dark. Other places where the taller standards are now shielded by tree branches are also inadequately lit. I am taking these issue up with Balfour Beatty and with our County Councillor, and am always grateful for reports on areas you now consider require attention.

It was pleasing to see a good turnout on Remembrance Sunday for the Two Minutes’ Silence with perhaps 150 villagers present. And particularly pleasing that the driver of the No 6 which was passing at just 11am stopped the bus to join us. On the 11th, 16 people gathered to remember those who gave their all for us.

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