

## Annual Report for Impington Parish Council by County Councillor Matt Bradney

This has been my 3<sup>rd</sup> year serving the residents of Impington as their County Councillor. I think it is fair to say that this has been the most eventful of those 3 years both with regards to the operations and goings on at County Council and for me personally as a County Councillor. Once again I would like to thank the Chairman, who always does a great job for Impington and to Angela, who as always does a sterling job for Impington as the clerk.

Trying to compress a year into a few pages is quite difficult, but I will try.

I thought I would focus on the happenings in Shire Hall to start and then move on to more local issues.

The year started back in May with a change in Leader. Councillor Shona Johnstone was elected as the new Leader for Cambridgeshire. The mood in the Conservative group was very optimistic and we felt there was some real progress coming our way. One of her first tasks was to find a new Chief Executive, after the retirement of Ian Stewart, the previous one. The opposition also appointed a new leader.

During the period of looking for the new Chief Executive Cllr Johnstone put her new Cabinet together. There were a few big changes but by and large it was the same faces in a different order. There were a few new people appointed to Cabinet, those were Martin Curtis, David Harty and Allan Melton. There was also a new position created advising on Performance Management – which was given to me. I was tasked with looking at performance across the whole organisation and pulling it together in regular reports for Cabinet and Full Council. I was also given the Chair of the Scrutiny Management Committee and was appointed one of the County Council representatives on the new Northstowe Joint Development Committee.

The first few months of the new administration went well. There were changes made to the structure of Portfolio's, although some had some strange names, it did mean that portfolio holders were now looking at sections across the Council, not working in isolation on their own little bit. From a personal perspective the performance management role was very enjoyable, and I very quickly got the reporting in place for Cabinet and Council. Previously we had received reports which were very bitty and not in a very user friendly format. I made some changes and went to a traffic light system so councillors could see immediately any problem areas and the recent trend was right next to the performance indicator.

As you are aware I am sure, Cambridgeshire did not do that well in the audit we had last year. There were several things we got picked up on:

**Adult Care** – we scored 1 star on this. This has prompted all sorts of actions etc. It is an area I have focussed on with my performance management hat on. I am pleased to say performance has improved but there is still some way to go. We are

currently undergoing a consultation to see where Adults should sit in the Authority.

**Vision for Cambridgeshire** – the commission felt we lacked a clear vision for Cambridgeshire and that we needed to improve our work with partners. Huge amounts of work have been done on this. A new vision has been drawn up and the County have led the way in developing a new local area agreement, which essentially is all the authorities, commerce etc. pulling together to work for Cambridgeshire as a whole. This Local Area agreement has been very high on the agenda recently. Government have given each area a list of 198 Performance indicators, the Local Area Agreement board, called Cambridgeshire Together, were tasked in whittling this 198 indicators down to 35, something they have achieved. So we now go into a time when the government will judge the area as a whole under what is called the Comprehensive Area Assessment – meaning everybody will need to work together to achieve the goals for Cambridgeshire.

**Performance Management** – it was felt there was no cohesive reporting across the authority and there was no performance management culture. Hence my work, I have also been leading on a project funded by government to look at ways on how to embed a performance management culture in the authority. It is a big piece of work but so far so good.

Since the audit we had a progress check. This is where we are given a direction of travel statement, giving us an idea if we are on the right road. We were praised for our efforts on Performance Management and the work on a vision for Cambridgeshire. If we had scored better on Adults Services we would have got an excellent report.

Just a few months in we were asked to a briefing on the Transport Innovation Fund proposals. Little did we know when we sat in the room waiting for the briefing, the enormous decision that was going to be presented to us. The presentation went through the problems facing Cambridge with regards to congestion, and what was going to happen if we did nothing. The alarm bells started ringing at this stage. We were then presented with some options. One was do nothing, one was continue with the core scheme, i.e. closing the city centre off and rising parking fees etc. and then there was introducing some demand management, government speak for Congestion Charging. This 3<sup>rd</sup> option meant making a bid to Government for a pot of money in the region of £570 million. This would enable all sorts of improvements to the network in Cambridge. The main crux would be to improve public transport flows in and around the City and to drastically improve cycle networks etc. The downside, if you like, to this bid was the government had put a caveat on any bids being successful; they must include some form of demand management, congestion charging.

I left that briefing thinking this was absolutely huge. I was proved right in a few days time when it broke in the press. It was the story of the century and continues to rumble on. There has been a large public consultation exercise and the results of that will be shared with you and I on the 6<sup>th</sup> May.

Whilst the massive Congestion Charge story was going on over the summer adverts went out for the new chief executive. After all the initial applications were dealt, a

short list was drawn up. The final short list was prepared and the appointments committee went through the process and selected their preferred candidate. Nobody will ever know what or why or who etc. but it has been reported widely in the press on what happened next. Essentially Cllr Johnstone was unhappy with the decision of the Appointments Committee and called the candidate. The candidate withdrew their application and all hell broke loose. Cllr Johnston held on by her fingernails to the leadership but had a very rough few weeks. After some real pressure from the opposition and the group she decided she needed to resign, and did. This left the Conservative group a bit rudderless to say the least. We opted to bring back the previous leader Keith Walters, to be our safe pair of hands. This has proved to be the right decision, especially for me. Shortly after Cllr Johnstone's resignation Allan Melton also resigned his position in Cabinet. John Reynolds took his position and in December. I was asked to take the lead member role for Planning and Regional Matters. The title does it no justice at all, as I have found out in the 4 months since. I now have responsibility for; Environmental and Climate Change, Waste (locally and regionally (I chair the regional waste forum)), Economic Development (locally and regionally), Planning (from the County perspective), Innovation (a small department looking at new ideas and how to fund them, particularly focussed on Green projects etc. eg. Smartlife) and performance management (still).

The learning curve has been huge and I felt like a new councillor all over again. 4 months in and I feel like I am getting a real grip on the portfolio and am enjoying it immensely. We have got some tough jobs ahead like the new minerals and waste plan, just how do we extract and transport the huge amount of minerals required for all the development planned, the new daft eco town plan for Hanley Grange and embedding the new environmental and climate change strategy at Shire Hall.

The budget setting process was very different this year, and the whole well received. It is now called the Integrated Plan and has aligned priorities and targets to budgets. I know this sounds like a given to most of us, but I understand this is fairly revolutionary amongst County Councils. The new process put a lot of pressure on officers, but they delivered. The other change is we now have a budget for next year and a loose one for the year after. All this work was amongst the news that we had the worst settlement for a decade from government.

The results of the Joint Area Review were published mid October. The review looked at all agencies who contribute to the services received by Children and Young People. The results were very good, but as always, some areas could be improved. The overall score was 3 stars out of a possible 4. It was some well needed good news. The main areas for improvement were in social worker qualifications, more support for children educated not at school and more work on children with complex needs.

We signed the waste PFI contract this year. This is the largest contract Cambridgeshire has ever entered into, some £730 million and 28 years. This is real cutting edge stuff and the authority who is already at the top of the leader board on

recycling will be in an even better position to continue to improve on the way it handle waste in Cambridgeshire.

Locally has been just as busy as it has been at Shire Hall. I am sure the chairman has covered the happenings in Impington in his report? I will go through a few things that have happened in the last year outside of Shire Hall.

I have already mentioned the Northstowe Joint Development Committee. I was very pleased that Tim Wotherspoon was appointed Chairman of the committee. I was very confident that with a application of that size coming in, Tim was the right man to go through it and pick out all the issues – and I think I was right. The application arrived in December, the extreme size of the application made everyone take a deep breathe and then begin. The consultation period for this application has now closed, 31<sup>st</sup> March, although there are a few additions for the County. The statement of objections from County is 85 pages long, we looked at this at Cabinet this month and I made statements about the traffic assessment being weak and the objection needing to be more robust. More work is being done.

The guided bus construction is now well under way. We have had to endure a number of closures of roads this year. The one that upset everyone the most was the closure of Gatehouse Lane, Histon. I had a huge amount of letters, emails and calls about this. I spent quiet a lot of time speaking with officers and seeing if there were different options etc. but as you all may have noticed, it was closed anyway. There was a slight reprieve at Christmas when it was re-opened for a few weeks, but this pleased some and not others! The saving of the station in Histon was another Guided Bus problem I was involved in trying to sort out. Again I spent huge amounts of time meeting with officers to find a solution. I am very pleased to say, although can't take credit for, a solution was found. Pene Nudds from Impington put in a Herculean amount of effort and pulled a rabbit out of the bag at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour – which was great news. Buses have been running on the guide way and I have to say the construction looks impressive. It is a little stark at the moment but I am assured it will be softened up and will green in.

While I am on the traffic theme I have been trying without much luck to get these interactive signs sorted out in Cottenham and Oakington. I will continue to be the thorn in their side until something is done. I mentioned earlier the closures of the roads in the area. All the closures caused a lot of disruption. After some canvassing we managed to get the Gatehouse Lane closure put onto the agenda of the Environment and Community Services Scrutiny Committee. The discussion focussed around the closure and the works that were completed during the closure.

Recently we have had the announcement that the home to school free bus transport for children policy is being applied to the route from Rampton to Cottenham Primary School and from Oakington to Impington Village College. Both of these route cuts have resulted in a lot of public concern for children safety and as a result will go to appeal in June. I have supported officially the retention of both routes based on safety.

Work started on the new Park and Ride site on Butt Lane, Milton. The works are very advanced and should be completed in the autumn.

I now move into my fourth year as a Councillor. The authority is at a very exciting point in time. Our new Chief Executive has started and there is already a good buzz around the officer tea at Shire Hall. We also move into a challenging but exciting time with the Local Area Agreement. On top of that we have the growth agenda to keep on delivering, with developments like Northstowe, and if we are really unlucky the Eco Town at Hanley Grange. As I said right at the beginning I have really enjoyed my time serving Impington as it's County Councillor and I look forward to the next year with optimism and a sense of energy. We will have a new leader at the Council, and although I felt the same last year, I am better positioned this year to really make a difference.

Matt Bradney  
County Councillor for Oakington

4 Lyles Road  
Cottenham  
Cambs  
CB24 8QR  
h: 01954 204347  
m: 07739393137  
f: 01223 508188

[matthew.bradney@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.bradney@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)