

Chairman's report

18th May 2009 - 17th May 2010

I'd like to welcome everyone to this 116th Annual Parish Meeting.

In preparing my report on the last year I looked back to my last report - which covered, among other things: Orchard Park, Boundary Review, Guided Bus, NIAB Extra, Unwins, Northstowe, A14 - so much has changed - or **hasn't** changed.

- The City/South Cambridgeshire Boundary Review is ongoing, but it looks as though any change, if at all, will happen during the lifetime of the next Council - not this.

- The Guided Bus is not yet open for business - and whilst it *looks* as though it will be this year, there's no guarantee. Nor is there absolute clarity on costs - or what of those Cambridgeshire residents may have to pick up.



- NIAB Extra, and Northstowe have barely moved forward - though it is good to see that Northstowe is likely to be an *Eco-Town*. The Council has made clear that we will be involved in the NIAB Extra application - but that that involvement will be limited - we cannot afford the time that Orchard Park took, nor is that appropriate in this case.

- Unwins - is now happening - homes are going up rapidly; we are working with the developer on the street name. We're also aware that a planning application for the rest of the site will be coming - probably before the end of this year. So we need to plan to welcome 70+ new households to our community.



- A14 - the Public Inquiry starts in July, and the Council intends to be there. However, I have to wonder whether the review of spending that the new Government will be doing will impact this - either with a delay or cancellation. There are those who argue that fixing our current roads is more important than building new - and if there is limited money, which gets priority?

On the wider front, some will be pleased that Marshall's will not be relocating from their airfield

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site. However, it was to be redeveloped for some 12,000 new homes. If not there, they will have to be somewhere else - and that is likely to include here, among others.



Last year I said there was a glimmer of light over B1049 speed limits. The formal consultation will start soon, and much of it makes sense. However, few will easily understand or accept keeping the limit north of The Green to 40mph, when limits elsewhere (including between Histon and Cottenham) have been dropped.

Much could be said and written (and has been) about Histon Football Club - the phrase "*anno horribilis*" comes to mind. However, the Council has recently set up regular meetings with the Directors, and we look forward to working with them. Whatever has happened, the Club is an important part of our community and we all want it to thrive.



The Council should have eleven Councillors, but only has seven - this has put more stress on the remaining, very committed, team. I recently heard a senior County Council officer describing our community as "punching above its weight" for everything that happens here. The Council and Councillors contribute to that in a lot of ways:

Policing - by all reports, the village crime rates have not risen as was perhaps expected during the recession. Councillors regularly attend Neighbourhood Panel meetings to feed back information picked up in the community, but to influence local policing priorities towards hotspots.

Environment - with the help of the considerable teams of volunteers, both the litter pickers and the Enviro Volunteers, plus work parties organised from outside the community, outstanding work is done on to maintain and enhance our environment. The wider environmental issues are covered also by working with HICCA, with a member of their management team seconded to our Environment Committee.

Station Gatekeeper's hut - we've now got planning permission to rebuild the hut, providing extra outdoor space via the use of a canopy - providing a flexible facility that's already taking bookings on the edge of the Copse, close to its original location.

Buses - we are fortunate in the provision of the Citi 7 services - and these have become well used throughout the village. There was a threat that



What might have been

some parts of our community would lose that service - and, via website, mailing list and Courier a powerful set of evidence was assembled, and a team met with Stagecoach. For the first time in the recollection of many, some of the threatened services were reinstated. As it turns out, the lack of Guided Bus services stopped all of the changes - but this issue will surely raise its head again.

Play area - the complete rebuild and refurbishment of the Rec play area represents a considerable investment of time from a whole range of people, including many Councillors, both in the planning and budgeting, but also in the landscaping, where



cash was saved by the work done by volunteers. The whole work had previously been outside of our budget, but a grant (which was finally less than 50% of the total) from County Council helped make this happen.

Young people - we continue to invest in supporting our young people - not only through play, but also by funding youth workers, and also the Connections Bus. Our community needs to provide not only the traditional uniformed activities (Scouts, Guides etc), but also general youth clubs, and also for those who don't want to be so organised. We will continue to try to fill some of those gaps.

Chelsea and Tom - the Council is also making a very practical contribution to helping young people. Led by Angela, our Clerk, we've been able to give work opportunities to Chelsea and Tom - who will be with us for 6 months both learning about our work but also making a real contribution. We have been able to do this at no direct cost to the local taxpayer via Government funding.



Courier - the Council made some practical initial funding contributions to help get the Courier off the ground, and Councillors have continued to write individual articles, and the regular Council update. Councillors continue to be involved in the team, and deliver their share of issues. The Courier is part of the vital glue helping to keep people in touch, to maintain the community, and considerable thanks go to Ken Doyle for the many hours he puts into it.

But what of the future? There's a real limit to what the existing team can continue to deliver, and this comes at a challenging time. Whatever the new Government does or doesn't do, we know that they are going to be tightening their belt, and that means tightening Local Government's belt as well. The response will include "prioritisation" - but let's be very clear - that means taking something away from someone.

We will continue to make a difference in a number of ways:

- Being a demanding customer - we have an understanding of how the County and District Councils work, we know the rules (even if they are changing), we can make sure we get our fair share
- Working with others - partnership, working together, sharing costs and making sure that the community doesn't pay twice when it doesn't have to
- Identifying, and if need be, filling the gaps. Parish Councils aren't capped - we can raise more money from Council Tax - if residents agree, we can do that and cover some gaps
- Our local businesses, trades, shops, pubs are part of our community - so we'll use them - *use it or lose it* applies to everyone.

I'll close by thanking Councillors doing such a splendid job, particularly when our numbers are down. I'd also like to thank the Councillors from the rest of the local government family that work for our residents along side us - Cllrs Chatfield, Davies and Mason at District and Gymer and Jenkins at County.

Last but not least I'd like to thank our staff Angela, Lynda, Steve, Terry and Trevor - without whom we'd not be able to do anything!

*Denis W Payne
17th May 2010*