

## **Annual report for parish councils; 2006/07**

### ***A personal note***

Looking back on my second year as a councillor and rereading what I wrote 12 months ago I realize that I have learnt a lot and yet I'll never learn ....

I've learnt how the council works and I think I've become more effective as a councillor. I reduced my work load a tad but found time to continue to participate in the Community Learning and Development and Adult Social Care Service Development Group and the South Cambs Area Joint Committee. I also participated as a member of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee. I have continued to be Deputy Spoke for Community Learning and Development and Adult Social Care Service and to participate actively in Council meetings. So far so good.

But just as it seems I have been getting on top of this challenge I've given myself a new one. I have just been elected Leader of the Lib Dem group at the County Council so it's going to be all change. I intend to continue to support the Division (Cottenham, Histon and Impington) but inevitably the rest of my council work will be different. I'll have to lead in the Council meetings and I'll have the doubtful honour of trying to lead 22 independently-minded fellow councillors. I've heard it described as being like herding cats. I'll keep you informed.

### ***2005/2006 in retrospect***

#### **Police**

The local police liaison meetings have continued through the year and have generally been well attended. The recent restructuring with the loss of a PC for Histon and Impington is puzzling but we do have a new PCSO.

It was good to see plans for Police Authority mergers to go along with Charles Clarke's departure. There's a lot to be said for smaller accountable local bodies and there's no reason why there should not be national structures in place to handle issues which demand them.

#### **Corporate Services**

Matt Bradney and I have served together on Corporate Services Scrutiny and he can no doubt complement by comments below.

The Council ran out of money again during the year (this seems to be an annual event) and had to implement massive savings resulting in cuts across the board. The news in the Adult Social Care Directorate was especially bad and was compounded by errors both in the budgeting process and in the reporting in the early months.

The Cabinet again opted for a 5% council tax increase but balanced the books with a range of cuts. The Lib Dems proposed an alternative which went through

full scrutiny and would have mitigated some of the cuts. Whether it would have worked of course we'll never know.

### **Environment and Community Services**

The Guided Bus project was approved by Central Government. The implementation team has subsequently established a series of fora to facilitate building of the route and its acceptance by local people. I have been attending the forum for Histon to Longstanton and share the chairing duties for the forum for Histon to the City. The main issue at the former has been the turning circle at Oakington (lack of). At the latter we have been lobbying strongly on a number of fronts including cyclists' provision, noise barriers, the station building and car parking.

I have attended several meetings relating to the Milton P+R site and was pleased to see the Development Control Committee be very critical of the Council's lack of attention to the concerns of local villages and the needs of cyclists. It has insisted that the application return to it before work starts.

At budget time the Lib Dems encouraged the Council to be a little more serious about climate change. For some reason it's not on its radar.

### **Children and Young Peoples' Services**

Schools in the Division have continued to get excellent reports. I have yet to see an adverse report or to hear anyone speak poorly of any of our schools. It makes you proud and with Impington VC now having appointed a new Warden we are back to full management.

### **Planning and the growth agenda**

I have become more active looking at development plans. We are all well aware of Northstowe of course but there is Arbury Camps closer to home and now the recent application at the NIAB site. I have begun to prod the Council into being more proactive and sharp with its responses. County Councils are expected to show leadership within their counties and I will be encouraging this one to do so!

### ***Parish issues***

I would not claim too much success with many of the local issues which I have championed. However there have been some modest gains. I have been closely involved, along with Matt Bradney, in:

- The Histon to Girton cycle and footpath
- Travellers' issues in Cottenham
- B1049/A14 and Cottenham traffic management
- The Milton P+R and its impact on Impington
- Safer routes for cyclists into Cambridge on both sides of the A14
- Safer routes to school in Oakington and Histon and Impington and Cottenham
- Guided bus issues
- and several other minor and/or confidential matters

I have continued to encourage the various councillors to work together in cross council meetings (county, district and parish) for Cottenham, Rampton and Oakington and Westwick and for Histon and Impington.

There is no doubt that I could do more and I look forward to making the next council year more productive than the last.

### ***Outlook for 2007/08***

I will endeavour to respond to what's important in Cottenham, Histon and Impington, Rampton and Oakington and Westwick but I would be surprised if this did not include the following:

- traffic plans for the villages (again): looking to developing coherent plans and not just responding to short term funding opportunities;
- Northstowe: making sure that this development does not do irreparable damage to the villages that border on it. I will specifically be looking to ensure appropriate green belt separation is implemented;
- local transport: finding ways to make public transport more accessible and/if possible, ensuring that the Guided Bus actually makes a net positive contribution to the villages through which it travels. I will follow through current campaigns to get a turning circle in Oakington and to save the station in Histon;
- road systems: ensuring that new and existing road systems actually serve the people that use them, thinking especially about the B1049 and the A14 junction. I continue to think that this is unsafe and ineffective and we should get some improvements implemented;
- cyclists: making sure that whatever is planned for cyclists is sensible and safe and actually does contribute to the objective of encouraging more cycling. (this point probably applies equally to walkers). The provision along King's Hedges Road needs to be addressed so that promises are not forgotten;
- schools: being ready to support our excellent local schools should they need extra support in their dealings with the County Council;
- cross council activity: working with colleagues on South Cambs District Council on issues in which we both have an interest including waste management and planning issues; and
- social care for both adults and children: ensuring that big government ways don't get in the way of addressing personal issues

Please contact me directly if you have any questions and/or comments regarding the above.

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