

## **Monthly SCDC Report by Lynda Harford – October, 2010**

The clocks went back last night and I'm just sitting here typing my report on the first of the shorter days as dusk is descending. Not one of my favourite times of year and not particularly uplifting as I contemplate what to write about what the effects of the CSR may be for us.

Local authority budgets are set to fall by 28% over the next 4 years. SCDC are already a very lean council and it is worrying to think what these cuts will mean in terms of services and the people that provide them. The full details of the impact on SCDC won't become clear until December. There are lots of headline announcements but they also pose lots of questions which will need to be answered before we can be sure how we will be affected. Spending cuts of £1.2 million had been identified already by SCDC and the spending review seems to have confirmed a lot of the assumptions that were made in arriving at that figure.

The Coalition will go ahead with Housing Revenue Account reform. This means that SCDC is going to have to take on a huge debt – the last figure quoted was £206million.

The Government lend to councils through the Public Works Loans Board. Until now, the interest charged was at a small premium to government's borrowing costs. This premium has now been increased to 1% above the equivalent Government Gilt.

SCDC has no immediate plans to borrow so this has no immediate impact but this could significantly increase the costs to the Council's HRA in financing the debt we take on through the planned HRA reform.

The news that the improvements to the A14 are not to go ahead is disappointing because of its impact on the development of Northstowe. There is still optimism from some that development will go ahead on a different footing but I believe that there will be a lot of challenges to overcome before we attract any builders to start work. Delay will, however, give more time for reflection on the impact that any improvement to the A14 will have on existing communities.

It seemed quiet this month at SCDC as everyone waited for 20 October with some meetings being cancelled including the Housing PfH's meeting. Here are notes from some of the meetings I attended which did take place:

- 05 October      Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals & Waste Core Strategy DPD Examination – Pre-Hearing Meeting  
This covered the process for the Hearing. Sessions are due to commence on 30 November 2010. I have all the handouts if anyone wishes to see them.
- 06 October      Planning Committee  
An agenda of initially daunting length suddenly shortened to allow us to finish at a very respectable hour. There were no applications of local interest. The appeals received included that of Mr McCarthy at Smithy Fen and there was an update on the enforcement action with regard to Smithy Fen.

You may have read recent press articles about what appeared to be an attempt to coerce some members of the Planning Committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council to vote on a matter before them on political grounds.

I hope that you will be reassured that experience is that members of the Committee are blind to anything other than the relevant and material planning considerations – as they should be

and as they are required to be. We receive regular mandatory training on this and it would be a very foolish Councillor indeed who made a decision on any other grounds.

- 07 October Planning PfH meeting  
A new Building Control fee schedule has been implemented from 01.10.10.
- 07 October New Communities PfH meeting  
A grant of £1,060 [84% of total project cost] was approved for Cottenham Village College for a Carnival Stilts kit. These will form an essential part of the equipment needed to develop Carnival in the District in the build up to London 2012.
- 12 October Environmental Services PfH meeting  
Update on the Hauxton remediation with representatives of HauxAir present. Progress Report on issue of blue bins. Please let me have your feedback.
- 12 October Neighbourhood Panel  
Notes from the meeting have now been issued. Please let me know if you have not received them.
- 19 October Finance & Staffing  
The information item on the impact of budget changes on housing benefits was particularly depressing.

***A date for diaries in November:***

Village Energy Show

27 November

The Performance Hall at Comberton Leisure [same site as Comberton Village College]

Participants include:

- Eastern CRI
- Aran Services Ltd
- Sustain
- Cambridge Carbon Footprint
- SPEPshare
- South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)
- The SPEP team (SCDC)
- Community Orchards Project (SCDC)
- MGC Ltd
- Cambridge Water
- Cambridge Climate Change Charter
- The Energy Saving Trust
- Comberton Renewable Energy Group

Please contact me if you have any questions. I may not know the answer but I'm sure I'll be able to find someone who does.

Hope your month goes well, Lynda.

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