

In preparation for writing my first Annual Report to Parishes I've been looking back over the monthly reports that I've written during the last year. Almost all of them express concern about the situation that we find ourselves in and trepidation about how we are going to be affected for the next few years. On the positive side, though, the other strong thread running through the reports that have been written over the last year by either Tim Wotherspoon or me is teamworking. And to end the year on a positive note yesterday gave me a wonderful opportunity to observe the successes of other teams in the ward.

Jean Hunter, CEO of South Cambridgeshire District Council, is also coming to the end of her first year with the authority. Some of you will have already met her as tirelessly she has popped up at meetings right across the district in her effort to get to know the people that the Council serves and to understand their priorities. Yesterday afternoon she visited our villages and it wasn't just the sun that shone as I introduced her to members of some of our successful teams.

In Oakington she saw the sports pavilion with its excellent facilities provided through grants that members of the parish council had worked hard and successfully to apply for. She learned about their efforts to provide a much needed new play area for local children and how the discovery of archaeological remains which might have delayed the provision of the play facility had been turned to advantage. Had this work had to be done by the parish in developing the play area the cost would have been prohibitive but through the involvement of the University of Central Lancashire the financial burden for the community has been significantly reduced and by moving the play area slightly, delay whilst the archaeological work is carried out has also been avoided. And the parish can also boast fame as the site of the first 'open dig'; one where the public have been able to view what is going on. Despite a grant from SCDC however the hard work to raise enough money for the play area continues but the 'can do' attitude shone through and I've no doubt that we shall get the opportunity to watch children enjoying the facility in due course.

In Cottenham she was given a tour of the new 6<sup>th</sup> Form building at Cottenham Village College. This is nearing completion now and it really is a project of which the college and indeed the village can be very proud. It will provide not just purpose built facilities for vocational learning and do away with the ugly, temporary buildings that have provided accommodation for special needs classes for the last 25 years but will offer an amazing community resource. Jean commented that it was the best use of space that she had seen in the whole of South Cambridgeshire. After that she was offered tea and delicious cake at the newly opened coffee shop at the Cottenham Community Centre where she remarked on the lovely light atmosphere that had transformed what must have been a very sombre interior as the building was given a new lease of life whilst still preserving its history as a meeting place for the community. She saw the roll that celebrates the 22 successful applications for funding, one of which was made to SCDC and acknowledged the hard work that must have gone into the countless applications that resulted in those successes. Equally

impressive is the fact that this very successful project continues to depend on volunteers to run it lead by one catering professional.

The afternoon ended at Rampton. Here we walked in the beautiful late afternoon sunshine to see the successes of the smallest village in the ward: the work that is being done to restore All Saints Church, the only thatched church in Cambridgeshire still in regular use; the recently planted community orchard; the wildflower meadow and the hedge planted along one boundary, all of which in some way had been supported by grants from SCDC. This small community seems to have turned the identification of funding sources into a delightful art form. And, as we enjoyed a cup of tea and another piece of delicious cake [we felt we had walked far enough to justify this indulgence] Jean learned about the next community project being investigated. The village has recently joined Cottenham as one of the 23 villages now signed up to SCDC's Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership and, as seems to be its way, has a plan for a new community resource.

Of course, during discussion with the many people that she met yesterday, Jean also heard about concerns, hopes and fears but, just for this once, I thought I would concentrate solely on the positives. As a ward we have faced and still face challenges but yesterday's experience reminded me of what a resilient and resourceful community I represent.