

## **Monthly SCDC Report by Lynda Harford – May 2011**

I hope that during my first year as a District Councillor I have made my position very clear in that I put the interests of the people I represent above party politics and I believe that I and my two cabinet member ward colleagues have demonstrated this. We may have differences of opinion but I am confident that politics have not played a part in the way we work together for our parishioners and I sincerely hope that this is the way in which we shall continue. In keeping with this I don't think I have ever mentioned in my reports anything that could be construed as having a political flavour. In a slight departure this month I am going to mention the very depressing first full council meeting of the municipal year which took place on Thursday 25 May. As happens at this meeting every year membership of committees is announced and voting takes place for the roles of chairs and vice-chairs of those committees. I recognise the right of the administration to take advantage of their position, recently strengthened through successes on which I congratulate them, but I am saddened at the way in which they demonstrated their strength. Committees do very valuable work and the chairmanship is crucial in driving that work forward. I believe that each of those roles should be filled by the individual most capable of achieving that aim; the people we represent have a right to expect that competency is the paramount consideration to ensure that. Time alone will tell whether I am right to be concerned or even to mention it here. Perhaps I do not have the right to judge either the competency of others or the behaviour of the administration. It is my opinion though that democracy was not well served during last Thursday's exercise and that the divisiveness that was created may be a drain on the energy of the council.

On a much more pleasant note I offer my congratulations to both Simon Edwards and Tim Wotherspoon on the enhancement to both their portfolios. The addition of Risk, Procurement and Value for Money/Efficiency would seem to be very relevant additions to Simon's portfolio. Locally I am sure that there will be satisfaction in noting that in addition to Northstowe Tim now has responsibility for Planning Policy and Development of New Communities [including Arts & Sports]. I am pleased to confirm that I shall continue to serve on the Planning Committee, Joint Development Control Committee: Cambridge Fringes and Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee for this coming year. As far as attendance at PfH meetings is concerned my main focus will be Finance & Staffing, Policy & Performance and Northstowe & New Communities which is much as it was last year. I hope also to be able to attend the PfH meetings for both Sustainability, Planning & Climate Change [this covers both Development Control and Building Control] and Economic Development.

Meetings attended in May:

- 10 May:** **[i] Scrutiny Task & Finish Group [Customer Contact] Meeting**  
This group is due to report its findings and recommendations in June. It has been a very interesting project which has run in parallel to an officer group project looking at the Contact Centre and recommendations in advance of the expiry of the current contract with Cambridgeshire County Council. With continuing progress in technical innovation it is anticipated that recommendations from both groups will provide for a decision that will not only enhance the service SCDC offers to its customers but will also provide very considerable savings.
- [ii] Library Meeting**  
This was very well attended – about 100 people. The information offered by the officers seemed to indicate that the County just wants to divest itself of responsibility for library provision in Cottenham despite the fact that it has a statutory obligation. Whilst disquiet was expressed about the County's approach and its management of costs in its day to day running of the library there was also a very positive group who seem already preparing themselves to step into any breach that does occur.
- 11 May:** **Planning Committee**  
S/0399/11 – 71 High Street, Cottenham – conditional approval  
Solar Farm applications S/0319/11 – Croydon – withdrawn & S/0567/11 - Bourn [revised application] – refused.
- 12 May:** **[i] Scrutiny Task & Finish Group [Customer Contact] Meeting**  
As above.
- 19 May:** **New Communities PfH Meeting**  
The PfH was asked to note the results of the Cambridgeshire Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Examination. In its submission SCDC had requested changes to include a new policy for a Routeing Strategy and other measures to address traffic

problems. Amendments have been made to Policy CS32 which strengthen its consideration of heavy traffic associated with mineral workings by including the need to use an Advisory Freight Map. However SCDC's request that air quality be specifically mentioned in Policy CS34 was not agreed to. The principal concern raised by individuals and community groups in their submissions was the effect of the transportation of large quantities of minerals and waste by road. Whilst the Inspector recognised that this has the clear potential to affect adversely the quality of life of those living close to the routes used and the convenience and safety of the users of those roads he stated that Policy CS32 whilst seeking to address those concerns could only do so in general terms. It is not within the remit of the Core Strategy to set weight limits on roads or to define specific routes for individual facilities. It is the County, as Highways Authority, that can control wider transport issues.

**24 May:**

**[i] Finance & Staffing PfH Meeting**

The end of year performance report again highlighted the superb performance of the Revenues & Benefits team. 99.3% [99.2% in 2009/10] of Council Tax was collected and for Business Rates the figure is 99.6% [98.8% 2009/10]. This latter is not just a testament to the commitment of the team at SCDC but is also a reflection on South Cambridgeshire's economic position. The Treasury Management Team's performance has continued at a high level although financing arrangements for the £205.6m debt which the HRA will have to meet will provide a huge challenge. SCDC is also looking at ways in which it can provide investment strategy support to parish councils who may be holding considerable sums in reserves or in preparation for specific projects.

**[ii] Sustainable Cottenham Meeting**

Separate report

**25 April:**

**[i] Meet the new Chief Constable**

Members were offered the opportunity to meet Simon Parr, the new Chief Constable for Cambridgeshire. He gave a very polished presentation in which he talked about engaging with communities. 'Policing' he said 'isn't something that should be done to communities'. He is not in favour of comparative data between different areas of the country and believes that policing objectives/priorities should be set appropriately for different communities. He said that arrests are not necessarily laudable outcomes and talked about a 'Threat/Risk/Harm' analysis and offered some interesting examples. He said that collaboration with Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire would be on such things as HR, Procurement and other central services which would save money so that, he said, we would see no loss of constables, pcso's [although he subsequently seemed to qualify this] or operational staff. There will be just 1 Commander for Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire will have its own Chief Inspector. In answer to a question he confirmed that the award of discretionary grants will continue.

**[ii] Full Council Meeting**

The item: Fulbourn: Compulsory Purchase Order, Windmill Estate Redevelopment was withdrawn. The new Chairman of the Council is Cllr Tony Orgee and the Vice-Chairman is Cllr Dr David Bard.

**Dates to note for June:**

**01 June:** 14.00 Planning Committee – SCDC  
**08 June:** 10.00 Standards Committee - SCDC  
**09 June:** 19.00 SPEP Workshop - St John's Church Room, Chapel Street, Waterbeach  
**16 June:** 19.00 stART Network Event – Cottenham 6<sup>th</sup> Form Centre  
**17 June:** 14.00 Parish Council Briefing Session on Planning Policy – SCDC  
**25/26 June:** Fen Edge Family Festival – Cottenham

*Your councillors are here to help you. Please feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope that we can help but, if we can't, we probably know a [wo]man who can.*

Simon Edwards

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