

Monthly SCDC Report by Lynda Harford – June 2011

Phew! The weekend of the 25/26 June was a busy one! We had the Fen Edge Family Festival and I helped man the stands of both Sustainable Cottenham [Saturday afternoon] and Cottenham Village Design Group [Sunday afternoon]. Both groups put on a very good display and worked very hard as did so many other community groups. On Sunday, Tim and I were up early to set up the feed station at Cottenham Village Hall for about 600 participants in the 'Flat out in the Fens' cycle ride. We stirred barrels of isotonic drink, cut bananas in half and big Swiss rolls into 8 slices in preparation for the arrival for the first, fast group at about 08.30am. They were followed by the nearly as fast, the not quite so fast, the not really fast but enjoying the scenery groups and unfortunately we had to leave to get to the CVDG stand before the 2 who got hopelessly lost arrived. I think their family phoned them and gave them directions for a short cut and went off to meet them at the next feed station. We had a wonderful time and there are some great photos taken by Kate Heydon on the FEFF website. Tim and I now feel sufficiently experienced in volume catering to consider requests to demonstrate our expertise in support of events run by the other villages in our ward.

Meetings attended in June:

01 June: Planning Committee Meeting

A very gentle induction into committee meetings for new members of the committee as this was probably the shortest meeting in its history. A very short agenda was further diminished by the withdrawal of two items. It was probably helped too by the fact that new members had not yet developed the art of expressing their opinions as volubly as more longstanding members. There was just one item of local interest S/0707/11 – Oakington - approved with conditions.

08 June: Skills Update Workshop for Members/Subs of Scrutiny Committee

06 June: Friends of Cottenham Library Meeting

Attended by about 25 including all 3 District Councillors this meeting brought forward 2 very energetic candidates for Chair and Secretary of the Friends Group, Lindsay Stewart-Miller and Trudy Lee. Both subsequently attended the meeting of Cottenham PC that was addressed on the subject of library policy by Mike Hosking from the County Council.

09 June: [i] Policy & Performance PfH Meeting

The first part of this meeting was attended by Christine Smart, SCDC's assessor for Customer Service Excellence. The PfH adopted the policy on Acceptable Use Undertaking for Members' Personal Websites and Blogs on modern.gov. I have since signed up and am starting to use the facility. The item on customer service performance was probably the one of most interest to Christine Smart.

[ii] Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership Meeting

This was very well attended and we were treated to 3 excellent presentations.

15 June: [i] Joint Development Control Committee – City Fringes

During discussion about Member Development I gained the support of the Chair, Cllr Dr David Bard and Cllr Tom Bygott for my suggestion that all members should receive a briefing on the subject of planning in respect of Gypsy & Traveller sites. Cambridge City and the County Councillors need to be aware of the requirements to bring forward appropriate sites when applications for new developments are being considered.

[ii] Sustainable Cottenham Meeting

The committee met at Fen End Farm to practise putting up the stand for the FEFF and to confirm last minute arrangements.

16 June: [i] Meeting with Pat Matthews, Drainage Manager, SCDC re ditch at Brenda Gautrey Way, Cottenham

This was the most recent chapter in the continuing saga of Cottenham Parish Council's battle to get Taylor Wimpey to clear the ditch of almost 10 years growth of vegetation, accumulation of silt and contributions by fly tippers. An offer of some support from PM was elicited. To be continued.

[ii] Afternoon spent out on patrol with our new PCSO, Claire Whiteman

A useful exercise as I had the opportunity to meet some of the young people who are known to Claire. We were able to share information and will be meeting again to discuss local youth provision with Julie Bristow. Incident-wise it was uneventful.

[iii] StArt event at Cottenham Village College.

A chance to network with people from across the South Cambridgeshire district interested in the arts and the opportunities afforded by the new 6th Form building.

20 June: Meeting with members of the Smithy Fen settled community

This is the meeting I had requested to start to integrate communications from SCDC to both communities at Smithy Fen. There was some very frank and open discussion & I hope now to be able to monitor progress against a list of actions identified.

21 June: [i] Meeting with Schuyler Newstead and a Cottenham resident who has offered land for affordable housing.

Schuyler has subsequently discussed this with Cambridge Housing Society who feel that the risk factor and costs involved in taking forward an application would mean that the site would

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not be viable for them. Schuyler has suggested that a private application might still be possible and has suggested that the resident be encouraged to take pre-application advice. I am pursuing this with planning and the resident concerned.

[ii] Member Development Task & Finish Group Meeting

[iii] Finance & Staffing PfH Meeting

Simon Edwards' first review of the Risk Register [previously in the gift of Tim Wotherspoon]. I supported his refusal to endorse officers' decision to reduce the 'likelihood' score for 'Lack of Development Progress' from 5 to 3. The impact that this will have on the funding that SCDC will receive from the New Homes Bonus warrants a higher score than the 3 that had been maintained as the 'impact' score and Simon adjusted this to 4 whilst modifying the reduction in the 'likelihood' score also to 4.

22 June: [i] Planning Application Process Workshop

I found this very informative but not altogether reassuring. Planning is an emotive & contentious issue & I feel that, whilst we cannot please everyone when decisions are made, we should be able to demonstrate that they have been dealt with fairly and consistently. I have no reason to say that this isn't the case but I am concerned about SCDC's ability to robustly demonstrate its application of these 2 principles across the whole planning service. The Task & Finish group recently set up to look at the planning process has now reported to Scrutiny and its recommendations will go to Cabinet. I will report again following their meeting on 07 July.

[ii] Equalities Workshop

A very interesting session at which the need for this to be a mandatory training requirement for every member was unfortunately very clearly demonstrated.

23 June: [ii] Northstowe & New Communities PfH Meeting

A meeting that was so well attended that the venue had to be hastily rearranged from a meeting room to the Council Chamber. The reason: 2 draft responses to Government consultations [1] on PPS: Traveller Sites & [2] Relaxation of Rules for change of use from Commercial to Residential. A very important point was raised in the discussion of [1] that identification needs to be made of the groups within the Traveller community and the implications that this has when assessing needs for sites. The officer responsible for drafting [2] was congratulated on a superb response clearly indicating that a policy which must have been initiated by a desire to regenerate inner city areas cannot be applied to rural communities.

28 June: Joint Development Control Committee Site Visits

29 June: Friends of Cottenham Library Meeting

Lindsay Stewart-Miller has done some sterling work in obtaining budget information from CCC and starting to analyse it. Tim Wotherspoon had managed to get CCC to forward a copy of the covenant on the library building. It states that the building has to be used as a library. The Friends are currently engaged in trying to identify other uses of its facilities from which the library might develop income streams. Please forward any bright ideas via their website: www.friendsofcottenhamlibrary.org. There is also a facebook petition that you can sign in support of our libraries – there is an easy link from the Friends' website.

30 June: Scrutiny Committee[See note above under Planning Application Process Workshop]

Dates to note for July:

06 July: 14.00 Planning Committee – SCDC

07 July: 14.00 Cabinet Meeting

08 July: 09.00 Corporate Governance Committee Meeting

10.00 Planning/Sustainability PfH Meeting

13 July: 19.30 Northstowe Parish Forum, Oakington Pavilion

19 July: 19.30 Friends of Cottenham Library Meeting, Cottenham Library

20 July: 19.00 Planning Parish Forum

21 July: 14.00 Full Council Meeting

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