

Monthly update for parish councils: October 2011

County Council and Cabinet meetings

There was a big council meeting during September. It was a full agenda with a report on members' allowances and 8 motions. Highlights include:

- The end to 'secret' PDGs: to be replaced by 'overview and scrutiny committees;
- The motion to increase members' allowances by about 25% was approved by a majority of 4. David and Sue voted against. There was a recorded vote;
- Another motion to establish an armed forces Community Covenant. Sue spoke of her personal experience of family involvement in recent conflicts. David reminded the Council of his earlier request that it facilitate easy road closures at the time of the 2 minutes silence on Armistice Sunday;
- The inevitable Guided Bus Motion gave Sue the opportunity to complain about the end of the very constructive liaison forum meetings;
- David moved a motion on libraries which emphasised their value as places which are a part of the community. Unfortunately the Tories produced a wrecking amendment. Moreover the council leader said that his promise to preserve library services did not extend to a promise not to close libraries;
- A Lib Dem motion urging a pro-active asset management based approach to road maintenance, the subject of a similar defeated motion 2 years ago, was weakened by a Tory amendment but was as a result passed;
- In oral questions David asked about the council's commitment to minimising the cost of parish council funded traffic management schemes; he highlighted the yellow lines in Oakington costing £150 plus £750 to advertise them;
- David also asked a written question about the subsidised bus service review which Sue followed up with an oral just to confirm that when it comes to the 110 Freedom Bus the Council will look at it on its own and not lump it in with other similar, but less well patronised, routes; and
- Sue asked about senior pay levels at the Fire Authority and the availability of fire engines to handle simultaneous fires such as the recent one the Co-Op.

At the 27 Oct 11 cabinet meeting it was agreed that Swavesey would get a small car-park at its guided bus stop (<http://bit.ly/sUyQqo>). David has requested that Oakington also get one. This is a request that has been regularly made and ignored.

Environmental Services

The B1049 cycle path progresses; we have been advised that the remaining section has now cleared necessary hurdles and will be implemented as soon as possible.

David met officers to discuss the B1049/A14 crossing and section 106 funding. This is now clear if not 100% satisfactory. Officers are confident that there will be enough money and a meeting to review traffic modelling has been set for 19 Jan 12.

The council has announced the availability of funding (<http://bit.ly/t5c2Pm>) to allow parish councils etc to bid for grants of up to £10K for local highways projects.

Children and Young People's Services

The council has 'bucked the trend' by reducing the number of children in care. Nationally it is increasing. That's good news and reflects well on a seriously professional team in Children's Social Care (<http://bit.ly/sZHbOq>). The adoption service has also performed well (<http://bit.ly/sLrtaD>).

Adult and community services

The latest number for the Adult Social Care overspend is over £8million.

Health

The first meeting of the Shadow Health & Wellbeing Board has taken place as it takes its first steps towards being a substantive institution next April.

Fire and police

Both services are looking hard at options to cut costs: Police by £5million and Fire by £4million. The police, in common with many other authorities, are furious about the latest government 'no council tax increase' bung because it is only for one year and prevents them increasing their precept in line with inflation (<http://bit.ly/oPhRHQ>).

Local Issues

There was good news for Histon and Impington (but not Orchard Park) and probably Oakington when BT OpenReach announced the upgrade of the Histon exchange.

Sue has been working with the Co-Op in Cottenham and with officers to ensure that rebuilding work can proceed apace and responsive to the needs of the village.

David met officers and has asked them to use enforcement powers to get the appropriate developer to deliver the final part of the Butt Lane cycle path.

Forthcoming meetings and events

4 Nov 11	Councillors' surgery at the Community Centre Cottenham 7pm
9 Nov 11	Northstowe parish forum
10 Nov 11	CCC development control
15 Nov 11	CCC cabinet
18 Nov 11	Councillors' surgery at the parish offices, H&I Rec
7 Dec 11	End of bus consultation
7 Dec 11	County Council meeting
19 Jan 12	A14/B1049 options review CCC+parish councils

And finally ... I've had mixed feelings about France in October. On the one hand its rugby team, supported by a literal interpretation of the laws by the referee, prevented Wales from winning the world cup. On the other I enjoyed 5 days in Languedoc Roussillon. I was based in Montpellier; like Cambridge it is flat and a university city. The climate is a little better and the university is not so dominant although it is still visibly a city of young people. Two features impressed me. Firstly there is a wide pedestrian area with the streets in excellent condition and no compromise towards motor vehicles. And secondly there are trams: 2 lines already with a third being built. I hadn't realised that trams fit so easily into a pedestrian environment and that they can do sharp corners which other road vehicles like buses cannot handle.

Both this monthly report, and the ones for previous months are on our website <http://www.chilibdems.co.uk/>

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