

Monthly update for parish councils: November 2009

County Council and Cabinet meetings

There were no council meetings during November.

There have been two cabinet meetings. There was one during the month and David attended to give his and Sue's input. He supported the officer recommendation that the NIAB development not make a Section 106 contribution towards the Guided Bus. He also repeated his support for the Cycling Demonstration Town projects highlighting the need to address the A14/B1049 crossing and pointing out that both ends of the planned Milton to Impington cycling route are dangerous.

The big political development which may be of less interest to those not involved with the Council is the Tory Leader's decision to abolish cross party meetings. These are briefing meetings and opportunities for officers to alert councillors of the impact of delegated decisions. They will now be replaced by multiple meetings with the same agendas. That won't do much for council efficiency.

Environment Services

The guided bus saga continues and now we wait until next year before we can ride on it. Press speculation is rife but at last it has been confirmed that the project is over budget and that the Council will need to find about £1.5million from Cambridgeshire tax payers.

Following the meeting with parish and other local councilors Stagecoach agreed to 'soften' its proposed timetable changes. Implementation has now been postponed until there is a date for the Guided Bus.

The revised HCV map is now out for consultation and officers met with the parish councils' joint action group (the JAG) during November. It is important to give this close attention because future planning applications and their request for freight routes will be determined with reference to it.

The 'gritting review', following last winter's poor performance, has been completed. It proposes to move some routes around but does not appear to propose more gritting.

Children's Services

There have been public meetings in St Neots as a part of the consultation about the proposed 'merger' of Longsands (a successful school) and St Neots Community College (a failing school). Parents from both schools voiced serious objections to the proposal. A Lib Dem proposal to approach resolution of this issue on a cross party basis has been rejected.

The County Council has failed in its bid to secure extra funding for primary school buildings. This means more investment in lower cost temporary structures.

Adult and Community Services

The black hole in Adult Social Care is getting bigger. The Council's share of this is now approaching £5million. Action plans are being developed but so far no numbers have been produced.

Corporate Services

The Appointments' Committee has met again to consider the recruitment of a new Director for Environment Services. It's good to note that it is exploring options to not do that and to appoint internally.

A first 'budget briefing' has taken place. The prospects for an 'easy' budget in 2010 are slim with lots of upward pressure and little scope to increase Council Tax. The good news is that the government grant for next year is secure. Later years don't look so good. The indications today are for a council tax increase in the middle of the allowed range viz 2.5%.

Local issues

County Council internal bureaucracy has meant that the opportunity to remove three lime trees on the green at Cottenham has been missed. They will now be felled in February, 2010.

Forthcoming meetings and events

1 Dec 09	CCC development control meeting
8 Dec 09	County Council meeting (see * below)
January 2010	CGB liaison forum

* note that residents of Rampton will be presenting a petition requesting a better bus service to the village at the December council meeting.

And finally ... I had a break during the month and enjoyed 10 days in Cuba. I wanted to go there before the country changed. With Obama in the White House and Fidel's younger brother now in charge most people think that there will be change. I just hope that it can be at a pace decided by Cubans and with an objective which doesn't simply result in the country opening up to scores of flight a day by Ryanair US from Florida. Today there is some frustration in the pace of change but Castro and Guevara are still heroes. The famous 1950s American cars are plentiful and the island is a wonderful mix of communist drab, Caribbean colour and vitality and Spanish style and correctness.

Both this monthly report, and the ones for previous months are on our website.

David Jenkins on behalf of Sue Gymer and David Jenkins
County Councillors for Cottenham, Histon and Impington

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