

Monthly update for parish councils: February 2010

County Council and Cabinet meetings

February was the month for the big County Council budget meeting.

As usual there was a full debate of the Council's budget plus one on the Lib Dem's amendment. The former was dominated by cuts across the board with the most swingeing being for Adult Social Care. Highways budgets also saw the knife at least in part to fund continuing problems at the guided bus. The Lib Dem alternative identified substantial saving opportunities and would have used these to invest in the roads, to mitigate the worst of the cuts in ASC and to reverse cuts in children's services.

There was another episode in the continuing secret/not secret meeting saga. After a series of meetings (in secret of course) the council came out with a series of minor proposals to the council's constitution which would have resulted in the currently private Policy Development Group meetings continuing to meet that way. The Lib Dems requested that these changes be referred to scrutiny where they could at least be investigated in public. The request was voted down so the council will continue to operate with a central part of its policy development taking place away from the public gaze.

David tabled 3 written questions:

- 1 How bad has this winter been and what specifications define the work which WS Atkins must carry out on behalf of the council? It's been a one in 20 year winter; I got a not very satisfactory answer to the rest.
- 2 How much has already been paid to BAM Nuttall? £110 million (the original contract, which was for a bigger scheme, was for £87.6 million.
- 3 How many employees has the council terminated on performance grounds? 0, 3, 0, 1 and 8 in each year 2005/06 to 2009/10. The total workforce is about 6500. The council must employ some good people!

Environment Services

The guided bus saga continues with much speculative press coverage. The council's budget papers give an indication of the size of the hole from which it must dig itself. A £40million repayment from BAM Nutall is forecast for 2014/15 (budget papers yellow page 15). No-one is saying when the Busway will open.

The A14 crossing study has been released. Unsurprisingly there is a range of options with the lowest cost being one that introduces several pelican crossings to protect cyclists as they cross the slip roads. More ambitious plans for tunnels and bridges are very expensive because of the local topography. In theory there is enough 106 money to pay for the pelican crossing scheme.

The council's long term transport plan (LTP) is out for consultation and exhibitions are taking place throughout the county (including Cottenham, 10 Mar 10). There's more info at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ltp.

The Highways Agency has announced (24 Feb 10) details of the public enquiry related to the A14 improvements. The enquiry will start 24 May 10.

Children's Services

Cabinet decided to support a federation of Longsands School with the failing St Neots community college and to write off about £1million in the latter's debt. This decision was called in on the grounds that it was not apparent that due process had been followed. The scrutiny committee met and although it endorsed the decision it also highlighted the poor basis upon which it had been made.

St Neots is not the only school to have run up a large debt. Several other schools are in a similar situation with some of them showing major swings from significant surpluses to losses over a 12 month period.

Adult and Community Services

The budget includes significant savings from the library service. Although the services in Cottenham and Histon are probably safe cuts to the mobile service and to the successful library access points are likely.

Local issues

At the second attempt the 3 'surplus' lime trees on the High Street by Cottenham green have been removed. The spacing of these magnificent trees now seems a little more sensible

Forthcoming meetings and events

11 Mar 10	CGB liaison forum
23 Mar 10	CCC development control meeting
30 Mar 10	County Council meeting
13 Apr 10	Neighbourhood panel at Impington Village College

And finally ... yesterday was tree planting day in Oakington. To celebrate 100 years of county farms the plot in the corner formed by Gatehouse Lane in Histon and Cambridge Road in Oakington has been released for woodland development. Volunteers were invited from the 3 neighbouring villages (Girton as well) and there was an impressive turnout. The scouts and guides turned out to do their bits but many individuals became serial tree planters. David showed up in totally inappropriate footwear to plant his tree but was seriously out-performed by Simon Edwards who claimed to have planted more than 20!

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

contacts	email	mobile	home	website
Sue	suegymer@ntlworld.com	07919 036246	01954 252902	
David	ccc@davidjenkins.org.uk	07739 758859	01223 236232	www.davidjenkins.org.uk