

Monthly update for parish councils: July 2010

County Council and Cabinet meetings

There was one Cabinet and a County Council meeting during July. There were no items of immediate local interest at Cabinet so neither David nor Sue attended.

The Council meeting was a full meeting with a major item for determination (the proposed Local Government Shared Services, LGSS, opportunity in partnership with Northants), 2 motions and 3 cabinet meetings to debate.

LGSS will involve CCC and NCC pooling and sharing much of what we call the Corporate Directorates, both professional services and transaction systems, for a potential saving of £2million per year. The Lib Dems support the concept of shared services but are concerned at the balance of risk and reward and therefore voted against the proposal.

The first motion came from Labour and challenged CCC to express its concern about the Coalition Government's education reforms (academies and 'free schools'). The Lib Dems successfully proposed an amendment and voted for the motion. The Tories voted against it.

The second motion related to the Audi Commission Act which gives the public 20 days to inspect the council's accounts. It asked that the council be more vigorous in advertising this. The Tories voted against this motion saying that the council did enough already.

Accounts for the first 2 months (April and May) were presented at Cabinet. They show overspends all round with a YE forecast of a £3million deficit. Note that this is an overspend and is not related to any reduction of funding which simply compounds the problem. Cabinet agreed to virements totaling £3.8million and asked CCC Directors to commit to savings equal to 1% of budget. Note that £0.5million of the virements is from the school transport budget which the Lib Dems argued for in their last two alternative budgets.

David also asked 3 questions relating to the council's 'partnerships' (how many, how much do they cost etc), its publication of glossy magazines (how many, how much do they cost etc) and its HR management policies. These are recurring themes and there may be some progress but what's illuminating is how such questions highlight gaps in CCC's knowledge and management processes.

Corporate Directorates

The first meeting of the joint committee for the LGSS will take place in August. David will attend as one of the 3 Cambridgeshire members.

David joined Lib Dem group leader Fiona Whelan in a meeting with Andrew Rowson of Data Diligence (<http://bit.ly/a14qyT>). Andrew specializes in helping public bodies to identify waste and losses in their accounts payables. He has approached CCC with no success.

It has been revealed that although the council has centralized a lot of basic admin tasks to save money there are still pockets of marketing and IT purchasing which remain in the hands of the operating directorates.

Adult and Community Services

The Library service review, which has an objective to reduce costs by £2million over 3 years, has been published. There are worries in the city that libraries will be closed although there are no plans at present. Proposals to reduce mobile library coverage have, however, been published. Click on <http://bit.ly/cWO7vT> for more information.

Environmental Services

The AJC met. David has replaced Sue on this committee. Tim Stone, Lib Dem county councilor was voted chair. The committee approved the 50mph speed limit for the B1049 between Histon and Cottenham. There had been one objection. David asked about action to mitigate illegal use of the airport road between Oakington and Longstanton. It is waiting for an agreed position from the two parish councils.

The Local Transport Plan consultation leaflets were finally delivered (17 Jul 10), at least to some of us. The consultation has once again ended (31 Jul 10).

It looks like the Guided Bus as a complete project (north and south) will open Dec 10. However progress to fix the 'snags' on the northern section remains slow.

Childrens' Services

David and Sue attended a youth services' stakeholders' meeting. This is a prelude to consultations about changing the service from 'universal' to 'targeted' delivery. An informal consultation runs until 23 Jul 10. Formal consultation begins 3 Sep 10.

Local Issues

Histon FC has announced the appointment of a new chair. Russel Hands has been invlived with the club for 40 years and was chair 20 years ago.

The new Citi 7 bus stop in Cambridge has been moved. Passengers should now board at stop S1 in St Andrews Street. Click on <http://bit.ly/9Txlqr> for a nice map.

The Council has responded negatively to requests that the no unloading restrictions outside the Station Stores in Impington be relaxed. David is asking for a site meeting with the relevant Cabinet member to explore ways to challenge the Council's position.

David and Sue and their fellow Lib Dem district councilors have agreed to hold surgeries starting in October: on the first Friday between 1900 and 2000 at the new Community Centre in Cottenham and on the second Friday in Histon or Impington. Other councilors will be welcome to attend.

David joined Julian Huppert, Cambridge City MP, and Oakington parish council chair David Reeves on a visit to the Oakington detention centre. Click here, <http://bit.ly/9xAH8B>, for a summary of David's impressions.

The Orchard Park family fun day (<http://bit.ly/apUxt7>), it is in fact a fun week, with the official opening of the community facilities went off well on Saturday. The illegal encampment of travelers on a Gallaghers' plot had little impact on the festivities.

Forthcoming meetings and events

There don't appear to be any meetings to look out for in August.

And finally ... did you know you can 'follow' CCC on Twitter (<http://bit.ly/bE3syD>) and Facebook (<http://bit.ly/bv3qfd>).

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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