

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Report to Parish Councils October 2017

This month has provided me with the usual quota of meetings some of which were ... well let's say not so inspiring as the two I attended with the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of Girton Glebe Primary School. Over the last year or so the three of us have met a few times with County Council Officers as the school has wrestled with funding challenges. Over this time I have learned much about the quality of leadership that has raised the school's performance so that it now rivals and, in some areas, surpasses that of other establishments locally. I am not sure that many of us really understand the demands made upon teaching staff but none of these seems to distract from this school's firm belief that children's personal and social development is as important as their academic progress. Statistics evidence the school's success in providing the latter. First hand observation tells me that this friendly, inclusive school at the heart of Girton's village community is delivering so much more. It would be unfair for me not to say that my respect and admiration extends to all the headteachers and their teams in the primary schools within the division with whom I am equally well acquainted. I know that they are all faced every day with similar challenges and have to use skills that would have been unheard of in teaching staff of my youth. It just happens that this month I was so forcibly reminded of teachers' dedication by these particular meetings and I hope you will agree it is nice for me to have such a positive message to deliver at the start of my October report.

The subject that has prompted the largest number of emails from residents this month has been the County Council's proposal to change the way services that are currently provided through **Children's Centres** are delivered in the future. As soon as the proposal came forward I met with relevant Council Officers to establish exactly what it would mean for us locally and was reassured that little would change. Much of what the centres deliver is already through outreach which will continue. One benefit will be in freeing up space for much needed additional Early Years places. Most of those emailing me of their concerns have not actually been resident in the division. I have received separate emails from one couple in Dry Drayton, two from Girton residents and none at all to date from Bar Hill or Lolworth. Councillors will debate the proposals at the meeting of full Council this month and by the time I attend your meetings I will be able to advise the outcome and answer any questions or concerns that you have.

Since an initial call last year for parishes to suggest how links to public transport could be improved, six villages have been working with the Council and the **Greater Cambridge Partnership** [GCP] to look at how the idea of rural travel hubs could work in practice. A well attended event was held in September to continue this initiative by the GCP to get more people out of their cars and using public transport, cycling or walking. Most locally to us, Oakington Parish Council may be able to use this as an opportunity to address some of the unintended consequences of the success of the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway [CGB]. The Parish Council's ambition to make a change to the bus route will certainly benefit Girton. The work so far has indicated that connecting SCamb's villages to each other as well as to Cambridge is important but other factors have also been highlighted: the issue of space to build a facility and reducing on-street parking around rail stations/bus stops among them. It has been stressed that this should be a 'bottom up' initiative allowing villages themselves to drive the projects and that there is not a one size fits all definition of a rural travel hub. It has provided, too, an opportunity for neighbouring villages to support each other and investigate mutually beneficial proposals.

Profiting from its new status as a devolved authority the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority** [CPCA] submitted a bid for £193m from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund's Forward Funding Pot to facilitate development of Cambridge Northern Fringe East. If the bid is successful it will allow for the relocation of Anglian Water's Cambridge Water Recycling Centre and unlock the potential for 7,600 new homes to support new jobs on the Cambridge Science Park and in the Greater Cambridge area generally. The other two proposals considered were for the Huntingdon Third River Crossing and Wisbech Garden Town. Whilst they were unsuccessful on this occasion support was given by members of the CPCA for seeking future funding opportunities for these two proposals.

CPCA also endorsed funding bids submitted by constituent District Councils including one from SCambs to the Government's Marginal Viability Fund which seeks to get stalled developments moving. The SCambs bid is for £2m to develop Cambourne High Street and deliver much needed additional affordable homes. The scheme given permission in 2012 for the provision of 8,000 square feet of retail space proved unviable due to the high cost of essential road widening and relocation of a complex network of electric cables, sewers and broadband links. A successful bid would allow for the development of shops and restaurant space as well as 120 additional homes. Successful bids will be announced between December this year and February next year.

I have checked the **Transport Investment Plan** [TIP] details of which were presented to the **Economy & Environment Committee** this month. It is extremely long and depressingly most of the schemes on it will remain little more than a pipe dream until a source of funding can be identified for them. I confirm that the schemes for which both Girton and Dry Drayton have expressed desire have been included as I requested but in the main these also fall into the category of no funding solution currently identified. The only exception is the link from Wellbrook Way which will, when it comes forward, receive funding from the Darwin Green development.

I have been fascinated to discover '**Your Library in the Palm of your Hand**' available via an app called Spydus Mobile which can be downloaded from either the Apple iTunes Store or the Android Play Store. Effectively this is an anywhere 24/7 library. You can search for books, e-books, films, music and more. Once you've found what you are looking for, you can download, save or reserve the items. It also has a 'Discover' feature which can provide suggested reading via featured new lists, new arrivals or personalised recommendations. Another innovation by the Library service which you may find useful.

And finishing on another technological topic: this month I became an 'Uber' subscriber. I never get into politics in my reports so won't comment on the recent position taken by the London Mayor but what I have learned is: it is generally cheaper than other providers, incredibly efficient and reliable. I took the opportunity to talk to my driver each time. None had any complaints about terms and conditions. All were unfailing courteous and good conversationalists.

I look forward to hearing your comments and questions about the items in this report or any other local or strategic matter either at October's Parish Council meetings or directly by email.

Lynda

lyndaharford@icloud.com;
01954 251775/07889 131022;
Follow me on Twitter: @2whit2whoo