

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Annual Report

Bar Hill Division: Bar Hill, Dry Drayton, Girton and Lolworth

My year end report in 2017 started with anticipation of the election of the first Municipal Mayor for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and the benefits that devolution would bring to the area. It is still very early in James Palmer's tenure of the role and much of what has been done so far has been about how the **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority** will actually work; appointments of staff and process and procedure setting. I am pleased though that there has been agreement for Combined Authority funding of a county wide strategic review of bus services. Our villages have seen a gradual decline in the service provided by the commercial companies as County Council subsidies on many routes have been withdrawn. The lack of public transport affects the lives of those living in our villages as well as the overall sustainability of our rural communities. The review will provide information for a future Combined Authority Bus Strategy which is to be developed as part of the future Local Transport Plan. A specialist contractor for this work has now been appointed. Approval for funding of infrastructure at Northstowe Phase 2 has also been approved. This will allow for a forecast 540 homes to be delivered within the time constraints of the housing part of the first devolution deal. A proposal for 880 key worker homes at Northstowe is also being considered and I recently spoke to the Mayor about the benefits that these homes will bring to Addenbrookes. The cost of housing in the local area has a detrimental effect on the hospital's ability to recruit and retain the nurses and ancillary staff that it needs.

Northstowe recorded another milestone in April 2017 when the first residents moved in to South Cambridgeshire's new town. 2017 was also the year in which the first new residents moved into the **North West Cambridge Development**. Although none of the affordable housing provision on this development is for general needs across the district, the University's model of providing for its own affordable need is one that I believe that we can learn from.

The Greater Cambridge City Deal relaunched itself during the year adopting the new name of **Greater Cambridge Partnership** and announcing a refreshed vision for how it will accelerate the provision of thousands of new homes and jobs and create a fit-for-the-future transport network. I have been able to participate in the housing stream in my role as Housing Portfolio holder at South Cambs and we are working to secure funding in the second 5 year term of the deal for affordable and key worker housing.

The County Council too made changes during 2017. Two new service committees were created at the start of the year. Assets & Investments Committee became **Commercial & Investment Committee** to reinforce the Council's ambitions to work in a much more commercial way. The housing company it set up, Cambridgeshire Housing & Investment Company also changed its name recently to This Land. The committee continues to oversee the sale of County Council land to the company which is then responsible for developing the land. The committee is also responsible for managing all the Council's assets including its current home and most valuable asset, Shire Hall. At its meeting in March Council voted in favour of progressing two options for the relocation of the County Council's headquarters. Delegated authority was also given to the Commercial & Investment committee to take all decisions necessary or incidental to the selection of a 'hub and spoke' type arrangement for the future. An undertaking was made to keep a presence in Cambridge city.

The second new committee is **Communities and Partnerships**. The creation of this committee acknowledges the importance of meaningful and successful working with Parish Councils. They have some of the closest relationships with local communities and the County Council realises that these are key to supporting its efforts particularly in helping people stay independent and healthy for longer. This committee has led on the creation of the Council's Innovate & Cultivate Funds. While the 'Cultivate' fund offers small grants of between £2,000-10,000, the 'Innovate' fund offers up to £50,000. These grants are offered to local organisations and groups that support adult social care, children and families' services and the waste service. I urge all our hardworking local voluntary groups to consider whether or not they might benefit from making an application.

Changes too were announced to **Children's Centres** and locally this has become an issue for Bar Hill Primary School. The proposal for this centre is that it should be used primarily to provide Early Years places which are much needed. However, it is the process for awarding the contract that is being challenged. Bar Hill Division has some excellent primary schools led by some exemplary head teachers. I shall be sorry to say farewell to Al Mistrano who is leaving Bar Hill but thank him for all his hard work and commitment to the school and welcome Jeanette Quinn who will take the school forward as it moves towards academy status. A welcome too to Sally Daggianti who I know well from my days as a governor at Oakington and who took on the role of Executive Head Teacher at Dry Drayton as the two schools federated from January 2018. Andrew Simpson continues to raise the profile of Girton Glebe. My thanks to all the headteachers and governors at our schools who work tirelessly to overcome the funding challenges that all the County's schools face and yet still provide excellent education opportunities for our children.

Over the past 8 years the **Library Service** has become ever more resourceful and has made savings of more than £4m whilst keeping all its libraries open. There has however been criticism of the County Council's recent decision to charge for computer use in libraries on the basis that it conflicts with one of the main objectives of them being universal access points for information. The new charges came into force from April and there is to be a review of how things are working in September. Meanwhile I am asking for local feedback about this change.

The Council has continued its efforts to meet the challenge of maintaining our roads. The Combined Authority recently received a grant of £974,047 from the Government's Pothole Action Fund of which £806,511 is proposed to be allocated to Cambridgeshire County Council. Locally we have seen some much needed work carried out and I continue to press for other work in our villages to be prioritised. I am keen to support our villages to develop plans for work that is needed to the roads and investigate how projects might be funded. **Highways** related issues are high on everyone's agenda and I appeal to residents to support Parish Councils who may wish to set up a village group to work on this.

After many years of waiting **Cambridge North Station** opened on 21 May 2017 providing good connections with the busway and its popular and well used cycle way. The current schedule of services has received some criticism but there is no doubt that this new station provides for many an alternative to driving through congested city roads to get to Cambridge station. The 8 proposed sites for a new Park & Ride facility have now been whittled down to 3 and there is local apprehension about the possibility that this could be located at Scotland Farm. More positively Oakington has been successful in its bid to become a Rural Transport Hub and this should have benefits for villages in our Division.

Last year's report ended with reference to County Council elections. This year it is the turn of South Cambridgeshire District Council's electors to select their representatives for the next 4 years both for the District and Parish Councils. My thanks for their hard work go to Councillors of both tiers with whom I have enjoyed working for the past 4 years. My very best wishes to all those standing. I look forward to supporting those who are successful to provide the very best outcomes possible for our residents in the coming year.

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