

Report from District Councillor Douglas de Lacey 5. 9. 2018

It's been a busy month. As Chairman I have attended the presentation of a Queen's Award to a local business and made useful links with the business -- as a Council we are working on our links with business especially in the light of Brexit. I have also raised the Red Ensign on Merchant Navy Day (3 September). More excitingly, I was approached by two Councillors who told me that following my adoption of the Foodbank as a chairman's charity they had encouraged their local store to act as a collection centre. If they could do that, why shouldn't we all? So I wrote to all Councillors encouraging them to follow suit and there are now at least ten new collection points in various local shops (including our own Co-Op, whose manager also intends to co-opt others). The media picked up on the story and I hope we can keep it in the public eye. I also attended the funeral of one of our last RAF war heroes: Keith Jeevar was Flight Engineer in Lancasters in 625 and 170 Squadrons, and a delightful man to know. I hope to write a proper obituary after liaising with his family.

On 14 August the Scrutiny Committee had a presentation on Universal Credit. There is no hope that its advent will be delayed so we must work to make it the best we can. We also looked at a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the new town at Waterbeach, and were asked to make comments. My own are that the 'Vision' statement is great, full of phrases like 'A high quality environment'; 'well-designed buildings'; 'excellent infrastructure'; 'excellence in sustainable development'; 'making the best use of ... water'; 'securing radical reductions in carbon emissions'; 'Prioritisation of walking and cycling'. But these are never turned into concrete requirements, the language is always 'should' rather than 'shall'. Things like re-use of grey water, significant insulation of dwellings, pedestrian and then cycle priority, are not built-in; though 'traffic calming', which is generally very hostile to cyclists, is recommended. I asked for many changes; we'll see what happens as this SPD now goes to Cabinet.

The Civic Affairs Committee again looked at two requests from Parish Councils, one to decrease the number of Councillors as they have no hope of reaching the current requirement, and the other to increase as there is so much work to be done. None of my Parishes is up to full strength; we all expressed concern that in general Parish Councils struggle to find volunteers. What can be done? Answers on a postcard, please!

At long, long last we have received the Inspectors' report on our Local Plan, declaring it sound (after some modifications), and with a requirement to review. We in the opposition always thought it a bad plan, and the review will actually be the production, as soon as possible, of a new one. But at least in the interim we are at last free of destructive opportunistic applications going against our desire for well-thought-out development in the District.

I am being consulted on a major change to our Planning software. We are likely to move to that used by Cambridge City. If you have used that system (IDOX) and have any comments on it I would be grateful to know.

Finally, some residents have received a very worrying telephone scam. The caller is well-spoken and purports to be from Inland Revenue. The matter is extremely time-critical, requires you to call back a UK number and `if we don't hear from you or from your solicitor, prepare to face the legal consequences'. Please if you receive any such call just hang up -- this is emphatically not how IR deals with the public.

Douglas de Lacey