

County Councillor Notes – March 2010

The Gamlingay Division comprises the 13 Parishes of Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Great Eversden, Lt Eversden, Gamlingay, Lt Gransden, Haslingfield, Harlton, Hatley, Longstowe, Orwell & Wimpole.

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA. District Councillor Bridget Smith is on 01767 650510 or bridget@glockling.com and District Councillor Liz Heazell is at 01223 870289 or on liz.heazell@btinternet.com

Pot Holes & Road Repairs – everywhere!

There is no parish that has not been suffering greatly from pot holes since the onset of the bad weather and we have had numerous conversations with Parish Councils and residents on the subject. The ones in Cinques Road, Gamlingay became so awful that they began to form a trench. Pot hole repair is the responsibility of the County Council but Sebastian proposed a Motion at South Cambs District Council asking it to communicate all our concerns to the County in the hope that it would highlight what an important issue this is to every one living in the district. The gangs have been out and are doing their very best to get through the enormous work load. To give you some idea – in late February 1592 potholes had been reported as opposed to 300 last year.

Cinques Road Gamlingay (and all the other roads too, really...)

What a sorry state this road continues to be in. Sebastian has asked the County Council (again) about the plans for a rebuild. The response so far is “We are reviewing and amending our Capital programme at this moment following the untold damage this Winter has caused to our roads. We are looking to do a programme of major repairs on a lot of roads across the county and one we have submitted is Cinques Road. I will hopefully know more in the next couple of weeks.”

There is a further issue with flooding actually in the Cinques; mostly recently highlighted by the constant rain at the end of February. If you have to drive this way when the road is flooded please drive slowly!

Police Surgery in Gamlingay & Wimpole

There is now a weekly police surgery in Gamlingay held on a Friday from 3pm to 5pm in the Fire Station in Stocks Lane. Business has been a bit slack for them so please do go along to voice your concerns, ask advice about home security or just for a chat. They will be pleased to see you! Likewise in Wimpole you can meet Police Community Support officers at the car park at Wimpole Hall every Friday from 3. p.m. till 5. p.m.

Gamling-Aid

Gamlingay Records are holding a number of events to raise funds for Haiti. The young (and not so young) people involved are working very hard on this so please do go along to support them.
Gamlingay Records Night – March 6th 8pm The Old Kings Arms, Hemel Hempstead
Electric Night – March 20th 8pm Social Club Gamlingay, Waresley Rd
Classical Night- March 21st 3pm St Marys Church, Gamlingay

Entry is free to all these fabulous events but do expect to be asked for a generous donation!!

County Council Children's Centre

As you know the Children's Centre serving most parishes in the Gamlingay ward is being put in Bassingbourn despite our concerted efforts to have it located in Gamlingay. The County's reason for doing this was based upon their assessment of the relative levels of need in Bassingbourn compared to Gamlingay and also their assurance that a new building could be delivered in Bassingbourn by Summer 2010. Of no surprise to us is the result of some new research that clearly shows high levels of deprivation in Gamlingay but not in Bassingbourn. On top of this it is now very unlikely that the new, and very expensive building in Bassingbourn, is going to be finished this year. It is too late to change things now but we are always interested to hear from anyone who is having difficulty in accessing support from the Children's Centre. Bridget has been asked to sit on the management group so should be in a position to do something as and when.

Children's Trust

As member champion for children and young people Bridget now sits on the Children's Trust. She writes "I was concerned about how influential my role on this very important committee would be but am now quite reassured since they have agreed to put some issues about which I am very concerned on their future work programme. This includes:-

- access to mental health services for children and young people
- and the very thorny issue of public transport for young people"

If you have any experience of either of these issues that you would like to tell her about please do get in touch either by phone or e mail.

Buses

We have had some correspondence recently with Longstowe Parish Council about buses which fail to turn up when they are meant to. On one occasion this has resulted in a young person standing alone in the dark for a considerable amount of time. This is obviously completely unacceptable and Bridge has been in contact with the responsible person at the County who has in turn been talking to Stagecoach. If you have any similar experiences we would very much like to hear about them. Our bus service is poor enough as it is without the few buses we are meant to have not showing up.

For your information please note that from April 4th the Stagecoach 18 service at 16.25 from Long Road via Comberton/Cambourne is amended so that it leaves at 1615.

Recycling Bins

Following our recent articles about the new recycling service from South Cambs we have had quite a few conversations with residents who are concerned as to where they are going to put a third recycling bin. We are currently trying to find out if you can refuse this 3rd bin and keep your green curb side bins if you do have space limitations. Needless to say, a member of the public asking this question at Council received an incoherent answer so we still don't know. We do know however that the new service will start in October this year.

Council Tax & Rent increases..

South Cambs has agreed a 2.995% increase, the County Council 2.9% and the Fire & Police authorities a similar figure – and sadly we will all be receiving our bills shortly. Council tenants will see an average increase in their rent of 2.7%; and a number of new charges are to be introduced for those living in flats with communal areas.

Supporting our elderly residents

It has been a year of uncertainty for Sheltered Housing tenants following South Cambs District Council's failed Housing Stock transfer vote last June. That 'consultation' exercise' which drew so much criticism from South Cambs residents for its one-sided slant and wasteful output of leaflets, DVDs, home visits, and other materials and activities, cost a staggering £1.4 million!!!! Perhaps as damaging as the financial cost has been the reputation of 'consultation.'

Now, savings in housing services have had to be found in this year's budget, and in the past several months there has been a question mark over the future of services to the elderly. We have vigorously protested the administration's proposal to cut £10,000 to Age Concern, which supports many of the Village Warden schemes in South Cambs villages; and we have pushed for a fair and sensible budget package on sheltered housing services generally. The coming year now sees the warden services staying in place across South Cambs villages due to a one-off windfall, but Councillors will have to be vigilant in watching future plans as these difficult decisions must be faced.

Occupational Therapy Services

Please contact us if you have run into issues with OT services. These continue to cause concern – not least because some people can wait up to 45 weeks to be seen. Sadly this is likely to get worse after April as the budget cuts bite.

Climate Change

South Cambs' Climate Change Working Group has met to consider how we should build global warming into SCDC's planning. After all the jokes about our weather recently there remains the grim reality and it is interesting that a Mini-Stern report undertaken for Manchester by Deloitte reckons that without input now, poor planning could cost that one city up to £21 billion over the next 12 years, which is roughly £8000 per person in Greater Manchester. Read about it at <http://www.en4m.org.uk/?q=node/576>

At present in our risk register climate change is a C3 level risk (ie likelihood: possible; impact: medium), glossed with: "9. Climate change adaptation The Council does not develop measures to safeguard its services against climate change, leading to unacceptable vulnerability to the impact of climate shifts and other weather-related events, resulting in a degradation or breakdown of service delivery and damage to property, increasing costs and impact on the Council's reputation." Which is a long-winded way of saying we need to get on and do something about it.

All change.....

There must have been something in the spring air...both the Chief Executive of South Cambs and the Chief Constable have announced their retirements to take effect in 6 months time. Both have been excellent servants to the people of South Cambridgeshire and will be much missed.

Cambridgeshire Guided Busway

Honestly, it is not funny. Stagecoach may have repainted all the slogans on their buses from "I'll be on the Busway soon – will you?" to "Will I be on the Busway soon?" but the sorry truth is that this project is failing at a cost of an extra £41 million. Yes – a project costing £116 million has a £41 million overrun and counting. Despite assurances from the County Council's Cabinet that this

extra cash will be recouped in the future there is frankly no way we amongst many others believe this. The whole issue will end up in court and another key pledge by the County Council – that not a single penny of the cost of the Guided Busway will fall on the Cambridgeshire taxpayer – will be shown to be a hollow and inaccurate assurance.

Meanwhile, there are no buses at all running on the 100,000 tons of concrete/cement that Cambridgeshire County Council has sunk into the Fens. We've all seen first hand recently how they manage the failing roads so I tremble for the future of the guideway. If it ever gets used, that is. Some good news however – the cycle track part of the Busway is excellent - at least those parts of it that have been properly surfaced and which are not flooded.

Cemex at Barrington

Residents have contacted me about future developments at the Quarry in Barrington. By the time you read this a road show will have taken place but information so far is that the proposal depends on Cemex winning a large infrastructure contract. **If** they do, it will mean bring up to 4 trainloads of clay a day for up to 4 years to backfill a large part of the quarry and restore it to agricultural use. In addition, up to 100,000 tons of non-hazardous inert waste from the construction industry will be included - brick, stone, earth and subsoils essentially.

The railhead is protected like all other ones in Cambridgeshire as key infrastructure rather than for a specific purpose. Cemex do propose extending the railink into the quarry to reduce the need for lorrying the clay off the trains. They think it will create up to 20 jobs if it goes ahead.

Road Repairs

To report problems with the highway you can either ring 0345 0455212 or e mail street.scene@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. For problems with streetlights phone 0800 253529.

Congestion Charging & TIF - is it dead then?

As you'll recall the County bid into a £500 million fund for transport improvements which would have required the introduction of congestion charging in Cambridge. The Minister has dodged this by cancelling TIF and introducing (drum roll!) "a new Urban Challenge Fund". Very very early days but this is what we can expect: (and here I am quoting the Minister...)

“clear and measurable benefits for **urban** areas in terms of:

enhanced mobility through offering people wider choices for their journeys; reduced congestion and increased journey time reliability; better health as a result of improved safety and much greater levels of walking and cycling; streets and public spaces which are enjoyable places to be, where exposure to harmful emissions is reduced and where quality of life is transformed, improved safety; and reduced level of carbon emission from transport.

The Fund will support packages of measures designed to deliver all of these benefits. The packages are likely to include a combination of [sustainable travel](#) measures, investment to encourage modal shift and better bus services alongside demand management measures, better and city-wide traffic management and improved street design. Acting together, these measures will deliver a step change in the local economy, the health of urban residents and the environment they enjoy.

The new Fund will replace the Transport Innovation Fund. Work by a number of authorities showed that a combination of measures was necessary to tackle the problem of congestion and could deliver wider benefits to local communities, the urban economy and environment. TIF also

encouraged new thinking in a number of areas, for example on a phased and incremental approach to demand management. Its weaknesses lay in its too narrow a focus on the issue of congestion, the failure to win public acceptance for the more challenging proposals and inability to transform governance at the same time as delivering radical change. The new Fund will draw on the lessons from TIF and the new ideas that have come forward.” End of quote.....

So this government-babble says to us that there will be no recognition of the **rural** issues facing us. Typical. If you were hoping for improvements to our bus services in any meaningful sense I fear that your hopes are to be dashed. This in particular will impact on rural communities such as Barrington, Gamlingay and the Eversdens as the bus services reduce because of the focus placed on Cambourne. Needless to say we will carry on campaigning for a proper rural bus service. Onwards!!