

Caldecote Annual Parish Meeting - 20th May 2010

District Councillor's Report by Tumi Hawkins

Introduction

This report aims to give a summary of the significant activities that have occurred in the district during the year from April 2009 to April 2010.

1. Children's Centre

A SureStart Children's Centre is being built in the village, on the school grounds. It is one of 40 Children's centres in Cambridgeshire, and this one aims to provide information and access to services for children aged five and under, and their families in Caldecote & Comberton. The formal designation is the Little Footsteps Children's Centre, and its temporary location is in the Village Hall. The construction of the centre is making progress good progress, is expected to be completed sometime in early October 2010. More details can be found on their website: www.cambridgeshirechildrenscentres.org.uk

2. Community Grants

South Cambridgeshire District Council has funds available to provide grants for capital projects within our communities, to provide much needed services (community, sports, play facilities, youth initiatives, arts etc.). Caldecote Parish has successfully applied for and been granted £33,400 to be used for building the Cricket facilities in the village. Congratulations to the Parish Council and all who worked to see this through. There is still scope to obtain more funds, so we should not be shy in putting forward further applications.

3. Recycling

This district has one of the top recycling rates in the country. As part of the drive to improve and meet the government's targets, a new blue wheelie bin scheme is now being set up to replace the green bin scheme. The new scheme is to start on Monday 11 October 2010, and the blue bins will start to be delivered during September to ensure all households receive their bins by the start of the new scheme. This all comes at a cost of over £1.5 million.

4. Revenue Shortfall

The District Council's budget has reduced in the past year, and is now facing a £1.6 million shortfall, on an annual budget of about £17million. The shortfall is a result of the reductions in funds from Central Government, coupled with the reduction in income from Planning applications, the latter being a direct result of the recent recession. The reduction in revenues has necessitated reduction in council spending, and this has hit staffing as well as services.

The Resident Wardens services in the sheltered housing schemes was the first service to suffer. Wardens now have to float between 2 or more housing schemes.

Staff levels have also been reduced significantly, with up to 30 positions having been lost. The Planning and New Communities teams have seen a reduction of over half of staff positions. For new communities, it means the specialist staff for arts, sports etc. are no longer available. For planning, the level of service that is currently being offered has suffered, with applications taking longer to be registered, and information not been made available on time to interested parties. The Council is currently developing a new computer system for Planning, which it hopes will enable it to provide a better service with fewer staff. Turn on date is late June 2010.

General maintenance of council owned properties, grass cutting of public areas and litter picking services are also likely to be affected.

5. Housing Targets

The District is having to accommodate huge government targets for building new houses. So far, most of these have been located in the Cambridge fringes so that they do not disrupt our rural villages or put extra strain on our already congested roads. However, Marshalls have just announced that they do not want to relocate the airport so we still have to find space somewhere for about 12 000 new homes.

There is also a drive to build more affordable housing in the district, and the bulk is usually accommodated in large development sites. Whilst the opportunity at Marshall's is now deferred, another site at Hauxton has also fallen through. This means that focus is now being placed on Exception sites in the villages, to try to secure the level of affordable housing that is needed.

6. Banner Homes development

Following some amendments made to the plans by the developer, the application for development at the rear of 18-28 Highfields Road, is again in the consulting phase. There is ongoing dialogue with the County and District Councils to try to achieve the best possible outcome for the village, and we will keep you updated on progress. The loss of two major development sites, and the new focus on securing affordable housing on more exception sites means that negotiations in relation to some aspects of the development may prove to be much tougher.

7. Community Pride & Village Hero Awards

South Cambridgeshire District Council would like to celebrate the excellent work that parish councils do to make the district a place in which residents can feel proud to live. The Community Pride Award is to replace the "Best Kept Village" awards. A parish council can nominate itself for the Community Pride award.

Similarly, the District Council would like to pay tribute to residents who have made a significant contribution to their local community. Parish Councils will be requested to nominate up to one person each.

The deadline for nominations will be 31 July 2010, with judging taking place in August and the ceremony taking place on 1 October at Scotsdale Garden Centre, Great Shelford. Nomination papers will be sent to parish councils sometime next week, and more information made available on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website.

8. Elections

The Electoral Ward of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston and Toft have a new District Councillor, following the elections on 6th May 2010. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance. Contact details on my website at www.TumiHawkins.org.uk.

I'm sure you'll join me in wishing the outgoing district councillor, Robin Martlew, a happy retirement.

Prepared by:



District Councillor
Caldecote Ward