

County Council Report - September 2010

There has been a lot of activity at the County Council in September, with the meeting cycle getting back into the swing following a slow-down over summer. We had a meeting of the Adults and Communities Policy Discussion Group. This meeting discussed County Council responses to Government white papers about the future of policing and reforms of the NHS, as well as providing an opportunity for member input into the review of library services.

The review of library services was also the main topic for discussion at a meeting of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee. The responses to the current consultation clearly show how highly valued our library service is, with over 4,000 responses having been received to date. Scrutiny Committee agreed various recommendations to Cabinet about the library service, including recommending further detailed work on seeking joint working with a number of other Councils in Eastern England to run library services at the same time as delivering the savings needed. Mobile libraries will operate on a monthly frequency in future, coupled with the ability to borrow more books for a longer time. It was also agreed to review fees for those services which are currently charged for.

I chaired 2 service appeal hearings in September, one relating to home to school transport provision and the other to confirm a guardianship order.

I attended Cabinet in early September when Cabinet received a petition, presented by Mrs Ratcliffe, regarding the state of pavements and dropped kerbs in Burwell. Cabinet instructed the Cabinet member responsible and senior officers to investigate and provide a detailed response to the petitioners.

I have attended a number of meetings of a small group considering Highways Policy and issues, including general policy, the winter maintenance schedule, policy for environmental weight limits and third party funding. We are keen to enable third parties, such as Parish Councils, to help fund local initiatives. On winter maintenance, salt stocks have been purchased in readiness for the winter with top-up stocks pre-ordered for later in the winter.

On the less formal side I also attended the official opening of the Reach Lode Bridge; helped present certificates and medals to the children who had taken part in the library summer reading challenge; and attended the County Council Civic Service at St John's College Chapel. All of these were a real pleasure.

I have also been asked by the Leader of the Council to act as Cabinet Assistant to help and advise the cabinet members looking after issues surrounding children and young people. Much of that work will surround budget discussions, where the funding position should become clearer after the Chancellor's announcement on 20 October.

David Brown

