

And finally ... my footnotes from my 2017/18 monthly reports

April 2017

And finally ... this may of course be my last monthly report. If so I hope that you have appreciated receiving them and found them valuable in giving you updates on what I am doing and what's happening in Shire Hall. I've delivered a monthly report without a break back to January 2006.

And ... whatever happens next Thursday I'd like to thank you all for your support and feedback over the last 4 years. It's been a privilege representing you and I trust that I have done a decent job. However I am optimistic and responses on the door step have been positive so maybe I will be publishing another monthly report next month.

Whatever happens next Thursday this will be my last report covering Cottenham, Oakington & Westwick, and Rampton. Because of boundary changes the current two-member division of Cottenham, Histon & Impington will be no more. I have enjoyed working outside my home patch and thank the three parish councils especially for the challenges which they given to me and for the warm welcomes they've always extended to me when I've attended their meetings.

May 2017

And finally ... I've got to say that I'm troubled with what's happening: locally, nationally and globally. I've articulated my local disappointment above and who knows where the national election is now taking us? There was a time when the major parties competed to see which ones could best command the middle ground. Not any more. Both now seem determined to appeal to the far ends of our political spectrum and to play to the vested interests of those who are there. What happened to making decisions in the national interest? And as if that wasn't enough we've got the man in the White House with his twitter based government walking away from the Paris Climate Change deal because that's the way to bring jobs back to America's coal miners. Never mind that it's not going to happen it reduces the US in the eyes of the world and could have consequences which don't bear thinking about. It comes to something when we have Gary Lineker leading liberal thought in this country and Germany and China showing rational global leadership regarding climate change.

June 2017

And finally ... it seems like lots of water's gone under the bridge since last month's report. We had Mrs May's election of course only it didn't turn out in quite the way she expected. It seems like even politics is subject to the laws of thermodynamics and we've seen entropy increase which is surely a more satisfactory position than drifting into the cast-iron certainty of an increasingly right-wing government. And btw I'd be similarly concerned about such certainty from the left wing and by a pendulum which stuck in the middle. It's change which keeps us all on our toes and without it we get ourselves locked into futures which only please a minority and which inhibit challenge and alternative thinking. Go to <http://wp.me/p7tuu7-1BX> for my view of the election result.

July 2017

And finally ... this report seems to have become a little bloated of late. It's the consequence of a couple of trends. The first one is the emergence of bodies (the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Police & Crime Commissioner, and the Mayor and the Combined Authority) which have taken over

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responsibilities from the County Council. They need to be reported because they are spending public money and county councillors seem to be the only elected people who can hold them to account. The other trend is the sudden enthusiasm of the County Council to spawn more committees even as it does less. I'll be thinking about ways that this report can evolve as it responds to these trends without boring the reader to death. Advice would be appreciated.

August 2017

And finally ... I've spent quite a bit of time recently working on the Histon & Impington Neighbourhood Plan with colleagues from the Parish Council and in the community. It's a challenge. It's important because it enables the community to get some control over its future because what's in the plan will be a material consideration when planning applications are considered. Our 'problem' in H&I is that it is a good place to live and although we all grumble there are no big visible threats today. That results in a desire to have a plan that simply defends the status quo. That's an untenable position to take because we all know how Cambridge is developing and the impact that this has on housing etc. If we don't plan to accommodate that then we'll find ourselves vulnerable. Our challenge has been therefore to come up with a plan which enables development whilst protecting what we have. The first draft will be public later this month and there will be an open workshop to review it at the Rec, Tuesday 12 Sep 17 at 1930.

September 2017

And finally I'm just back from three weeks in Australia. You can't pick and choose of course but there are so many good features to life down under that I'm not surprised that people should want to live there. This time I was impressed by the integration of rail and bus transport, by the way that new developments get utilities and adopted roads before housing starts being built, by the generous funding of the arts and learning and by the high quality of the facilities provided for the public at their national parks. There are negatives too of course and I couldn't help but notice that it's still a car led society and that housing developments don't provide much in terms of private open space.

Australia also has a well-funded police force as well which is why my son lives there and as he drove us to the airport to return home we saw it in action when two cars were in collision at a road junction in front of us. One sped off but my son followed him to get his car number. This was reported to the officers who attended the accident and we've heard since that they arrested the driver who they found to be well over the drink driving limit. I guess that's what you'd call a result!

October 2017

And finally There's a trend which troubles me. It's the one that sees people taking the position that if they are in the majority then they don't need to worry about the views of the minority. It's not limited to the County Council although it's seen there but it's what's driven all this Brexit trouble, it seems to be behind the polarisation of politics in the US and now most recently it's seen in Catalonia where there doesn't seem to be any desire for the Catalan separatists to engage with those who prefer to remain a part of Spain or for them to even discuss some sort of consensus with the national government. When I went on my parish council chairs training I was 'told' that a good chair (1) looks to forge consensus; and (2) doesn't vote him/herself. It's what I did when I was chair of the Health Com and it's what I remember happening at the County Council before we had

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our period of 'enlightened' committee behaviour. It troubles me because it means we're not exploring the best options and we're making decisions on purely political grounds with insufficient regard for what's good for the County and its residents.

November 2017

And finally I've been 'back home' twice since my last month's report. That's home as in Flintshire. I grew up in a town called Connah's Quay which had some pride in those days but sadly what had been a vibrant if polluted high street now features several boarded-up pubs and shops. There were grand buildings housing banks and other businesses supporting what had been a thriving port but the banks have now moved on and the businesses which have replaced them have, let's say, less substance. I went to school in Hawarden, to the grammar school, in the days of course of selective education and only 10% of us going on to university. Hawarden's faring better than Connah's Quay, the school is still there, but although its centre still sports Gladstone's Library and two excellent pubs a third is being converted into flats and it has the feel of a community being 'hollowed out'. Lots of housing on the perimeter but slow decline in the centre.

December 2017

And finally The snow in December had us all excited and yet again there was lots of comparison of this country with others which seem to fare better. The reason we do so badly of course is that we have much less practice and because snow is infrequent and typically only remains for a few days we don't have systems in place to enable us to live through it. But is that enough and shouldn't we consider living 'through' snow as a part of improving community resilience? Even if we can't live life as normal isn't there some in between state which we can strive for which prevents a complete standstill. There's always going to be a standstill if we have a real snow storm, that happens in other countries as well, but we should be able to recover more quickly than we do. Maybe this is something that the C&PCom could get its head around and its teeth into.

January 2018

And finally we had a little light early morning chaos on Histon High Street during the month as the gas board had to set up traffic controls to enable it to connect the new Boot kitchens. Monday was dreadful with queues down Park Lane, unfortunate driver behaviour at the crossing by the Green and lots of grumbles in HI People. But during the week it sorted itself out. The people running the lights got a bit smarter, drivers learnt how to behave and parents recognised that when the lights are green it's worth letting the cars through. By Friday you'd almost think the traffic controls were a good thing! Which they were of course because this weekend the new Boot opened, on time and to seemingly universal approval.

And finally I enjoyed a bit of Cambridge during the month. I always describe Histon & Impington as being close to Cambridge but not a part of it. It's the latter which gives it its village feel and the former which gives you lots to do so in February I enjoyed the e-luminate festival and went for the first time (shame) to the Fitzwilliam Museum. I also enjoyed two meals on High Table at Churchill College. The first was a dinner where I gave my wife a first experience of Cambridge academic life and the second was lunch when I enjoyed a meal and associated conversation with

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assorted academics which can only be possible in such an environment. There's a bit of a summary of one topic of our conversation at <https://wp.me/p7tuu7-1Mi>

March 2018

And finally I missed the first of the two GPC meetings this month but I reckon I had a good excuse. At the time I was recovering from a general anaesthetic in the BUPA hospital in Impington. There's an account of my experience at <https://bit.ly/2pUJunS>. I don't often miss committee meetings and it got me thinking. What exactly is my attendance record? I'm on 4 committees including Council itself and have attended 30 out of 33 meetings during the current municipal year. There's more information about my council activity at <https://bit.ly/2lhUcMW>. Some councillors aren't on any committees and some don't turn up that often. I reckon that's not a fair return for the allowance which they get.

April 2018

And finally as noted above I visited the A14 operations during the month. Specifically I saw the operational centre and the work on the Great Ouse viaduct. I would have been interested in such an opportunity even if I had not been a councillor because I like seeing how things get done. In my working life I've always been keen to visit the factory, either our own because it's important to know how your product gets made, or the customer's because by so doing you get a better understanding of how you can best serve it. This month's visit was eye-opening from the serried ranks of engineers behind maybe 250 computer screens in the office to the size and scope of the project itself. It does seem to be laying waste to our communities in general, on both sides of the A14 from Girton northbound, and to Histon & Impington specifically because of the loss of the trees but then you meet the engineers whose sole focus is on 'on time, on budget delivery' and you can understand, if not forgive, their singlemindedness. I asked one if there was any difference between the different projects he worked on. 'No' he said 'I just pour concrete'.