

REPORT FROM CLLR D LOMAX – DCC & HPBC

Many of the scrutiny committee meetings over the last year have been cancelled due to lack of work to put before them. Council meetings have been rescheduled as work could not be completed in time for the original dates.

Corporate Select is the main scrutiny committee, taking an overview of the other three Select Committees and their work programmes. Following a recommendation from current Select Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs there was a review of Select Committee arrangements. It was agreed that Regeneration Select Committee would be disestablished, with items currently reported being redistributed to the Corporate/Community Select Committees or appropriate regulatory committees.

The Committee has monitored the performance of the Council. Finance and performance management monitoring reports have been considered. There has been concern over a number of areas where targets have not been met.

As part of the fundamental review of fees and charges a Sub-Committee was established but failed to meet.

A £5m Regeneration Growth Fund has been set up by the Council.

The Council has disposed of some asset sites no longer required although the money achieved on some of them has been disappointing when compared to other sites marketed privately within High Peak.

The new national system of Individual Electoral Registration has been introduced but failed to engage the public until the last few months.

A new management structure and Service Review Programme have been set up to try to achieve savings in delivery cost.

It has been disappointing that some tender exercises have resulted in very few tenders actually coming forward for consideration. There has been some mix up over gas servicing and management of boiler within housing. Parking enforcement continues to be a hot topic with complaints from residents and visitors over enforcement and non-enforcement. A new contractor is now in place.

A new Derbyshire Business Rates Pool has been established which should allow for money to be retained locally from Business Rates income.

Progress has been made on the Buxton Crescent and we should see work commencing soon. There is concern over the impact on roads within High Peak of the Manchester Airport link road. The announcement of the Mottram bypass was welcomed but again there is concern over the impact on Glossop and Tintwistle.

It was agreed that High Peak would be part of a new Derbyshire Combined Authority. This is supposed to bring extra money in for regeneration and transport projects benefitting the Derby and Derbyshire area.

There has continued to be delays over the production of the new Local Plan, with one Council meeting ending in confusion when the Labour Councillors could not accept the decision of the meeting to exclude the inclusion of one site in New Mills which would have seen house built on old mine workings. This would have meant that the 360 houses p.a. figure that was supposedly needed would fail to be met by just over 1 house p.a. When the Local Plan was finally agreed by Council it was immediately ignored by the Development Control Committee in approving the Macclesfield Rd development at its very next meeting. Ironically the extra site approved would compensate for those lost on the New Mills site.

At the Annual Town Meeting last year councillors were asked to justify the 360 figure proposed. My reply was, "I can't." Since that time the proposal has been proved to be flawed and the number of houses required to be built is down to the level that your local councillors proposed in the first place!

Interestingly despite comments made by others in the room last year, the latest central area planning application states that "Although the need for affordable housing is still high Registered Providers may become uneasy due to the large number already delivered" as a result of the high number of planning approvals in the Chapel area.

The Community Infrastructure Levy is still not in place.

The Community select committee recommended measures, following legislative changes, to continue and improve the Borough Council's ability to tackle dog fouling and problems with nuisance dogs within the Borough through the introduction of Dog Control Orders.

There continue to be many complaints over dog-fouling. In addition I have had many comments about the look of High Peak with litter and the general appearance deteriorating.

DCC has resurfaced several footpaths and roads over the last year.

The county council has continued to put out many consultations scare stories on buses, school crossing services and Housing Related Support. These are poorly contributed to with one consultation reportedly getting 7 responses across the county!

A further review of school crossing is being undertaken with the suggestion that they should only be provided where national guidelines are met rather at the whim of councillors trying to secure a crossing for their area. The crossings in Whaley Bridge and Furness Vale would be safe under this proposal.

The support service at Cromford Court was under threat but has been agreed that DCC will continue to fund the Category Two Sheltered Warden service until 31/03/2016. This enables the County Council to review both the Category Two Sheltered Warden service and the Older Persons Floating Support Service alongside one another. A final decision on the future funding of both services is expected to be made by the County Council Cabinet in June 2015.

Area Committee meetings across the county, which are open to the public to attend and ask questions, continue to be a waste of time and money. It is probably a good job that members of the public rarely attend as they are usually held in rooms that could only accommodate 4 or 5 extra people! When members of the public have attended, they have been berated by councillors for daring to ask questions!

The lack of support for youth provision in Whaley Bridge doesn't need further elaboration here. Needless to say other parts of Derbyshire have seen increased provision.

The County Council will be the lead on the Combined Authority. Members are already excited about the extra money that will be going in to NE Derbyshire. I reported last year on the proposed solar farms. These are progressing with hopefully 2 being built over the next year. At a recent scrutiny meeting, a member welcomed the Leader of Derbyshire County Council's support for the project which would provide cheap electricity for NE residents!

The Council has recently conducted a review of credit unions across the county and is now looking at the Trusted Trader scheme.