

## **County Council - Annual Report 2021/22**

It's been almost a year since I was elected as County Councillor, by a margin of just 9 votes. One of just three seats that changed the County Council from a decade of Conservative control ushering a new Joint Administration of Liberal Democrats, Labour and Independent Councillors. There was understandably some skepticism amongst the new opposition councillors about how robust this arrangement would be - as rainbow coalitions are often fractuous, but I can report after surviving the first year of administration that Joint Administration is strong, and so far any disagreement - if there has been any - has been minor.

### **Planes, Trains, and Automobiles (plus massive housing developments)**

When addressing Parish Council meetings, Richard and I, have often discussed the big national infrastructure issues the Oxford Cambridge Arc, East West Rail, A428/421 dualling, and the Luton Airport Stack. Where applicable County Council Officers have offered a robust response to consultations, for example demanding better cycling and pedestrian facilities along the A428, and questioning the case for a Diesel Railway for EWR.

I personally have offered robust responses to each of these projects, both in replying to consultations and in the media. In many cases these campaigns have been successful, the Oxford Cambridge Arc is currently "in review", pending probable cancellation, and we are seeing neighbouring authorities retreat from including new housing developments - such as the massive Denybrook development west of St Neots - in their local plans.

There is also increasing uncertainty about the financial viability of EWR, I was one of 61 high profile signatories in a letter to State for Transport Grant Schapps demanding to see the business case for the railway.

Of course we haven't always been so successful, as Luton bound aeroplanes circle over our villages. Although we are working with residents to fight a rear guard action with regard to this.

### **Highways, Flooding and Drainage**

The Joint Administration inherited a dilapidated and pot hole filled road network,

- Drain and gully clearance programme - every gully in Huntingdonshire should have been cleaned, and we are investing money into the resolution of persistent wet spots.
- The County Council has also adopted a new Cambridgeshire Flood Risk Management Strategy, which will be used to address the ever increasing risk of flooding which is occurring as an inevitable consequence of the climate crisis.
- The state of roads in our area is one of the poorest in the county, routine repairs have been hampered by a long term vacancy for a Highways Officer, which has thankfully been resolved through the appointment of Majic as our new LHO. He has already visited most of the parishes on our patch, and has halved the number of outstanding highways reports.

- We are in the process of implementing 20 mph zones and school streets to tackle antisocial driving.

### **Social Justice and the Cost of Living Crisis**

- Free school meals for all eligible Cambridgeshire children.
- £20 into the pocket of every benefit claimant in Cambs
- Council Tax exemptions for all care leavers
- Paying all County Council employees at least a Real Living Wage
- £14 million [Just Transition Fund](#) to tackle inequality, improve lives, and care for the environment over the next five years

### **Environment and the Climate Emergency**

- A new ambition for Cambridgeshire to reach net zero emissions by 2045.
- An organisational target for the county council to reach Net Zero by 2030.
- The need for the council and others to engage, support and collaborate with communities, partners and businesses to make positive changes themselves.

This new strategy and action plan for Cambridgeshire is more ambitious than ever before and is focused on cutting carbon emissions before it's too late, to prevent severe climate impacts. It commits us to acting faster to tackle the climate emergency by bringing forward targets for reaching net zero. It puts climate change at the heart of the council so it becomes engrained in every department and service that we provide and it sets out how we will support communities and our natural environment to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

Cllr Stephen Ferguson