

John Jan

Report from Ashley Baxter – December 2021
County Councillor the Deepings West and Rural Division
and District Councillor for Market and West Deeping Ward

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to one and all!

Details of meetings attended since 10th November

18/11/2021 SKDC Planning Committee (re: Tallington Lakes)

I attended the committee and gave a short speech in opposition to the proposed new entrance to Tallington Lakes from Stamford Road. The Committee deferred the decision to a future meeting in order to allow committee members to attend a site visit.

25/11/2021 SKDC Council

Another chaotic and dreadful Full Council meeting at the Meres Centre in Grantham. A good deal of time was spent dealing with the vacancies for Vice Chair of Council and Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee caused by the resignation from these roles by Cllr Ian Stokes (former Con) as a result of his racist comment at a recent Committee meeting. Congratulations to Cllr Mark Whittington (Con) who is now Chair of two Committees and Vice-Chair of a third. There are other Councillors who would be well-suited to these roles but they are not members of the Conservative Group and therefore the Leader, Cllr Kelham Cooke (Con) will not allow their appointment.

26/11/2021 SKDC Planning Committee (Consideration of Planning Review)

Over the last 18 months, SKDC has spent £40,000 on a planning review from 'Cratus' consultants. Some of the recommendations have been implemented but are many are deeply unpopular among Councillors and, in my view, anti-democratic because they reduce the extent to which Councillors can participate and influence the planning process. In recent weeks, the Council appear to have taken more ownership of the process and further recommendations seem likely to filter through to the Constitution Committee in the months to come.

29/11/2021 LCC Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee

This meeting in Lincoln informed Councillors about the number of flood incidents in recent months and the new pumping equipment which has been purchased by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue. I have requested that a briefing on the proposed South Lincolnshire reservoir (which will be between Bourne and the Deepings) be presented to a future meeting.

30/11/2021 LCC Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee

This meeting also looked at flood incidents as well as the council's dismal performance on waste and recycling. There were two papers relating to the 'Levelling Up' agenda which appears to be a slogan, like akin to 'the Big Society', 'the Green New Deal' and 'Back to Basics' in that it can mean all things to all people and, at the same time, nothing at all.

30/11/2021 SKDC Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

I had to send my apologies to the SKDC Environment Committee because of a clash with the County Council equivalent meeting. In my absence, and at my request, the Committee consider the issues of water refill stations in the four towns of the District.

30/11/2021 SKDC Joint Scrutiny Committee re Deepings Leisure Centre

At a heated meeting of the Finance Committee and the Tourism Committee, Independent Councillors tried to establish why, since 2007, there has been no financial commitment to the oft-promised new Deepings Leisure Centre and why the Conservatives have now broken their promises and reverted back to a refurbishment of the existing centre.

The meeting agreed to recommend to cabinet that an extensive refurbishment should take place and (at my suggestion) the details of the refurbishment should be subject to 'meaningful consultation'.

6/12/2021 SKDC Members briefing re Mallard Pass Solar Farm Proposals

An opportunity to learn more about the project and ask some of the question which have been raised by residents. The scheme will not be decided by local councillors because it is a NSIP (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) and therefore decided by the Secretary of State.

7/12/2021 SKDC Cabinet

Further discussion of the Deepings Leisure Centre caused me concern that the 'meaningful consultation' might not be so 'meaningful' as we would like. This is a shame because since the first announcement there has been a pitiful, almost negligible, amount of consultation with local residents, sports clubs and other users of the centre.

8/12/2021 Lincolnshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

My first attendance at SACRE focused on a recent survey of Lincolnshire Schools regarding their provision of RE lessons.

Training

In the last few months I have also undertaken the following training:

Via Teams

5/11/2021 LCC "Understanding your role as a Corporate Parent"

6/12/2021 SKDC "The Model Code of Conduct"

Virtual safeguarding training completed via the Lincolnshire Virtual College

30/09/2021 "Introduction to Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire"

03/10/2021 "Understanding the Impacts of Hate Crime"

04/10/2021 "Radicalisation and Extremism"

04/10/2021 "LGBTQ+ Awareness"

18/10/2021 "Friends Against Scams"

25/10/2021 "Modern Slavery and Trafficking"

Some of the training offered by the Lincolnshire Virtual College is provided free of charge via 'Open Access' to anyone who registers. Some of it is quite interesting and informative.

Other information

During November, I attended the opening and closing ceremonies of the Deepings Garden of Remembrance as well as participating in the Royal British Legion wreath-laying ceremonies at Baston as well as Market Deeping.

As ever, if you require any further information or assistance with District or County Council issues, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Ashley Baxter
8th December, 2021

01778 344070

07799 077090