

‘Working Together’ must be our aim

The pressures we are facing as a country are greater than most of us can ever remember.

If we are going to meet the needs of young people, support the elderly, reduce the number of homeless, etc etc etc, all those who hold elected positions - MPs, Combined Authority Mayor, County councillors, District councillors and Parish councillors, have really got to ‘get our act together’.

Add to that, the many voluntary and faith groups who serve others, and we have a combined workforce which needs to set aside petty squabbles and differences and focus our time, attention and limited resources on where they can be most effective.

Too many tiers? *A personal view from Peter Downes*

You will see from the article above that we now have four tiers of local government: Parish Council, District Council, County Council and the Combined Authority Mayor. Some people believe that this is an expensive and confusing structure and might benefit from being slimmed down.

That is why, before the last election, I proposed that the County Council officers should investigate the costs and benefits of reducing the number of tiers. This was agreed, narrowly, by the Council, (the Conservatives opposed). We are now awaiting the outcome of this and then can consider if a more stream-lined structure would reduce confusion for the public and save money in these difficult times, money that could be spent on public services rather than expensive overheads.

A1 noise and safety

I can assure residents that the A1 remains at the top of our list of local priorities though it is not easy to report progress on a frequent basis. All the relevant councillors want to achieve an outcome which will make Southoe a safer place to travel to and from and, if possible, reduce noise and pollution. *PD*

County councillor ‘surgery’

Although most people are able to get in touch with me by e-mail or phone, sometimes people like to have the chance to talk a matter over face-to-face. I have offered this facility to residents in Brampton for the last 19 years and it has been appreciated. I plan to be available for you in Southoe at the Village Hall prior to the parish council meeting on the first Wednesday in the month. No appointment needed. *PD*

Cambridgeshire County Council

The first Full Council meeting in May confirmed the Conservatives’ intention to run the Council as a ‘one-party state’. All the Committees will have Tory Chairs and Vice-Chairs; no decisions can be reviewed without the support of a Committee on which the Conservatives have a majority; in Full Council no amendments to Tory plans can be made without prior notice; no councillors can put oral questions; officers will brief Tory Spokespersons separately from Lead Members from the other groups. Opposition groups will no longer have recognised ‘Spokespersons’.

A piece of good news: The Council has used some of its vast farms estate to open a solar energy plant which will eventually be a source of income to the Council as well as providing environmentally-friendly energy.

From your

County

Councillor



What? Another **Focus** already?

Yes, and there isn’t even an election!

The Lib Dems believe in keeping in touch with you all year round, not just in the few weeks prior to an election.

Our aim is to keep you informed about what the Councils are doing (or not, as the case may be).

We do not expect you to agree with all the opinions expressed in **Focus** but we hope they will make you think about the issues and challenges we all face.

If you have any specific questions on the topics raised in **Focus**, please get in touch with me:

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Some local events and news

Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital

Many thanks to those who supported the recent piano concert promoted by the The Rotary Club of Huntingdon. This raised £2,500 for the 'Friends of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital' enabling them to buy extra wheelchairs to help disabled people move around the hospital more quickly and comfortably.

Hunts Phil Concert

The Hunts Phil Choir and Orchestra bring their season of Russian music to a close on **Sunday, July 2** with a concert in the Hinchingsbrooke PAC at 7.30; Stravinsky, Shostakovich and Kabalevsky. Tickets from 01480 375678 (9 am to 3 pm, weekdays).

Huntingdon Drama Club

Shakers by John Godber & Jane Thornton is described by Variety Magazine as 'delightfully funny, thoroughly entertaining, pure theatre!' July 12-15 at the Assembly Rooms, Huntingdon Town Hall.

For tickets:
www.ticketsource.co.uk/huntsdramaclub

The national scene

Electionitis*

In **June 2016** David Cameron called a referendum on the European Union believing he would silence once and for all the Eurosceptics in the Conservative party and stop the drift of his voting support to UKIP. Instead, he lost his gamble, the country narrowly voted 'Leave' and Cameron immediately walked away from the chaos he had created.

In **June 2017** Theresa May called a General Election which she did not need to call. Her aim was to smash the Labour Opposition. Her inept campaign and a strong performance by Jeremy Corbyn actually wiped out her overall majority, though the Conservative are still the largest party.

The cost to the taxpayer of these two unnecessary elections is estimated to be nearly £300 million, plus the £80 million spent by the political parties, plus the millions of hours wasted by activists from all the political parties.

**Electionitis - an uncontrollable urge to call elections to gain party political advantage*

'Brexit means Brexit', said Theresa May. But what happens now?

On June 23rd 2016 the country voted by a 4% margin to 'Leave the European Union'. Nigel Farage said that if the margin was 4% or less, there should be a second referendum (but only if Remain wins!)

The Leave campaign told us we should 'Take Back Control' or 'Make Britain Great again' and promised us '£350 million a week more for the NHS'. The concerns raised by the Remain campaigners were never seriously debated or refuted, simply dismissed as 'Project Fear'.

Now that the negotiations have started, we are beginning to see more clearly what we were not told during the referendum campaign. The £ has lost 14% in value, making travelling abroad more expensive; inflation is increasing; there has been a drop of 96% in EU applicants to be nurses in the UK and a shortfall of 40,000 nurses is forecast for 2020; seasonal workers to collect fruit and vegetables are not coming in the numbers needed.

The Liberal Democrats have argued consistently that the public's votes in 2016 were based on insufficient detail and evidence. When we know what Brexit really means - for commerce, for employment, for students coming here or going abroad to study, for agriculture and fishing, for the environment, for crime and justice, - then we should have a second chance to express an opinion. Brexit will affect the lives of our children and grandchildren for decades - we owe it them to get it right.

Perspective All our local worries and concerns pale into insignificance when we reflect on the recent tragic events in London and Manchester. What is clear that we cannot continue to reduce our funding to the police, the NHS and local government. We are going to need them more than ever.

Why not get more involved with the Liberal Democrats?

In this time of great uncertainty, more and more people are joining the Liberal Democrats, attracted by our clear policies: working for an open, tolerant and united country, making society fairer but building a stronger economy which benefits everybody, not just the wealthy. If you would like to join, please go to our national web-site www.libdems.org.uk. Nationally we now have more