

County Report to Duxford Parish Council - October 2019

From Councillor Peter Topping

Local issues

Marshalls Move - I will be attending the meeting at Thriplow this evening where representatives of local parish councils will be meeting assessing the chances of Marshalls Aerospace moving their operations to Duxford. I have had meetings with the Imperial War Museum to find out their views on this possibility and I have attended the meetings of the group that has been set up to co-ordinate action - not everyone is opposed to the move per se, but we need to understand what the impact on the A505 would be of more people trying to get to work at Duxford, as well as aircraft landing frequency and engine testing noise.

Road and drain work - I will be meeting with the highways officer at 0900 on Monday next to check progress on repairs and have forwarded on to him the list from Duxford Parish council. The county council said earlier in the year that they would turn their attention to drain work in the autumn and I will keep them to that commitment. I will also take the opportunity to ask what is their view on the telegraph pole at entrance to Brewery Fields dispute - they said they would look into this but nothing has come back.

"children playing" sign - I've managed to get this put up this month in Thriplow after residents asked me to help. Depending on who owns the land, this is a district or a county council responsibility, but it is an option if there is a part of a village where car drivers might not be expecting children crossing the road. So, if there are areas or roads causing concern do please let me know. Obviously, the highways officers will do an assessment as to suitability.

A505 improvement research - This research, funded by the Combined Authority, starts this autumn and will take a year. I have been pressing for this for years and I am pleased this has finally started. I have been asked to be on the steering group, and I will make sure that the concerns raised by many parish councils and residents are listened to about how unsafe it is trying to turn on and off the A505 onto the roads that connect our villages.

Reports on issues further afield

Community Chest Grants - the District Council's second tranche of Community Chest Grants opens this month. When the new administration at the Council in 2018 changed the rules most parish councils were excluded from applying. When I queried this, I was told that parish councils can always put up their precept if they want more money. There has been a slight change so now if a parish council applies on behalf of some small settlements it can be considered. But for most parish councils and for Duxford it is still the case that in order to access this funding a community group will have to make the application.

Councillor Allowances - At September's Full Council meeting, Council agreed councillors' Basic allowance will increase by 2% (£98) as that is the percentage increase that local council staff will receive.

However, I opposed the proposal to increase nine new Special Responsibility Allowances which some councillors will get, one of which is over £5,000. I also voted against the proposals to change how many allowances any one councillor can get. As a result of these changes the leader of the council has had her allowances increased by 35%, to over £20,000 a year.

Planning Department at South Cambs -

At the September full council meeting I asked for an urgent meeting for councillors to test how close the Council was to losing its five year land supply and therefore its protection against unwanted housing development. I'm sorry to say my request was voted against.

Fostering Panel - As well as serving on the Health committee on the County Council, and the Climate Change steering group, I'm a member of the Fostering Panel, whose work is understandably highly confidential. However, I can say that the work of the officers dealing with these issues, and the commitment of the families who undertake fostering care, helping some very damaged young people, is to be commended.

Peter Topping

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