

County Councillor's Report. 13/11/2017

LALC: I have recently been made the County Council's liaison councillor for LALC, so in order get this role underway I met for two hours last week with Katrina Evans, The CEO of LALC. Ms Evans gave me useful background information about her organisation and we discussed ways in which she and I could best work together. I was impressed by the way Ms Evans wants to provide as many low-cost courses and services as possible, but it was clear that finance is an issue. We talked about ways of raising money and I suggested that she should contact individual councillors on all of the district councillors to see if any support could be gained from councillors' initiative funds. LALC doesn't receive government funding but it provides a service for all Lincolnshire councils, so approaches to councillors seems to be a reasonable beginning.

Secure Reviews: The County Council has appointed me to sit on Panels for Secure Reviews. This is when Lincolnshire teenagers are held in secure accommodation for their own protection. The length of detention is decided by the courts, but the panel has to review the situation regularly in case the young person is able to be released early. The panel is empowered to make the decision to let the teenager go before the court's deadline and there are very strict criteria for this, so mistakes are unlikely. However, these reviews can take place all over the country and I am concerned about the amount of time they take. In the last few weeks I will have travelled to Exeter twice, with each trip taking two days because of the need to be at the meeting place early (the journey takes at least six hours by train or car). I have had to go to Durham and was once also asked to travel nearly three-hundred miles to a review in South Wales (but I couldn't on that occasion). I'm questioning whether or not this is the best use of my time as a councillor, because, as we all know, two days of travelling and meetings tends to make the following day fairly unproductive. Any thoughts would be appreciated. My own feeling is that the council should train more people to share this instead of relying on one person.

Street-Lighting and IT Reviews: The two scrutiny panels for the above services are now underway and I'm chairing the ICT review. ICT resilience is a massive problem at LCC, but recent problems suggest to me that neither LCC nor Serco officers are remiss and that significant investment needs to be made to bring IT provision up to date. The systems simply weren't built to do what we're asking of them. The review panels are cross-party and will examine practices at LCC and other councils, with a view to making improvements at LCC. Urgent improvements are essential and, as an example, I have been given yet another new device (new iPad) only to find that I'm locked out of all emails before October 10th, with all e-mails disappearing without warning and then taking hours to come back, if they come back at all. These and other problems are being experienced by councillors and officers and make it very difficult to work.

Grass Cutting and Weed Spraying: The last meeting of the Highways Committee sat on Monday, 6th November and we scrutinised papers on the council's grass-cutting and weed-spraying policies. These papers can be found on pages 29-40 of the public document pack and they give useful information about plans and costs. The same committee also gave an update on progress towards the next Highways contract, which is worth in the region of £400,000,000 and is of such complexity that there are very few companies in the country, possibly as few as three or four, who are capable of providing the necessary services. Details of the work can be found in Appendix 1 of the report pack for this committee. This document makes very interesting reading and, I feel, demonstrates the high level at which LCC officers work.

