

Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual Statement

Let me begin by congratulating all councillors who have won their seats, and Cllr Smith on becoming leader of the council.

Now we recognise this is your day, and for you to take up the powers and responsibilities that come with office.

Nevertheless, we too have new people, and I am very pleased to welcome into the Conservative group newly elected councillors Heather Williams and Shrobona Bhattacharya – Cllr Ruth Betson would be here too, but she has tonsillitis and so is existing on a diet of ice cream and Netflix. I am pleased that women make up half the Conservative representation, and that our councillor age profile reflects the future. Although our group meetings are preceded by a traditional breakfast cooked for us by Cllr Howell, you will find no gammon on this side of the chamber.

I wanted to touch briefly on the key challenges that the council will face – and which Cllr Smith has made much of in the last year: but before that I should like to single out three councillors who fought and lost in the recent elections, and whose experience, in different ways, will no longer be available to the benefit of the council and its residents.

I would like to mention Cllr Neil Davis, an independent councillor, well-respected for his work on mental health issues, which was the reason Cllr Ellington and I asked him to be our mental health champion for the whole council.

The second is Cllr Simon Edwards, whose legacy to this council is a fiscally secure future. We will present an alternative budget, when the time comes, but in the meantime, you are free to have that devised by Cllr Edwards,

The final member of this trio of councillors worthy of apotheosis is of course Cllr Kindersley. His expertise on planning matters will be much missed by us all.

I have given you three councillors – let me give you three facts:

- Fact one – 588 affordable houses – or 85 per cent of the total number of affordable houses grant funded so far by the CA £100m, will be built in South Cambridgeshire. That is the baseline we have established. Councillor Smith has said that South Cambs is not getting the affordable houses from the Combined Authority deal – 85 per cent sounds a good deal to me - it is your job now to keep it there.

Secondly, as from two days ago, this council has a five year land supply, making it harder for developers to put in speculative bids to build houses where they are not wanted.

Thirdly, the income stream generated by Ermine Street housing for this council saw nearly £1.7m last year going into frontline services, services that would otherwise have to be cut, or the council taxes go up.

So, there it is: a five-year land supply, fiscal security, and affordable houses from the Combined Authority.

I said I wanted to say something about the challenges facing the council and the residents of South Cambridgeshire

- balancing the desire of many young families to have a home in South Cambridgeshire, with the need to keep the rural and green aspect of the district.

- balancing the need for people to get to work, with the desire to keep the rural green aspect of the district.

We will be interested to see where the new administration takes the Greater Cambridge Partnership,

We await with interest the new proposals that Cllr Van der Weyer puts forward with regard to the GCP. Because where the Lib Dem administration comes up with a sensible proposal, then we as the opposition may well support it, and welcome it. We will not oppose for the sake of opposition. But we will hold you to account.