

Annual reports – ECDC Representatives on Outside Bodies:

- Community Safety Partnership
- Sanctuary Housing
- Littleport & Downham, IDB

### **Community safety Partnership**

I have attended the majority of these meetings (via Teams) during the last year.

This board looks at a large number of matters of great concern across the District. Children and Young people are often at the heart of these and include actively putting in place such opportunities as Court days where appropriate.

Substance abuse at all levels and the effect this has on families and the wider community. Anti-Social Behavior in all its forms, low level crime, drink spiking, shoplifting, to name just a few topics.

The CSP is made up of representatives of Policing, Health professionals at various levels, the County Council (who often carry out deep dives to supply reports with evidence backing up subjects under discussion). Housing providers, City, Town & Parish Councils, District and County members, and officers of these various authorities. As might be expected not all members are able to attend all meetings but there is always a good cross section taking part.

The CSP is a very worthwhile body, shining a light on many difficult situations and endeavoring to improve the lives of those within our community. There are pockets of deprivation throughout the district and for some disadvantaged individuals and families, they suffer from multiple effects.

Working to make our district a safer, healthier and happier place fits in with our Corporate Objectives.

I am happy to recommend my continuing representation on the CSP

### **Sanctuary Housing**

Sanctuary are the largest of our social housing providers throughout the district. Sanctuary continue to have some senior officers based locally although The Grange no longer hosts dedicated Sanctuary officers within the reception area, for the benefit of their tenants.

A study was carried out recently by Sanctuary to determine the number of tenants using this facility and the findings concluded that numbers had fallen to an extremely low level, and the presence of Sanctuary officers could safely be withdrawn.

District members did query the findings but as the District Housing and Community Advice team are available to help and give guidance to tenants, assisting with logging complaints for instance, so it was accepted that this measure should not result in a drop in the level of service.

Looking backwards to the effects of the Covid lockdown which resulted in a very large number of void properties, great strides have been made to roll this back.

Coming out of lockdown, difficulties in the supply chain of materials and replacement parts, attracting the number of multiskilled and well trained tradesmen required back to the Sanctuary workforce was far from easy and the soaring costs of materials all played their part in the difficulties of turning the housing stock around in an acceptable timeframe.

A decision to concentrate on the easy wins was made and Sanctuary are now well within the expected timeframes for these. A vacated property has to be made acceptable to relet from the safety perspective. There may be cosmetic work which might be desirable, kitchens and bathrooms which might benefit from replacement but if these things are functional, then they have to be left for work at a later date.

Where a property has had tenants in place for many years, happily living in a somewhat out of date environment, these tenants have frequently turned down the opportunity for improvements as they possibly felt that the upheaval was not something they were able to deal with. This is something that many of us can understand from our own older family members.

This results in a property handed back but which is legally out of date and therefor unlettable. The property will have been loved and cared for but from a safety perspective is unacceptable. A great deal of work may be needed to turn these types of properties around. There may be those waiting for a home who would be prepared to move in with the property in its current condition but from a safety perspective this is not possible. Nevertheless the numbers of these properties are falling. It is much more efficient if properties needing a great deal of work are grouped in such a way that time and travel can be saved by tradesmen working on more than one property at a time.

Quarterly meetings of the Sanctuary Board are held via Teams, and the senior officer will give a comprehensive report covering a range of topics including financial matter and numbers backing up the report. A report from the Maintenance senior officer is usually given and board members are able to question and receive full answers on any topic.

The board is made up of senior local Sanctuary officers, their housing officers, member representatives of the District Council, and senior District housing officers, tenant representatives and an Independent member.

Finding Tenant representatives is far from easy as it is often felt that tenants are reluctant to be involved in this type of activity. This is a great shame as tenants

do have an opportunity to get answers to questions, although it is not intended that this is a forum for particular matters.

ECDC member seminars have been held recently and it is hoped that these will continue perhaps twice annually. Again, this is an opportunity for Councillors to question Sanctuary on matters of interest.

I find having a close relationship with our major social housing provider is very valuable, given the number of our residents who are their tenants.

I would like to see our other social housing providers within the district represented in some way so that a measure of cooperative working might take place rather than the silo working which I suspect is often the case.

I feel strongly that our residents should have the opportunity for a safe, and welcoming home which is so important to us all. A local lettings policy for those with close family or employment connections is desirable within new developments.

I am happy to recommend that I remain as an ECDC representative on this board.

[Note: I have referred to 'Tradesmen' as a generic term while accepting that more females should be represented within the workforce, and this is desirable.](#)

### **Littleport & Downham Internal Drainage Board**

I have been an ECDC member representative on L&D IDB for a considerable number of years, and find that my understanding of our Drainage Boards is increasingly improving.

The Board is made up of a number of Farmer members with land within this catchment and who often sit as members on other boards in which they have an interest. A Chair & Vice Chair are elected from within the Farmer members and generally serve in that capacity for a few years. They work closely with the Board Engineer, his working foreman, and the Clerk to the Board, meets quarterly, in person, at the offices/workshop/museum in Prickwillow.

The Engineer, the Working Foreman and the Clerk all give reports and other business is dealt with.

During the last few years, the Board has reorganized its working, accepting that working practices need to adapt and is now settling down with the current workforce. Keeping up with regular maintenance work both on the water courses and the machinery is always ongoing and the Foreman is carefully planning and carrying out the schedule of work.

Considerable housing development has an impact on this and other boards and needs to be constantly monitored. Currently the board is looking at the potential merging of local boards but this is at a very early stage.

L&D IDB have four District representatives, and generally all are present at the quarterly meetings.

I am content to recommend that I continue to be a District Representative on the Board.

Our Drainage Boards have a major impact on the control of flooding across the District and are a valued organisation.