

## **District Councillor's Report May 2018: Ingrid Tregoing**

### **Planning at South Cambs**

#### **The Local Plan**

Apparently, the Local Plan is nearly finished, and the Council is currently registering the representations from the last consultations. We still have no indication of when it will finally be adopted although we are hoping that the inspector will report back shortly after the elections. This is the longest running (most expensive?) Local Plan that has ever limped to conclusion in the country. The failure of the Council to facilitate a sound plan in a timely fashion has resulted in significant numbers of speculative developments in many of our villages, particularly our own as we well know.

#### **Designation**

South Cambs have exceeded the threshold on quality of decision making at which they can be designated as a planning authority. This means they are at risk of losing their status as a planning authority because they are judged to be so poor at making correct decisions! The threshold in question is that no more than 10% of planning appeals must be turned over by the planning inspector. SCDC is now one of 14 authorities in this position. It is now up to government whether they remove status from the council and take over the planning role. If this happens then the Council loses revenue from planning applications even though they still have to do all the work.

#### **Planning Committee**

Many parish councils have been frustrated over the past 2 years by regular refusals of requests for planning applications to be decided by the planning committee at South Cambs. We are now being told that once a 5-year housing land supply is secured that there will be more opportunities for applications other than the large unplanned speculative ones to be heard by the committee. I think it feels to many of us that there is no more of Waterbeach that could be developed in any case.

### **Rubbish Issues**

#### **Waste Collection**

This year we have seen the amalgamation of South Cambs and City refuse collection services. As residents, we may have experienced a few teething problems, but overall the new system is working well.

Ending the collection from caddies means fewer waste collection vehicles are needed, which will help save taxpayers around £670,000 during the next seven years compared to the previous system. Fewer trucks are needed because vehicles which can collect recycling mixed together with paper needn't have two sections and so can carry more waste.

This in turn means collection rounds will be completed without refuse trucks having to return to base to be emptied as often. As a result, the Council's recycling vehicles will cover around 26,000 fewer miles on South Cambridgeshire's roads every year.

#### **Incineration or Landfill?**

There are still several years before the Waterbeach landfill site is predicted to be full. We have all heard about the Amey application for a different method of waste disposal: incineration or 'Energy from Waste'. Although this is a County issue (District do waste collection, County do waste disposal) I was concerned that residents felt ill-informed about this proposal and so organised a well-attended meeting in January this year. My aim was to facilitate a range of experts to answer our questions and address concerns to enable us to make representations that would hold weight in the planning process. I was disappointed by many of the 'conversations' of the evening and felt that the panel could have done more to simplify the facts and answer the questions in a more meaningful way. We were however, granted an extension to the planning deadline to allow for the public meeting and the Parish Council to meet, and time for us all to formulate our responses to the County Council. As I write, new information is now available as part of the second round of consultations and this matter is likely to be presented to the County Planning Committee this summer.

### **New Town**

In parallel with the final stages in the preparation of the Local Plan, the Council has commissioned ARUP to prepare supplementary planning documents (SPD) for Waterbeach New Town as agreed by the Planning Portfolio Holder in December 2016. This document will provide further guidance on how the new settlements proposed in the Local Plan should come forward if approved by the Inspector in her final report. ARUP held a consultation session with a variety of local groups to try and garner what local people will be looking for in a new community.

In recognition of the current planning application by Urban and Civic for part of the Waterbeach new town, work is apparently focused on the Waterbeach new town SPD in preference to other large developments. The Planning Portfolio Holder will hopefully consider a report in the summer that will recommend a draft SPD for public consultation.

### **Community Warden**

Jane Williamson and I decided, at the end of 2016, to embark on a project for creating a Community Warden post for our villages. We are increasingly aware of older and more vulnerable members of our Community who do not have family nearby and would benefit immensely from regular contact with someone. After exploring various models of this type of scheme, and gathering information from Councillors from other Parishes and wards, we decided to design our scheme in partnership with Age UK. Jane and I worked hard to apply for grants, with the invaluable assistance of Shelley Mason our Parish Clerk, and I am so pleased to say that this scheme is now operational: we have a Warden in place serving the villages of Landbeach, Waterbeach and Chittering.

### **Other Duties**

In addition to the above, as District Councillor, I have spoken out in Full Council about changes to the proposed boundary of the new development. I have challenged the Housing Portfolio Holder on a number of occasions about inappropriate charges being forced on users of our day centres. I attended meetings of the Fen Line Users Association, the Amey Community Liaison Group, and meetings with developers large and small. The committee I sat on this year worked on a project exploring mental health issues amongst children in our primary schools which highlighted the lack of

support and funding available to our schools. I have arranged for Anglian Water to address the Parish Council, and of course have attended many Parish Council meetings. In addition to these more public duties it has been my pleasure to work with lots of local people on a wide variety of issues that they needed assistance with.

Despite all the fun and games, I have decided that 'politics' is not the role for me and did not stand in the election. Your local representatives of all parties and none work hard for the community, often for no or little remuneration. We are elected to act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias but sadly are often afforded little courtesy from some, especially in public forums. I wish the newly-elected Parish and District Councillors all the best for their coming terms and thank them for stepping up for the benefit of us all.