

## **CONSOLIDATED DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT – for March 2019**

**From Hazel Smith:**

### **Change of chief officer at South Cambs**

The Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service at South Cambs DC, Beverly Agass, has taken early retirement in a deal that involved SCDC making up her pension contributions.

The new Interim Chief Executive is Mike Hill, who has been Director of Health and Environmental Services and also during the last 6 months interim Director of Housing. There will be a reorganisation to more closely focus the structure of the council's organisation on the priorities and plans of the new ruling LibDem administration, with more emphasis on investment, house building and green issues.

One of the last events the Chief Executive led was a successful awards ceremony for staff, to celebrate recent achievements. Tellingly the member of staff most appreciated by colleagues was a member of the ICT helpdesk team. There were some great teams and individuals across the council being honoured for their contributions, from those developing new houses, to those working with communities, and those collecting the recycling.

Work is going on to put solar panels onto the roof of the council depot in Waterbeach. This will be the first of our green initiatives in South Cambs.

### **North East Cambridge**

The consultation on the Area Action Plan for the area around the station and the redevelopment of the sewage works started last week, and goes on till 25<sup>th</sup> March. It includes the Science Park, which they aim to make more diverse as it intensifies with the redevelopment that Trinity College have planned. I went out with officers and delivered a leaflet to all the addresses on Fen Road Chesterton, as the council is very keen to involve all the neighbouring communities in the consultation.

### **Waterbeach New Town Planning meetings**

The council is running a comprehensive series of sessions for the Planning Committee and other interested councillors, on the details of the two applications. The viability of the two developments is being discussed, and both applications have a lot of infrastructure to build, which means they are both offering amounts of affordable housing well below the 40% we would like them to deliver. We are told this has gone up from 8% to 23% but is still not up to our aspirations. The outline details of viability assessments that justify the amount of affordable housing are now supposed to be in the public domain once they are complete (as required in the NPPF), but we may not get much detail. A viability review mechanism for developments that are built out over a long period may allow for more affordable housing to be required at a later stage of the development, depending on how conditions are at the time, so for a 29-year development not everything is fixed for ever at the start.

Urban and Civic had given some presentations on the drainage, electricity, gas, water and sewerage arrangements they propose for Phase 1. This includes some electricity generation off-site at Chittering, and a separate local grid for electric car charging. Then there was a session on air quality and sustainability, and they explained the lengths they were going to to create a sustainable community, including links with Emmaus, the Army, apprenticeships, and a jobs brokerage function. There followed one on flood and water management, including an introduction to Internal Drainage Boards, and the responsibilities of the Environment Agency and the County Council as Lead Flood Authority. There is a whole day of briefing sessions on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb to come.

### **Greater Cambridge Partnership – Choices for Better Journeys**

There is another consultation coming up on the next phase of walking cycling and bus improvements for

Cambridge and its necklace villages. The detail of the Milton Road improvements is nearly fixed now, and a recent Local Liaison Forum meeting went through the details.

The **Combined Authority** is also holding meetings about its new Transport Strategy for the wider Cambs and Peterborough area. So many meetings – it's about time we had some actual changes on the ground ....

The **litter pick** on Sunday went well with 9 of us collecting litter. I spent quite a time at the Rowans play area (teletubby land), removing rubbish from under the hedges. The Tesco area is a disgrace: the Parish Council should be asking them to do more cleaning up themselves.

### **From Judith Rippeth**

**Landbeach Tithe Barn:** Listed buildings consent was granted on 12<sup>th</sup> February so the programme of repair works can now commence. Planning officers are in the process of finalising the lease over the next couple of months. The main change to the lease is to grant a licence to allow the serving of alcohol during events which will broaden the scope of fundraising activities. I will continue to press planning officers on this issue so that a new lease can be granted as soon as possible.

**Emmaus:** I completed a Level 1 course on 3<sup>rd</sup> February in 'Dual Diagnosis training' with other Emmaus trustees and staff members. It was interesting to learn about the effects of alcohol and drug misuse on the brain, the individual and of course wider society. I also learnt more about the kind of issues that the companions, paid and voluntary staff are dealing with on a daily basis and how best to support. The course was informative on the street drugs available and an education in the various substances and what is currently in vogue; although alcohol addiction is still the most prevalent issue. Dual diagnosis deals with the impact of drug misuse and mental health issues, such as clinical depression, and how they often go hand in hand and how to break that vicious circle. Not only was the day highly educational, it also highlights the challenging task Emmaus faces on a daily basis and the fantastic work they do.

**Waterbeach Greenway:** I have heard back from the Greater Cambridge Partnership regarding the Greenways project. They reported that they had received fantastic feedback of hundreds of responses for each individual project with some great ideas put forward. They expect to make the Waterbeach consultation findings available in the next couple of months. Subject to a new tranche of funding they hope to come back with updated proposals – hopefully this project can get off the ground in the near future!

**Recycling and bin collections:** From Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March the green bin will return to a fortnightly cycle of collection. From 1<sup>st</sup> April South Cambs will be charging for additional green bins to be emptied. This will bring the council in line with Cambridge City with whom it shares a waste service and with other neighbouring authorities. The small annual charge of £35 (£20 up until October 2019) should hopefully encourage those with additional garden waste (and probably a larger garden) to compost at home which is a far greener alternative than a diesel lorry collecting it for the composting process to be carried out elsewhere.

### **From Anna Bradnam**

**District Council Business Plan for 2019-24 and Budget for 2019/20** - The Council has approved the new Business Plan which embeds our four principles of – Growing Local Businesses and Economies - Housing that is affordable for everyone to live in – Being green to our core – Being a modern and caring Council. The Business Plan was drawn up following public consultation through social media, the website and via the South Cambs Magazine. In accordance with this, the first **Budget** proposed by the new administration for 2019/20 has also been approved. "In July 2018 two government reports (Office of Budget Responsibility and The Treasury) highlighted the pressures on public finances. Pressures on health, pensions and social care dominate long-term projections. When recent public sector pay awards are factored in, the future course of local government funding becomes very challenging." (Budget Setting

Report 2019-20) In order to prepare for this the Council has agreed a balanced budget which includes adding money into our reserves, to protect the Council against future funding cuts. This is because the government is likely to direct funding towards the County to cover health, pensions and social care – rather than towards District Councils. Broadly speaking, financial predictions for the next few years are rather bleak. The Government is likely to rebalance the Business Rate, which will impact us negatively and the New Homes Bonus is likely to be reduced. We are planning for difficult times ahead and savings of £3 million must be identified over the five years of the Business Plan 2019-24. Council Tax has been set on the basis of the District Council Tax for general expenses on a Band D property of £145.31. This will be an increase of £5/year or 10p per week for a Band D property.

The Council agreed to revise the **Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme** to use an income banded scheme for 2019/20. At present the Council Tax support scheme adjusts the amount of support with every change in income reported. The workload projected following the introduction of Universal Credit (which would otherwise require a change every time an individual's income changed) will not be deliverable with the existing staff structure, so the banded scheme will offer a more manageable workload and more stability for claimants. You can see the details here

<http://scambsmerngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=410&MId=7348&Ver=4>

### **Bringing empty homes back into use**

In an effort to bring back into use homes which have been left empty, the Council has agreed to increase Council Tax charges, to try and encourage them to be returned to use as homes. Currently owners of homes left empty and substantially unfurnished for more than 2 years must pay an extra 50% on top of the regular bill. From 1 April 2019 owners of such homes will be charged double the regular bill (+100%). If left empty for more than 5 years, they will be charged an additional 200% (and +300% for homes left empty for more than 10 years) on top of their regular bill. Currently there are 100 properties that have been left empty for between 2 and 5 years and 41 homes that have been left empty for between 5 and 10 years. Any extenuating circumstances will be taken into account

**Waterbeach New Town** - I've attended many of the briefings about Waterbeach New Town but I will not duplicate the report provided by Hazel. The next **Waterbeach New Town Community Forum** is on Wed 10 April. We are prepared the agenda and hope to look at planning for Community Infrastructure and transport issues specific to public transport around the north of Cambridge

**Waterbeach Internal Level Drainage Board** - have agreed their new Drainage Rates and Special Levies for 2019/20.

**Crime and Disorder Reduction Panel** - I sit on this Panel which works with a host of partners including City Councillors, Voluntary Services, Clinical Commissioning Group, Cambridge Fire and Rescue, Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the County Research Group to achieve harmonised approaches to crime reduction. At a recent meeting it was agreed to build community resilience by focussing on - supporting vulnerable people and identifying and supporting communities in dealing with - vulnerable places.

There will be a **Community Resilience Event** for Parish, District and County Councillors

Sat 9<sup>th</sup> March at SC Hall

Part 1 9am – 12 – What can your community do to improve community safety

Part 2 12 – 3pm – How can we work with Police and Planning Services to minimise the risk of unauthorised encampments. Please register to attend by calling 01954 713254 (2 parish reps max)

**North East Cambridge Area Action Plan** – Your views are welcomed on how the area near Cambridge North Station might be developed. Assuming the bid for money to enable the development is successful, the aim is to develop housing and employment opportunities that will take advantage of public transport, in preference to cars. We know the local road network is at capacity at peak times and that we'll need to

take steps to improve air quality but the aim is to develop this area with the best infrastructure possible. The Issues and Options 2019 Consultation is open and there are local exhibition dates until 14 March. You can have your say by Monday 25 March at 5pm here <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/necaap>

**Taxi and Private Hire Licensing** - the Council is holding a Workshop to consider its response to the national consultation on 'taxi' licensing. Nusrat Ghani MP announced the consultation saying, "The taxi and PHV trade has experienced significant and rapid changes in recent years which have brought with them benefits but have exacerbated concerns over the existing structure of the industry and the environment in which it operates. In particular, many of these changes have highlighted inconsistencies in the licensing standards, and in the rigour with which these standards are applied by some licensing authorities." The District Council Licensing Authority will submit its response by 11 April 2019.

Parish Councillors are invited to attend a **SCDC Parish Planning Forum Thu 14 March 6-8pm SC Hall**

**Mon 18 March SCDC Chairman's Event** – A Choral Evening with Handel at Histon Baptist Church Music from The Messiah, The Water Music and other well know pieces. Entry is free but you will be asked to donate at the event to the Chairman's Charity, The Trussell Trust which supports local food banks.

**The Farmland Museum and Denny Abbey** will be opening again on 1 April and will be open Tuesday – Sunday (and Bank Holiday Mondays) from 11am – 5pm, until 27 October (with its refreshed mural on the barn gable). Do come along and enjoy a day of education, relaxation and enjoyment.

**AB 03/03/2019**