

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

APRIL 2019

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NORTHSTOWE COMMUNITY UPDATES

We met with SCDC Community Officer Kirstin Donaldson to get an update.

She told us that the architects are currently working on 1st draft of the plans for the Sports Pavilion.

As a note on sport pitches (following question from Councillor Brash-Hall)- only the MUGA will be floodlit and these lights will be switched off at 10pm. There will be no lights on the grass pitches.

Forward funding has also been agreed by SCDC to be able to bring forward work on the Community Centre, before Section 106 money is released.

For the Civic Hub, they are currently waiting for NHS to approve plans for the Health Centre. The land transfer from L&Q (formerly Gallaghers) is due at 350 homes, which we are set to reach in the next few months.

As plans for these buildings progress they will be beginning community consultation- we will keep residents updated on these plans.

The land transfer has been completed for allotments. L&Q have completed their work on allotments, adding top soil etc. and the plan is now to tender for landscape design on allotments. The next step after the landscaping is complete, will be to set up an allotment society to run and maintain the allotments.

UPDATES FROM MEETING WITH PHILIP HARKER- HOMES ENGLAND

This meeting was in February with Oakington Parish Chair on Oakington Northstowe concerns.

Southern Access Road East- Homes England are currently talking to landowners which is not a quick process. Offers have been made to landowners and negotiations are being carried out between agents. Homes England are constrained by valuation on land, as a Government agency they can't pay over the odds for land, strict valuation based on its use.

Oakington Attenuation work is part of S106 & needs to be achieved – this might be linked to work on SAR East but might not necessarily. Phase 3 may offer an opportunity to improve attenuation in future works, this needs to be looked into further.

On Oakington Flooding concerns, plans for Phase 3 is to monitor and control natural flow and hold back discharge which is now naturally occurring without the ability to hold it back. There will be no increase on greenfield flow run off rates. Improvements will be made to culvert situation which is probably

causing blockages. Overall Oakington should see an improvement not a degradation to its current situation.

We discussed traffic survey work -data would be shared -waiting for this to be packaged up into a report and this can then be sent out. They are using raw data in traffic modelling work which will take 2-3months to complete.

Mill Road Community Orchard -this will be transferred over to Oakington Parish Council.

We raised issues of green separation on edge of Phase 3. Some of the land bordering Oakington is privately owned and therefore not part of Northstowe green separation, there can be no guarantee that the landowner would not bring forward plans for this land.

Finally, we discussed concerns about planning for Phase 3. We are pleased to say that since this meeting, we have been told that a Principal Planning Officer for Phase 3. Homes England are on track to deliver planning application for Phase 3 by late summer. This may include plans for Phase 3B or this may come forward as a separate application.

They have selected a developer for Phase 2a, the first for Phase 2 but this has not been announced yet due to a condition needing to be resolved first, expectation is this will be announced imminently.

NORTHSTOWE CONSTRUCTION NOISE

Unfortunately, we must include this in our report yet again this month, as we have continued to receive reports of breaches to planning conditions at Northstowe, for both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Enforcement are now logging and investigating all these reports. Again, we are encouraging residents to report issues directly online as Planning Enforcement advise this is the best way to collate the data and build a record of the breaches and evidence which could be used for legal action. It appears that Enforcement have not always had all reports from residents from the first dates of construction activity which is very frustrating for residents.

We have become increasingly frustrated that there has been no action from enforcement, despite repeated reports of breaches. We have therefore now escalated this to the Lead Member for Planning and have arranged to meet with the lead officer for enforcement Charlie Swain, on Thursday 4th April.

To directly report issues with breach of planning conditions, this is the best link: <https://scambs-framework.egovhub.net/REPORTABREACHOFLPLANNINGCONTROL/launch>

MEETING ABOUT CAMBRIDGE FOOD HUB PROJECT

We met with some of the team from the Cambridge Food Hub project. This exciting project aims to increase the accessibility of sustainable food whilst supporting local producers and small businesses. The Hub will be a centre for all aspects of food: from production and consumption to education and research. For more info Food Hub project visit their website: <https://cambridgefoodhub.org/>

The team are very keen to look at locating the food Hub in Northstowe. We have arranged for them to have further meetings with colleagues at SCDC, including Council Leader Bridget Smith, to discuss how SCDC can support this project.

NORTHSTOWE COMMUNITY FORUM

The next Northstowe Community Forum will be held on 15th May at the Community Wing. Agenda will be circulated shortly. Please feedback to us if there is anything you would like including.

Full notes from the last Northstowe Community Forum and the slides from the Northstowe presentations can be found via our Facebook page.

https://www.facebook.com/pg/longstantonoakingtonnorthstowe/posts/?ref=page_internal

SECOND NORTHSTOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL

A bid has been received from the Catholic Education Service for the second Northstowe Primary School. This would be a voluntary assisted school which means it can actively select its pupils based on faith. We have no other information on which other bids have been received but as this is the plot on the Education Campus next to the SEN and Secondary School being built by CMAT our understanding was CMAT would be bidding for this too.

OAKINGTON RURAL TRAVEL HUB UPDATE

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (formerly City Deal) Executive met to review the Rural Transport Hubs. Oakington Chair Stephen Moore gave the views of Oakington Parish Council and residents. The Executive decided to send this back for further consideration. We arranged a meeting with Cllr Moore and Cllr Aidan van de Weyer who is the GCP board member for South Cambs to discuss concerns on the Transport Hub at Oakington in isolation without other additional services on the busway or better connections to Cottenham, which were taken on board. We have yet to confirm the formal position on this from the GCP but our understanding is this project is on a pause and without greater support/other significant factors changing is unlikely to go ahead.

REINSTATEMENT OF NON-MOTORISED LINK BETWEEN LONGSTANTON BYPASS AND RAMPER ROAD

We have been contacted by a resident who has been attempted to get the issues with the path for cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders. She has been raising this issue since 2016. We have now had the following response from the County Council:

'We do acknowledge that a solution is needed. We have been actively looking for funding streams to progress a solution here. I have updated you and others, through the Local Access Forum (LAF), on the County Council's progress with funding bids to Highways England's Designated Funds and A14 Legacy Fund to promote NMU improvements in and around the A14. At the last LAF, I informed the Forum that the County Council had received principal approval for six schemes for the Designated Fund NMU pot. Since then, the County Council has been in talks with Highways England around making a second bid to the Designated Fund NMU pot for further

funding for additional schemes. I can confirm that the NMU link across Longstanton Bypass you refer to is included as one of the schemes in this new bid.

We are only just finalising the details of the bid with Highways England, but I hope to be able to inform you of the outcome at the next LAF meeting in May. If successful, the County Council will engage further with you and other users/stakeholders to secure the best outcome to resolve the issue you raise.'

KINGFISHER POND

We met with Councillors Street and Brash-Hall and Parish Clerk Libby White to discuss ongoing concerns regarding water level in the village and the Kingfisher Pond. We have agreed to arrange a meeting with Bridget Smith, the SCDC Leader to further discuss these issues and what action SCDC can take to further investigate.

Since this meeting we have heard from James Stone at SCDC that an engineer visited and took further reading from Clive Hayden's well. Reading from the borehole have very slightly improved from 7.55m AOD in May 2018 to 7.657m but they acknowledge that there is still some way to go to recover levels.

CHANGES TO BIN COLLECTIONS

From Friday 15th March the green bin will return to a fortnightly cycle of collection.

From 1st 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.

STREETS UPDATES

The Oakington EAG have done excellent work in surveying the drains in the village which are in a poor state, with many completely blocked. This information has been forwarded to the Highways team at the County Council. We will attempt to coordinate with CC so that we can get the street sweeper out before drains are cleared.

STREETLIGHTS OAKINGTON BUSWAY

The streetlights that are out by the Busway have been reported by Councillor Cheung Johnson again – this will be chased further to get these fixed if they are still out.

POTHOLE REPORTING

We have received a number of complaints from residents regarding potholes and issues with pavement surfaces around both villages. We have reported these to the County Council and are encouraging residents to use the report system to log them.

COUNCILLOR UPDATES AND SURGERIES

We have started sending out email newsletters and have been posting regular updates on our Facebook group. Details are here:

- Monthly email newsletter - with updates on local news as well as wider district issues which will impact us all. To sign up please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/email_signup_longstanton (*Note to help us manage GDPR it is easier for us to host from the LibDems webpage, but we absolutely promise this link will NOT subscribe you to LibDem news*)
- For all the latest news & updates so far please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/longstanton_news
- For those on social media we have a very active Facebook group covering the whole ward here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/>

We have also been holding regular councillor surgeries for residents who would prefer to speak with us in person, dates TBC.

DISTRICT WIDE UPDATES

TRANSPORT

BUS REVIEW PUBLISHED

The Mayor's long-awaited Strategic Bus Review has finally been published. It considered different types of arrangement between bus companies and councils. The report recommends that the Combined Authority should develop a business case comparison of possible models, including enhanced partnership and franchising. However, consultation on this may not be finished until 2021, which is a long time while services continue to deteriorate. If you are interested in being part of a community group promoting good bus services, might like to join the Cambridge Area Bus Users Association

... AS JOURNEYS SINK TO RECORD LOW

Figures from the Department for Transport reveal that 19.9 million journeys were made on local bus services in Cambridgeshire in 2017/18 — 100,000 fewer journeys than the year before, and the lowest number since at least 2009/10, when the figures were first published and when 22.7 million local bus journeys were taken across Cambridgeshire. Average local bus fares across England have increased by 12 per cent since 2009, after allowing for inflation.

Nationally, the number of local bus journeys taken across England has fallen by 85 million in the last year. Ongoing cuts in funding for these services, resulting in fewer services and higher fares, are being blamed. Cambridgeshire CC has been asked to agree to extend funding for subsidised contracted bus services until the end of the 2019/20 financial year. This is a continuation of the arrangement whereby for the last two years the Mayor has delegated his bus powers back to the county council while he decides what to do about buses.

MOBILE PHONE COVERAGE WORK

Cambridgeshire County Council have commissioned Advanced Wireless Technologies Group Limited (AWTG) to carry out a survey of Mobile Phone Coverage Survey in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area. We are aware of many black spots in the area, especially in Northstowe and Oakington.

This work took place from 11 February 2019 to end March 2019 and has confirmed what we all suspected which is that coverage is much worse and much more patchy than all the official data has suggested. We are now being told that a plan is being put together to sort this out.

OFSTED OF CAMBRIDGE COUNTY COUNCIL'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Cambridgeshire County Council's Children's Services has recently been assessed by Ofsted. Sadly, Ofsted have downgraded the council's children's services from 'good' (in 2014), to 'requires improvement' less than five years later. This is not a 'vote of confidence' in the quality of Children's Services in Cambridgeshire (as described by the County's own press release) but a clear sign that the quality of children's services has moved in the wrong direction in recent years.

It is not surprising that cuts to early help services across Cambridgeshire, the massive reduction in the number of children's centres by almost half, and the removal of almost all the locality teams who used to provide early help services to families of older children the number of children coming into care in Cambridgeshire has continued to rise. This figure is now significantly above the national average, whereas a few years ago it was significantly below.

Social care services are under huge pressure and the Ofsted report makes clear social worker caseloads are far too high. Quotes from the Ofsted report that did not make it into the County Council press release:

"The quality and the timeliness of services remain less than good for too many children. For these children, the local authority is not making the positive difference it could and should."

"The most significant challenge to the local authority's ability to provide consistently good services to children, young people and their families has been, and continues to be, the size of caseloads. These are too high for most social workers and unsustainable in some teams. The impact of this is that, too often, social workers and frontline managers have had to focus on the most urgent and important work to secure children's immediate safety, without sufficient capacity for the follow-up work needed to sustain change within families or to ensure that children in care have permanent homes as soon as possible."

"The help and protection that children, young people and their families receive in Cambridgeshire requires improvement. A significant minority of children do not get the help and support they need quickly enough. Too many assessments take longer than they should and do not fully explore underlying problems or the wishes and feelings of children. Significant workload pressures in teams across the county mean that there is much variability in who gets what help and support as well as in its effectiveness."

SOUTH CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL AND COMBINED AUTHORITY CEOs

The CEO of South Cambridgeshire District Council has taken early retirement. Mike Hill who was the director responsible for Environmental Services is acting up as interim while a new permanent CEO is recruited. The council is also undertaking a review of all of its operations to make it more efficient and to greatly improve the services it gives to the residents. This is a big piece of work which will take a long time to implement fully but which you should start to see the benefits of quite quickly.

The adverts should be going out soon for the new CEO.

The Combined Authority has also been without a CEO for quite some time and interviews took place last week for a replacement. Unfortunately no appointment was made and so 2 interim directors remain in place for the time being, one of whom is also running East Cambridgeshire District Council . This is far from satisfactory as the CA has a very ambitious number of extremely expensive projects to deliver and it is difficult to see how they can make real progress without first class organisational leadership.

COMBINED AUTHORITY – CAM METRO AND DUALLING OF A10

The high profile CAM Metro project which aims to run largely off road using wheeled, tram style vehicles out to the furthest reaches of South Cambridgeshire and beyond (St Neots, Haverill) has been costed at a staggering £4 billion at today's prices. Goodness only knows what that cost will be when and if it finally gets built. The really expensive part is the tunnelling under Cambridge City and the creation of an underground station - somewhere under the historic city. Critical to this is a new Cambridge South Station to serve Addenbrookes and the Bio Medical campus both of which are growing at significant rates and which will have tens of thousands of new employees before too long. The CA agreed to spend up to £100,000 to do a feasibility study into whether there is currently capacity in the timetable to create an extra stop at Cambridge South with a view to putting a temporary station there while to finds the money - along with Government- to build the permeant station. This money is in addition to £5 million already spent on the Cambridge South Station project some of which came form the businesses currently working in that area.

If you're interested in reading Smarter Transport's review of the CAM Metro report it's here:

<https://www.smartertransport.uk/response-to-the-sobc-for-the-cam/>

Cllr Bridget Smith, CA Board member managed to persuade the CA to include a project for upgrading all of the A10 junctions alongside their preferred project to dual the whole road. The complete dualling will cost up to £500,000,000 and it is difficult to see where this sort of money will come from bearing in mind that the A10 is not even a trunk road. Having said that, congestion and safety is a huge issue and so a more modest (under £100,000,000) project which would deliver considerable improvements seems like a sensible compromise. Business cases will now be worked on for both projects.

REMOVAL OF COMPUTER CHARGE IN LIBRARIES

Rather predictably (to us - because it was not a good idea in the first place) a report proposing the withdrawal of charges for computer access in libraries will be discussed shortly by the County Council.

The £1 charge for computer access, introduced in May last year 2018, was part of a package of measures based on public feedback and trialled to ensure computers are available for those who most need them and to generate more income for the library service to ensure they remain financially sustainable for the future. In September, Members reviewed progress on these measures, including the charge for computer access. The recommendation to withdraw the computer charge comes in response to this review, as well as feedback collected in a customer survey and a detailed analysis of the anticipated income – it saw usage drop and the income collected did not come near to that forecast and the Council has used £18k putting the charging system in.

HEALTH FUNDING

We are more than worried to learn that the funding formula used to decide how much money our local health service gets over the next 3 years is based upon an assumption that there will be less growth in the County and South Cambs than the average expected for the rest of the country. We know this is nonsense since we are in the top 3 areas for growth but the bottom 3 for public funding - the police share the concerns of the NHS as they are also seeing a complete lack of correlation between their funding and predicted growth. If we received the national average we would be £21 million better off.

BUILDING CONTROL & MY SOUTH CAMBS PORTAL

South Cambs has seen huge improvements in its Building Control Service with greatly increased customer satisfaction and consequently a larger share of the market. If you are building a house or factory you will require the services of building control. Please consider using the Council's service rather than a private contractor.

South Cambs District Council has launched a new way of accessing information, processing claims and applications, and generally engaging with the council: 'mysouthcambs' is a customer portal on the home page on the Council's website - www.scambs.gov.uk

Registration only takes a few minutes. Once in, you will be able to create a personal account with the Council which shows and tracks all your online transactions with Council services. All existing forms are on the portal, as well as revenue and benefits functions, making it much easier for residents to provide information and complete forms. In due course other services will come online, including the planning service scheduled for summer 2019.

MANOR FARM, GIRTON

We would not normally write about individuals. However, we have been asked about this matter a few times, especially given its recent appearance in Private Eye. The deputy leader of the county council was granted the tenancy of a county council owned farm, and currently enjoys a rent abatement on that tenancy. Councillors had recommended an investment of £183,000 in an extension to the property (which the tenant will repay over time), without initially knowing that the tenant was a senior councillor. That councillor concerned chaired the council's former Assets sub-committee that had had responsibility for the farms estate, and was the lead member for the

council's 'outcome focused review' of the county farms estate and member champion for the council's farms estate. So whilst there is no suggestion that anyone has done anything wrong there is a suggestion that it doesn't look good to the person on the street.

COMMUNITY REPAINT

Community RePaint - a partnership with CCC, Cambridgeshire Community Reuse and Recycling Network (CCORRN) and Amey – has collected and treated over HALF A MILLION LITRES of paint in the last 8 years. The scheme collects used paint from Household Recycling Centres where it is sorted, tested and re-manufactured so that it can be resold or donated into the community.

The scheme has been going from strength to strength and has a range of re-manufactured emulsion paint and chalky furniture paint in a host of great colours for great prices. So if you are thinking of redecorating, upcycling or know of a community or school project that needs paint, why not visit CCORRN (located in March) or follow them on Facebook.

HUAWEI AND THE SPICER'S SITE

As announced elsewhere, the Chinese technology giant, Huawei (pronounced "whawey"), has purchased the entire former Spicers site for £37m. They have stated:

"The proposed development is for a world class research and semiconductor fabrication centre for development and production of next generation components for the IT/Communications industry."

Brian and Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambs District Council, have had conversations with company representatives, they are working closely with our Planning department and they have submitted the first documents for their Phase One development. (See here: <http://bit.ly/2FjzpVK>)

This has great potential locally, for the region and nationally, and we will work closely to ensure the maximum benefit for Sawston. Huawei sell more mobile phones than Apple and are gearing themselves up to be the World leader in 5G mobile technology. They have set themselves a minimum global Research & Development budget of \$15 billion. Sawston will become one of their, if not the, primary UK location.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about these, or any other matters.

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