

# DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

DECEMBER 2019

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COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The first phase of the public consultation for Community Governance Review for Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe is ongoing.

The review process involves consultation with the community, and we hope that residents will take the opportunity to share their views and let the Council know how they feel about the future of our communities. Residents will be able to submit your views online via the link below until 15th January. Paper forms are also available. Draft recommendations based on this initial consultation will be published in March 2020 and this will be followed up by further public consultation when you can again express your views on any proposals. A number of extra dates for drop in sessions and public meetings have been added during the consultation period, a full list can be found via the link below.

As District Councillors we will be seeking to represent the views of the whole communities we represent and don't have any preferred outcome at this stage. If a preferred option emerges from the consultation, we will support this going forward.

The review will finish in September 2020. If any changes are proposed the Council will make something called a Reorganisation Order and then changes would come into force in May 2021.

For more information, the terms of reference for the review or to submit your views as part of the consultation go to: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/content/community-governance-reviews>

GP SURGERY UPDATE

We have had questions about the GP surgery in Northstowe. This is our latest understanding:

There is not a firm timeline for the health centre to be delivered because the Clinical Commissioning Group is still working on an analysis of capacity across the primary care network (PCN) for Cambridge North Villages. The Northstowe agreement (Section 106) indicates the Civic Hub, which will contain the health facility, should come on stream at 1500 occupations.

Willingham Medical Practice have previously indicated that they themselves are not interested in taking on a contract to provide health services in Northstowe.

We have been assured that the Willingham Practice can meet current demand from new residents - funds follow the patients so more patients mean more NHS funding for the practice which allows them to add more GP and practice nurse sessions. They have previously said that they are finding lower levels of usage from new patients than pre-existing ones - the demographics in Northstowe are generally younger than an equivalent sized population in an established village. We will obviously keep up to date with this.

For those worried about appointments at Willingham/Longstanton surgeries please contact the practice manager, Sharon Unwin. Interested residents can join their patient participation group to feedback on services, see <http://www.willinghammedicalpractice.nhs.uk/ppg.aspx>

#### ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Unfortunately, many of you will be aware that substantial damage was caused to the currently unoccupied Martin Bacon Academy on the Northstowe Education Campus Site (this will be the SEN school). The damage unfortunately ran into tens of thousands of pounds.

Investigations including checking CCTV and a review of access and out of hour's security to the campus were undertaken in the wake of the incident. Unfortunately, there have been a number of incidents of anti-social behaviour locally. Police have been increasing local patrols in response, but they are working with limited resources.

Please remain vigilant and report any suspicious behaviour directly to the police. If you witness a crime actually being carried out then dial 999 or you can report ASB or other concerns about crime via 101 or online via <https://www.cambs.police.uk/report/information-reporting>

#### CLOSURE OF LEAP AND LEARN NURSERY

You will be aware that Northstowe Leap and Learn nursery has closed with immediate effect and there appear to be no immediate plans to re-open.

The Local Authority has said:

"Following a Requires Improvement Ofsted inspection in June this year Leap and Learn has failed to improve despite support provided by the Local Authority. Due to ongoing concerns and circumstances beyond our control, we have made the difficult decision to withdraw early years funding with effect from Thursday 21st November."

Parents were provided with a list of alternative childcare providers by the Local Authority.

A copy of the full Ofsted can be accessed via this link <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/16/EY550417>

Our sympathies are of course with parents who have been affected by this closure.

#### MOBILE WARDEN FUNDING

Local Mobile Warden groups – which work to support older people to live independently – can now bid for a share of £20,920 from South Cambridgeshire District Council’s grant scheme.

Mobile Wardens can help with practical tasks such as making light meals, shopping, making appointments, filling in forms and collecting prescriptions, and they are a valuable source of information, helping clients to locate other services they might find useful.

By regularly visiting and keeping in contact with their clients, Mobile Wardens help to ensure that older people who want to stay in their own homes don’t become socially isolated. They offer a listening ear and help to keep people living in the communities that they know and that know them, reassuring clients and their families. They can also help to delay early transfer into care environments or help to get people home more quickly from a hospital stay.

In the 2019/2020 period the Council supported 20 villages through 14 Mobile Warden schemes, benefitting more than 300 elderly residents. The £20,920 now available is to help fund schemes during 2020/2021.

New or existing Mobile Warden groups can apply to the scheme. Bids will be accepted until Friday 24 January 2020. Find more information or apply.

#### TAXI LICENSING CONSULTATION

An extra consultation on a taxi licensing policy aimed at improving safety for passengers and drivers was confirmed on Thursday 28 November.

South Cambridgeshire District Council took the decision to carry out the extra consultation after additional feedback on the proposed policy was submitted.

The proposed taxi licensing policy would have seen CCTV as standard in all Hackney and Private Hire vehicles by the end of 2020. It also suggested that all new vehicles would be low or ultra-low emission vehicles by October 2028 – meaning they will be hybrid or electric vehicles.

Council officers have said that the consultation already completed was extensive with over 50 pieces of feedback from drivers, the taxi industry and people who use taxis. Over 150 drivers also attended workshops to gather their views.

Mike Hill, Director of Health and Environmental Services at South Cambridgeshire District Council, has said: "We are a listening Council and our aim is to always try and get as many people as possible to get involved in consultations. This means their views can be taken on board. We've done more than ever before to make sure this was the case on the proposed changes to this taxi licensing policy and have been really pleased by the level of engagement we have had. However, we had more people get in touch with us the evening before Councillors were due to make a final decision and it is only right that we take the time to properly consider their views along with all the others. Getting the policy right is the most important thing and we will launch another consultation before Christmas to gather final feedback before making a decision."

To support the transition electric and hybrid taxis, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have secured joint Government funding to establish new electric car charging points across the area for exclusive use by taxis.

#### COUNCILLOR UPDATES

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](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](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/>

#### DISTRICT WIDE UPDATES

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##### GENERAL ELECTION

As you are aware on Dec 12<sup>th</sup> we will have a General Election and there will be a new MP for South Cambridgeshire. We would publicly like to say thank you to Heidi Allen for all her hard work over the past years as our MP. Irrespective of her political affiliation she has been a good, hard working and compassionate MP who has always responded to the needs of our residents whenever we have called upon her for help. We were appalled to learn of the abuse that she had been subjected to, though it did not come as much of a surprise as, even at our lowly level of politics, we are far from immune. We wish her well in the future.

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## GREEN BELT

It is disappointing that some negative campaigning during the election included a number of lies stating the District Council is promoting greenbelt sites to developers. This is obviously untrue. South Cambs has just been independently assessed as being the most successful council in the region for promoting the environment in all our activities and operations; and our leader Bridget Smith is in the hugely privileged position of being the political lead for the environment for the Oxford Cambridge Arc. This shows people well outside of our district have confidence in us to deliver a zero-carbon region in which we do everything we can to protect and enhance the countryside. It is not the business of the Council to 'promote' any sites. What has happened is that in preparation for the next Local Plan landowners have been invited to submit sites for development to the Council for consideration. Less than 10% of those sites will make it into any Local Plan; and this is a process that happens for every Plan period.

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## FIVE-YEAR LAND SUPPLY

Councillors were briefed recently on the current situation with regard to the five-year land supply for housing development. There is at present 5.3 years' supply. This figure takes account of the fact that, for the first time, South Cambs and the City have a joint approach. There has been a change in national guidelines on preparing the housing strategy and on calculating the supply figures: planners continue to monitor the effects of these changes. Planners are also gathering evidence on the time taken from outline planning permission being given to start on site of building and thence to completion. Where there are delays these can be caused by numerous factors, including labour shortages, commercial decisions linked to the housing market, management factors. This monitoring work is being done carefully and with particular relevance to each site. Over the past few years government guidance on land supply and housing strategies has changed more than once; there is likely to be further change in the near future. Planners have to respond to these movements.

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## COUNCIL HOUSING

Over two hundred more council houses are set to be built. With the announcement last month that SCDC is buying 63 homes in a development in Sawston following the purchase of 81 homes in a development in Northstowe during the summer, together with smaller sites to start before April 2020, this brings the number of new council homes in the pipeline since the beginning of this financial year to 208. Moreover, a further 43 are due to be completed by April 2020. This compares with 82 starts and 44 completions in the 2018-19 financial year.

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## ROAD SWEEPING SCHEDULE TO BE PUT ON SCDC WEBSITE

Maps showing the scheduled of road sweeping over the year are to be put on the SCDC website together with a contact email to enable residents to report where unexpected sweeping is needed outside the new five-times-per-year cycle. As previously reported, roads are now to be swept more often. Further, should the need arise, special sweeps will be made: for example, to deal with cuttings left on cycle paths where a hedge has been cut back thus avoiding cyclists suffering punctures. For too long road-sweeping and litter-picking has been a Cinderella

service. The head of the Shared Waste Service has confirmed that the schedules are to be put on the SCDC website in the near future.

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## ZERO CARBON

### *Lighting*

Following a major exercise carried out over the past year, there is now some clarity on the ownership of street lighting across the District. Lights are owned variously by the County, the District, Parish Councils, Housing Associations and private owners. This has been a major piece of work and there are still some areas to be clarified. South Cambs has now committed £0.750m in the first phase to change all its own lighting to LED; with a further £0.45m being requested in next year's budget. It is fully engaged with parish councils in this project. Where there are ornamental/heritage columns in place at present it has agreed to replace these with similar columns, not standard modern columns. The project is being funded from Renewable Energy Reserve (RER).

### *South Cambs Hall*

Also being funded from RER is a complete overhaul of South Cambs Hall to make the building as energy efficient and carbon-neutral as possible. It is hoped that this will become an exemplar building which other councils and businesses can follow. Our clear intention is to take a lead and be a good example in the way we conduct our business and run our buildings. The £1.3 million cost of the major overhaul of the building is being funded from the RER.

### *Grants Meeting*

The meeting to determine the outcome of the Zero Carbon Grants application round has had to be postponed from 13th December on account of the general election. It will now take place on 20th December, the last working day before Christmas. Applicants will therefore not be informed of the outcome until early in 2020.

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## MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

At the full meeting of SCDC on Thursday members received the out turn figures for the previous financial year 2018/19 which showed that we have reversed a previous budget shortfall of half a million pounds to deliver a surplus of some £2 million. The council saw record levels of income particularly from Business Rates and grants whilst maintaining a tight control on costs. A thorough review of financial management has led to a number of changes in the delivery of the accounts and the reinvestment of the council's reserves to deliver better rates of return. We also saw a repurposing of Ermine Street Housing to focus on the travel to work area of South Cambridgeshire rather than buying property up North. We have some big challenges ahead and so a 'war chest' of some £15 million has been built up to cover the worst case scenario of having most of our Business Rates being taken for social care and the possibility of the NHS winning its case for Business Rate exemption which could cost SCDC around £6 million if not compensated by the Government. We also have the uncertainty of Brexit. Without using the 'war chest' we will need to find an additional £6 million after five years which we are confident of finding through more income and the savings that are to be made by reorganising

the Council with the intention of not only maintaining services but also delivering better quality in accordance with our new Business Plan.'

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#### GREENING THE COUNCIL

South Cambs is doing a huge amount to “decarbonise” (reducing the carbon impact of) the Council. For example, in the Environmental Waste service South Cambs and Cambridge City have installed a 30kW (kilo-watt) solar PV array on the roof at the Waterbeach Waste Depot. These panels are generating around 25% of our current need for electricity - they are the maximum size for the roof space can accommodate as well as the maximum to secure Feed-in Tariff payments. Additionally, these panels are reducing our costs on-site by 50% - utilising the electricity generated by panels saves us purchasing from grid and the Feed-in Tariff payments offset further electricity costs. We will be working with their Energy Performance Contractor to look for further opportunities to reduce heat and power demand on the Waterbeach site.

The Shared Waste service is also exploring options to move away from a fossil-fuelled vehicle fleet to renewable energy options. Two smaller electric vehicles will be trialled in December and the aim is to trial a larger electric Refuse Collection Vehicle in Spring 2020

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#### EMPTY HOUSES

There are currently 648 unoccupied houses in South Cambridgeshire – that’s quite a large village-worth! The Council gives advice and assistance to get property back into use – get in touch if you’d like to know more.

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#### NEW ARCHIVES CENTRE, ELY

The archives currently held in Shire Hall basement are now being moved across into the repository of the new building, where they will be stored in environmentally controlled storage for the first time.

Currently over 10,000 archive boxes have already been safely moved across, of which precisely 5,244 have been so far scanned by the archive team’s barcode scanning unit. The barcode system matches a historical document’s entry on the online database to that specific document’s location, thereby enabling staff to locate a document within seconds no matter where it may be stored in the new centre’s amazing seven miles of shelving! Currently we anticipate that the new centre will open to the public towards the end of the year.

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

**Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson**

***District Councillors for Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe***

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