

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

District Councillor's Monthly Report – October 2022

Service Quality Survey

South Cambs DC has launched a short survey to help deliver service improvements for residents and businesses across the district. This is your chance to say what you think what is going right and where the council needs to get better. The survey takes 5 minutes to complete and is also available on the website for residents to complete.

Cambridge Access and the Proposed Congestion Charge

The Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) Executive Board has agreed to hold a consultation on a transformative public transport and active travel package, which would be funded in the long-term by the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) with a road user charge.

The GCP's proposals for a congestion charge for the city of Cambridge to fund the much improved bus service across the county has caused a great deal of comments, both positive and negative. One particular pain point seems to be the inclusion of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (specifically Addenbrooke's, Royal Papworth and Rosie Maternity) within the charging zone. The GCP is developing a list of groups that would be exempt from the charge including patients and staff. This list will be published in due course.

The consultation on these proposals has been delayed by the royal mourning period but the GCP has now confirmed that it will be opening sometime in October. When it becomes available, please take the time to enter your comments. The GCP is obliged to listen to comments submitted in response to the official consultation, not from other sources.

Key features of the proposed City Access package are:

- New bus routes, additional orbital and express services, and a huge increase in rural coverage, with buses supported by Demand Responsive Transport.
- Longer operating hours from 5am to 1am and more frequent services - 6-8 buses every hour in the city and from market towns, and hourly rural buses.
- Flat fares to make public transport cheap and accessible for all, with passengers paying £1 to travel in the city and £2 in the travel to work area.
- Options for new cross-city cycling routes to encourage more active travel, enhancing Greater Cambridge's reputation as the UK's leading cycling city.

The package follows extensive public consultation and engagement over many years and would result in 20,000 extra journeys made by bus. A further 60,000 additional trips would be made by active travel every day to create a greener city region where people can travel easily and reliably on bus, bicycle and on foot.

Better buses and reduced bus fares would be phased-in before any Sustainable Travel Zone was introduced. The City Deal can forward-fund the bus upgrades now to build confidence in services to help people make the modal shift from private car to bus, but the changes require longer term funding.

Under the proposals, all vehicle movements into, out of and within the Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) would pay a flat daily charge - unless exempt or eligible for a discount or rebate scheme included in the consultation - between 7am and 7pm on weekdays. The revenue generated by the STZ, which would not

be introduced until 2027/28, would be ring-fenced for the bus network and transport improvements. The proposals reflect peoples' feedback to the GCP's extensive public consultations – including last year's Making Connections – and would help to cut the number of car trips in Cambridge by 50%, while raising the funding needed to provide a future bus network and better active travel options for people across the travel to work area.

The scheme would reduce carbon emissions from transport by about 5% to help tackle climate change, as well as reducing pollution to provide cleaner air and a more 'people-centric' city environment for people to enjoy. The City Access package is central to the GCP's integrated transport network – providing the thread that links together the GCP's busway and active travel schemes to transform how people travel across the area. For more information, visit www.greatercambridge.org.uk.

Stagecoach Bus Service Cancellations

Stagecoach has announced it will be discontinuing 18, most rural, bus services at the end of October. Stagecoach has taken similar steps across the country, citing reduced ridership since the pandemic and a shortage of drivers as the reasons.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (the mayor's office) is responsible for bus routes in our area and will put the affected routes out to tender, allowing other operators to potentially take them over. The Combined Authority has also made £1.7 million of emergency funding available to allow critical services to continue in the short-term.

In our villages, the most significant impact will be felt by the withdrawal of the No. 18 service, which will leave Caxton and Eltisley with no bus services. As this bus stops in several other villages, a joint representation for its continuation has been made to the Combined Authority.

Cost of Living Support - Update

The motion put to the September full council meeting, declaring a "Cost of Living Emergency", passed overwhelmingly. The council is now moving forward with practical steps to help residents. 29 expressions of interest in becoming Warm Hubs have been received across the county so far and 8 have been approved as meeting the criteria. Each hub will have at least three trained volunteers and the initial training sessions will take place next week. The first eight hubs will open on 17th October. The location of these hubs will be announced by ACRE, our partner charity, shortly.

Four Day Working Week Trial

Between January and March, South Cambs District Council will trial a four day working week for office staff. The new arrangements are intended to improve staff recruitment and retention by making the council an employer of choice.

The strategy is 100-80-100, 100% of the services in 80% of the time for the same salary. Different departments will implement this differently, but customer-facing areas will remain open for the same, potentially longer, hours.

People now think differently about work-life priorities; nationally and locally it is harder than ever to recruit and retain staff. In our own interactions with the district and county councils, as well as with a whole range of public services including rail and bus operators, health and care providers, schools, and many others, workforce retention and shortages are the headline concerns hampering successful delivery of key public services. The four-day week, which for a full-time employee at the Council would consist of 30 hours, can make an organization stand out from others and be more attractive to talent. It is also seen as a tangible incentive to encourage staff to stay.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be monitored to identify if service standards are maintained or improved. After that, a decision will be made whether to continue with the shorter working week permanently. In the trial, service levels cannot drop if a four-day week is to be considered as a viable option in the longer term. The Council will keep a check on things like how long it takes to process benefits claims, Council house rent collections, the speed of determining planning applications, staff turnover, call answering times and more.

For more than a year, the Council has only been able to fill around eight out of every ten, or fewer, of its vacancies. Between January and March 2022, only around half were filled. There are currently 23 agency staff covering office-based roles, which should ideally be filled by people in permanent positions. Over a whole year, these agency staff could cost the Council more than £2 million. If the Council filled all these posts with permanent staff, it would cost about £1 million.

Not being able to fill vacant posts is hugely disruptive to services for residents - for example, when case officers change during the process of a planning application. Another aspiration of the trial is to investigate whether it would help the Council to attract a more diverse workforce. For example, for those families where childcare costs can be a big blocker from working, or those people with caring responsibilities, it could be a more attractive option than the traditional five-day working week model.

If you'd like to give your views, SCDC has published [a new website page](#) that contains a short form, which members of the public can fill-out if they want to ask a question, or make a comment about, the forthcoming four day working week trial. Several officers from multiple services have access to the responses collected by this form and will be ensuring that a response is provided, where a resident has asked for one.

No trial is yet planned for manual staff such as refuse operators until a way of implementing a 4 day week around their particular working patterns is developed.

The trial has generated a great deal of interest as SCDC is the first U.K. council to consider the shorter working week. (There are many private businesses which have implemented a 4 day week, so the strategy is well proven.) Bridget Smith was interviewed on BBC Radio 4 and Radio Canada(!), and there is a lot of coverage in the national press.

East West Rail - Update

The quarterly briefing from East West Rail (EWR) for area representatives took place on October 6th. EWR explained that any new major transport project such as this one has to meet five detailed standards, which was reassuring. They then explained the business case development process the project will follow. This is a three stage process – stage 1 is development of an outline business case, stage 2 provides a detailed business case, and stage 3 provides the necessary criteria for the government to approve (or reject) the project. A major input for stage 1 is the results of the recent consultation and these are still being analysed. EWR stated that the typical time to move from stage 1 to stage 2 is 2 years, and we assume a similar period will be needed to move from stage 2 to stage 3. Consequently it may be 4 to 5 years before the government can approve or refuse the proposals, and that doesn't take into account any legal challenges to their decision.

The new Prime Minister, Liz Truss, has expressed her support for the proposed new line and it appears on their list of priority projects. However, given the amount of work EWR has to complete before any decision, it is doubtful if a go/no go decision is imminent.

Luton Airport and Aircraft Noise - Update

Complaints about additional noise from aircraft landing at Luton continue to trickle in. Councillors in affected wards were scheduled to meet with the airport and NATS (National Air Traffic Service) to in September but the meeting was cancelled as it fell within the mourning period following the death of HM The Queen. Instead, the regular quarterly meeting took place on October 5th.

They shared the map of the approved corridors, which show one side of the stack looping north of Papworth Everard but directly over Elsworth, Graveley, Eltisley and Croxton. Councillors explained that planes are activating air brakes over our villages, which has resulted in many of the complaints. Luton also shared details of the number of complaints received to date. However, this data only runs through to the end of the second quarter of 2022 (June) and doesn't include the peak summer period. If you want to view this data, here are the links:

Quarterly data: <https://www.london-luton.co.uk/LondonLuton/files/a2/a270f6ac-d589-46d3-a971-ed742c21d9c3.pdf>

Annual data: <https://www.london-luton.co.uk/corporate/community/noise/annual-monitoring-reports>

Residents should continue to email concerns directly to noise.enquiries@LTN.aero or submit them online at <https://www.london-luton.co.uk/corporate/community/noise/making-a-noise-complaint>. If anyone has evidence of aircraft flying lower than 7000ft, that information should also be submitted to Luton. Luton asked that complaints are submitted using the height information in the tracking tool embedded in their web page. Height information obtained from popular flight tracking apps is not adjusted for air pressure and consequently may be inaccurate.

Reservoirs

You may be aware that proposals have been published by Anglian Water to build two new reservoirs, one in Lincolnshire and the other somewhere on the Fens. (The exact site of the Fens is yet to be confirmed but is expected to be near the Cambridgeshire-Norfolk border.) These are long-term projects and will not be supplying water before the mid 2030s at the earliest. Cambridge Water is a partner in the Fens project and that reservoir will eventually supply drinking water to our area. In addition to providing water to our region, the reservoirs will include recreational facilities, similar to those currently available at Grafham Water. Expect more information and a consultation from Anglian Water as planning progresses. More information here: <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/news/anglian-water-drives-forward-plans-for-two-new-reservoirs-to-secure-future-water-demand/>

In addition, Anglian Water is working on a water drainage and water management plan, which will (amongst other issues) address the excessive quantities of sewage being discharged into our water courses. At the September Council meeting, a motion was passed calling on the water companies to stop dumping raw sewage in our chalk streams. The council will be working with the companies and other agencies to improve water quality in our water courses.

Community forums

The webpages and Facebook events for all the autumn community forums are now live, with agendas being published in the week prior to the event. The following forums are most relevant to the Caxton and Papworth ward villages.

Wednesday 2 November – A428 Development Cluster - Cambourne ([Web link](#) or [Facebook link](#))

Wednesday 2 November – A428 Development Cluster - Bourn Airfield ([Web link](#) or [Facebook link](#))

Thursday 10 November – North West and West Cambridge ([Web link](#) or [Facebook link](#))

Longstanton Ward By-Elections

Both of the district councillors for Longstanton ward, Sarah Cheung Johnson and Alex Malyon, have resigned. In their resignation letters, they indicated that it is impossible to fit family commitments, jobs and council duties into the time available. The loss of two experienced councillors is very sad and it is also a blow to building a more diverse council. A by-election to fill the vacancies will take place on Thursday 3rd November. Unlike during the “all ups” in May, most council business will continue as usual. A few meetings and other activities in Longstanton ward, which includes Northstowe, Oakington and Westwick, will be postponed until after the by-election.

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7 October 2022

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