

## South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

### District Councillor's Monthly Report – March 2023

#### **Bin Collection Route Review**

The Shared Waste Service reviews bin lorry routes every three or so years and has now begun a review. This will ensure routes are accommodating new developments in the most efficient way. The results of the review will also allow the service to start to plan for its own 4 day week trial. The employees would have liked to be included in the current trial but don't know how they will get their work done in four days, hence the need to look for more efficient routes. I assume adequate notice will be given to villages of any changes to collection arrangements.

#### **20MPH Zone Application Process**

You may have already been made aware by the county councillors that Cambridgeshire County Council opened its new 20mph zone application process on Monday 27th February 2023.

Further information on the process, funding available and application timeline is available on their website at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/20mph-funding>.

#### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

As many of you will know, the Home Office has requisitioned the Bar Hill Hotel to house up to 270 asylum seekers. Serco, the Home Office's contractor will provide security, food and laundry facilities. The County Council will assist with education placements and social care. There should be little call on the District Council's services from this action.

Residents have asked if it will be possible to donate clothes, toys etc for the asylum seekers. To avoid the hotel being overwhelmed, donations are initially being sought only from the Bar Hill area and their Parish Council is coordinating efforts. Updates will be provided if the situation changes.

Separately, the District Council will be looking to acquire up to 30 three bedroom or larger houses to house refugees from Afghanistan. Specifically, they are required to house interpreters formerly employed by the British Army and their families who are being allowed to resettle in this country. Ermine Street Housing, the council's open market subsidiary, will assist with the acquisition process. Once these former refugees move on, the properties will be returned to the general council housing pool.

#### **Support for Debate not Hate**

At its Full Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, South Cambs unanimously agreed to support the national "Debate Not Hate" campaign to tackle abuse and intimidation. Councillors agreed to take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and intimidation of councillors and council staff as part of the campaign. Leaders of the two political parties represented on the District Council jointly proposed a motion about implementing the Debate Not Hate campaign. The move comes after local government figures reveal that nationally seven in 10 councillors have experienced abuse and intimidation in the last 12 months and one in 10 experience abuse frequently. Councillors from both political parties in South Cambs have received abuse and intimidation, necessitating in several cases police involvement.

The campaign is led by the Local Government Association (LGA) and includes:

- Writing to the Government asking them to work with the LGA to address abuse and intimidation of politicians.
- Regularly reviewing support available to councillors in relation to abuse, intimidation, and safety.

- Working with the local police to ensure a clear mechanism for reporting threats and other concerns about the safety of councillors and their families.
- Taking a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and officers.

### **Additional Cost of Living Support**

Plans for a further cost of living support package for residents, worth more than £200,000, have been published by South Cambs. The proposals will be discussed at Cabinet on 20 March and include:

- A roadshow of cost of living talks, organised in partnership with parish councils, to highlight support available to the most vulnerable. This would improve the reach and uptake of grants and other support services as many do not know what is available to them.
- 25 Warm Hubs have been running across South Cambridgeshire this winter, with more than 2,000 visits recorded up to the start of February. They are run by Cambridgeshire ACRE and are free spaces where residents of all ages can visit to socialise, work, and catch up with friends. Under the proposals, some Warm Hubs could evolve into Community Well-being Hubs, offering more services.
- A Council Tax communications campaign to increase the number of eligible people who are aware of, and subsequently claim, financial help towards their Council Tax bill.
- Expansion of the South Cambs scheme to provide free energy saving appliances to those residents who are only just about managing next winter. So far this winter, more than 300 South Cambridgeshire residents have been provided with a slow cooker, electric blanket, or both by the Council. A charitable giving fund, to which residents can donate as part of this scheme, has raised nearly £2,000 and remains open.
- Funds are proposed to help create a South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Food Network. This would link existing food-banks in the district, creating a network of support. The primary aim is to distribute food that would otherwise be thrown away. The network would also create links with local farmers to donate excess food that is not suitable for supermarkets, encourage communities to grow fresh vegetables for the most vulnerable, and promote healthy eating and more plant-based diets. This network will be a key part of the emerging South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Food Strategy, which is being developed by the District Council and will be discussed by its Climate and Environment Advisory Group in April.

The proposals build on a package of almost £400,000 of support which was agreed by the Council in November last year. Just over half of that initial funding came from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System (ICS) to support community-based programmes tackling prevention and community engagement. These new support plans announced by the Council look to set out what could happen next. The ICS have indicated that they will provide further grant funding that the Council will bid for, to continue projects for the next financial year. The focus will continue to be the prevention of poor health resulting from financial hardship and living in cold homes.

## **Council Business Priorities for 2023-2024**

At the Full Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, South Cambs also agreed the following business priorities.

### Goals for helping local residents including:

- Reducing fly-tipping hot spots through cameras and prompt investigation into dumped rubbish reports.
- Civil Parking Enforcement in South Cambridgeshire, working with Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- Helping older people live independently in their homes for longer with a new Mobile Warden scheme.
- Bringing forward community buildings at Northstowe.
- Supporting the health and wellbeing of residents with grants for local projects.
- Continued support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme to help guests who have arrived in the past year to move away from hosts and into more independent living arrangements, wherever possible.

### Goals for helping business include:

- Supporting start-ups and small businesses growth, for example providing space at the Council's Cambourne office.
- Advising businesses on how to become greener.
- Promoting local businesses, offering tailored support and resources, as well as identifying funding opportunities.
- Continuing to support and help establish South Cambridgeshire local markets.

### In-line with the Council's green to the core goals, there are plans to:

- Address water scarcity in Greater Cambridge by working with Cambridge City Council, the water industry, and others.
- Distribute up to £125,000 as part of the Council's annual Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme.
- Provide grants to villages for more tree-planting.
- Award up to £50,000 in grants to help with the installation of electric vehicle charging points at village halls and community buildings.
- Continue with plans for a solar farm to power electric bin lorries at the Waterbeach depot of the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service.
- Replace diesel bin lorries as they come to the end of their working lives with low-emission vehicles, or those powered by alternative fuels such as biofuel.

### Council Tax

A below inflation £5 per year increase in Council Tax for the average band D home will ensure essential front line services continue to be delivered effectively. This equates to £165.31 per year for a band D home - an increase of around 10p per week. The rise continues to maintain the Council's position in the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country.

### Housing

The Council's Housing Revenue Account – a ringfenced account used to maintain its stock of around 5,600 Council homes – has its own budget targets. Highlights include:

- Having successfully doubled the number of new Council homes built in South Cambridgeshire from 35 in 2019/20 to 70 in 2021/22, the target is for at least 75 new energy-efficient Council homes to be delivered every year.

- During the next two years, more than £2million has been allocated to continue work to retrofit the Council's existing housing stock, as part of ongoing carbon reduction efforts.

### **Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (Cambs HIA)**

Cambs HIA is a not-for-profit service covering Cambridge City, South Cambs and Huntingdonshire. They provide advice, support and assistance to the elderly, people with disabilities and vulnerable people to help them repair, improve, maintain and adapt their homes to meet their changing needs. The purpose of the service is to help people remain independent, warm, safe and secure in their own homes. They undertake a wide range of activities, ranging from installing stair-lifts, level access showers and ramps to heating systems, guttering, and electrical safety works. Grants to assist with works may be available to those on low incomes or benefits. For information about their activities, look online at <http://www.cambshia.org/> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/cambshia>.

### **East-West Rail (EWR)**

EWR has sent out invitations to their usual quarterly round-table meetings with councillors in potentially affected areas. They say in the invitation email they have nothing new to share.

Peter Sandford

2 March 2023

Email: [cllr.sandford@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.sandford@scambs.gov.uk)

Mobile: 07985 425414