

District Councillor's Annual Report

Municipal Year: 2011-12

1. General

I have now come to the end of my second year as your District Councillor, a year that was busier than the previous one. I remained on the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and continued as Scrutiny Monitor for the Finance Portfolio and the Economic Development Portfolio. I was involved in one task and finish review, looking at how we interact with Customers and learn from feedback. The general outcome of that is that we need to communicate more, celebrate successes and learn from and improve upon not so positive feedback. I also served as a member of the Planning Committee. The best and most important work though is for residents of the Parishes.

2. Highlights of local issues

As you know, I attend the monthly parish council meetings of my parishes, where I give verbal and written reports on council matters that are of interest or relevance, and on local issues that I have been involved in or been asked to assist with. I also provide advice as needed on dealings with the district council. Being involved in the local issues is the most interesting and enjoyable part of the job!

Some of these issues include helping residents navigate their way through the local government red tape, and our complex planning system so they get to talk to the right people, and speaking on behalf of applicants and/or residents at Planning Committee meetings, Standards Committee meeting or raising issues of concern at the relevant Portfolio Holders meetings. I've monitored, taken pictures and videos to give evidence to the council about the long standing unresolved problem with overflowing of Caldecote pumping station. I've dealt with getting new litter bins, finding the right people to get rid of rodents, getting blue bins non-collection issues resolved, supporting bids for SCDC grants, being a sounding board for anyone who wants to bend my ear on SCDC matters or life for that matter! I spoke vigorously against the application for the touring caravan site on St Neots Road, but unfortunately, the planning committee saw differently and gave it approval.

I accompanied the SCDC CEO Mrs Jean Hunter on her visits to each of the villages to meet and chat with members of the Parish Council, and get to know the villages more. It was interesting to find myself learning even more about each village, which is always a good thing.

I continue to work with the County Councillor Fiona Whelan and Steve Harangozo the District Councillor for Comberton in finding a resolution to the withdrawal of bus subsidies for the No 18 service which affects Kingston and Toft, and the No.14 service that affects Caldecote. In March, I travelled to Wisbech (at my own expense) to attend a County Council cabinet meeting where the bus transport subsidy withdrawal decision was finally taken, and asked a question at the Full Council meeting in Shire Hall two weeks later, about the subsidy withdrawal and what support we could get for our proposal for alternative service for No.18. I also pointed out the case of price increase of the No.4 service from Childerley Roundabout.

The issue of superfast broadband is one that comes up again and again. As you may know, Caldecote and Childerley, both served by Madingley Exchange, are getting faster broadband shortly. I coordinated the campaign in Q3 of 2010 that enabled the exchange to be one of 6 winners in the BT Race to Infinity. I also continue to liaise with BT to provide updates when these are available. BT expects that it would be in a position to offer Caldecote and Childerley residents the superfast broadband service toward the end of June/beginning of July. Fingers crossed!

Check out the updates on www.facebook.com/MadingleyExchange or www.RaceToInfinity.org.uk

The rest of Caldecote Ward, which is Toft and Kingston, now have a chance to get faster broadband as part of the County's new economic drive. The County has launched a new project called Connecting Cambridgeshire, to provide at least 90% of homes and businesses in Cambridgeshire with access to faster broadband of at least 25mbps. It will be using £6.75M of government funding and £20M from its own coffers to fund this project. Toft and Kingston are on the Comberton exchange, so to stand a chance of getting the upgrade, residents of these villages need to register their interest and demand at www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk . If you would like to be a "digital champion" for your village, or know anyone who might be able to do so, then please raise your hand and contact me.

3. Council and Corporate Plan

The Council administration continues to make policy as it sees fit. The corporate plan setting out the Council's vision, aims and actions for the period 2012-2017 is available to view and download at <http://bit.ly/SCDC3As>. The three core aims are (1) Listening to and engaging with residents, parishes and businesses, (2) working with partners (3) making sure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer outstanding quality of life. The approaches, actions and performance measures have been spelled out. Feel free to hold the administration to these objectives at all times.

4. Finance

The Council administration has set its financial strategy for income and capital expenditure up to 2017. The detailed estimate book can be found at <http://bit.ly/SCDCmFS>. Whilst it looks like the books are balanced, the reality is that there is a financial hole of more than two hundred thousand, which will increase in the following years, and the administration has not yet identified where the savings will come from.

The SCDC element of council tax has been frozen for the second successive year. However, the County, Police and Fire Authority precepts increased by 2.95%, 2.92% and 2.49%, which is why you have seen an increase in your council tax for this year.

The Council has also taken on a debt of £205 million from central government, to enable it take full control of the rental income from council properties. The loan is taken out over a period of 30 years, and there is sufficient rental income from Council housing stock to service it.

5. Housing

The Council owns and maintains a housing stock of over 5000 houses. The maintenance of these houses has now been outsourced to Mears, a national company, even though the in-house repair team was doing an excellent job. The new arrangements began on 2nd April, and the new number for repairs is 0800 085 1313.

The Council administration hopes to be able to build 1000 council housing, with half of that projected for delivery in the next 15 years, using some of the £205m loan facility that it recently took out. It has promised to work with Parish Councils to determine the locations for these houses.

The Council has an ongoing project to install PV panels on as many of the council houses as are viable. You may already have seen some of these (e.g in Toft), and those who've had it installed are reporting savings.

6. Planning and Economic Development

The process for creating the new South Cambridgeshire Local Development Plan is under way. The plan will create the strategy for building in the district from 2015 to 2031. Parish councils and elected Members have been participating in workshops to consider the issues that should be addressed. Some aspects of the way planning is implemented may change, based on the ideas that come forward. The plan will not be ready until 2014, and there is plenty of work to do in the meantime.

As a first stage, last year, SCDC sent out a request to local landowners and parish councils to suggest sites that could be used for building new developments. In Caldecote, a number of sites were submitted, most of which are to the west of the village, and include large plots at the rear of West Drive, Grafton Drive and Strympole Way, as well as Bourn airfield. You can find out more about these sites at <http://bit.ly/SHLAA1> and <http://bit.ly/SHLAA2>. These are just for information only as no decision is being taken as to their suitability or otherwise for a while yet.

Toft and Kingston do not have any sites brought forward as the villages are currently classed as infill and not able to support large developments. However, some sites were identified in Comberton, although the Bennell Farm site seems to have missed out!

The council is now actively promoting south cambs as a place open for business as it tries to encourage businesses to relocate or start up in the area. It has also woken up to the fact that faster broadband is

essential for business growth in the district, and has set aside some funds to use to provide resource to work in partnership with the Connecting Cambridgeshire initiative.

The Business StepUp competition, backed by some big names in local business, was run again successfully and the prize of £30,000 worth of business support was won by two sisters who run Cambridge Super Foods.

7. Environmental Services

For most of us, the face of this service is our bin collection and recycling. The blue bin recycling scheme is going very well indeed, with more people recycling last year than ever before. It has also saved the council a lot of money. Second blue bins are available for those who are real recycling geeks, but there is a delivery charge of £62.

8. Young People

As you may know, the Children and Young People's Plan was created and approved last year. It is the Councils promise to consult with and listen to young people when making decisions or providing services that could affect them. The next step to achieving that is to elect youth councillors to represent young people, and nominations for the Young People's Council has opened for those between the ages of 13-18 who live in the district, to put themselves forward for one of the 20 places available for youth councillors.

We don't know what the electoral system is going to be yet or the terms and conditions for the youth councillors as that will be determined along the way. My question to cabinet at the April full council meeting did not get answered properly.

For more information and to apply, email Tracy Mann at tracy.mann@scambs.gov.uk or telephone 01954 713342. I will also be very happy to talk to young people about the role of a councillor and what they could expect!

9. Conclusion

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as your District Councillor. My special thanks to all my Parish Councils for the unstinting support I have been given. It has been a pleasure to work with you all, and I look forward to continuing to serve you in the future.

As your Councillor, I am here to help you. Please do feel free to contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints. I can be contacted by phone, email, facebook, twitter or via my website as shown in the details below.

Please subscribe to my blog RSS feed, or Like my facebook page, so that you can get regular updates about relevant issues and what I get up to on your behalf.

With best wishes to all for the 2012-13 municipal year.

Tumi

Tumi Hawkins

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