

Councillor's Annual Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council

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.

2. Highlights of local issues

As you know, I attend the monthly parish council meetings of my three 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. 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 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.

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.

The issue of affordable homes in Toft is one that presents opportunities and challenges and I am pleased to continue working with the Parish Council to identify potential sites. After much to-ing and fro-ing, and with the help of pictures taken by Cllr McCarten, I was able to get a replacement litter bin for the Green, which has helped in keeping litter pollution down.

I was able to assist the owners of the Golf Club to navigate the planning system and represented the village's views to the Planning Committee in the case of their application to build a hotel, which when built would benefit the village. I was also called upon to by the owner of The Old Barn to help resolve matters with the system and eventually the application was passed, which would see a big employer and international renowned company remain in Toft.

The young people of Toft are not forgotten, and I must congratulate Cllr Howling on the excellent work done to get the proposal for the new playground together. It is important to acknowledge that the young people who would be using it took an active part in selecting the design. I was able to lend the weight of my support to the application to South Cambs District Council for a substantial grant, which was awarded. Well done everyone.

The issue of superfast broadband is one that comes up again and again. As you may know, Caldecote is getting the upgrade, being served by Madingley Exchange. I coordinated the campaign that enabled the exchange to be one of 6 winners in the Race to Infinity in January 2011.

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.

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 in which 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 Bennel Farm site seems to have missed out!

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 (decision makers at district and parish levels) 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, and nominations for the Young People's Council has opened for young people 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. For more information and to apply, call Tracy Mann on 01954 713342 or email tracy.mann@Scams.gov.uk. 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.

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

Tumi

Tumi Hawkins

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