

South Cambridgeshire District Councillor's Monthly Report

Month of March 2012

1. SCDC Grants

The district has funds available for parishes and groups to apply for, and I would encourage any village groups looking for funding to investigate if there is an SCDC grant that can be used for their purpose. Capital grants (new limit of £50,000), community chest grant (maximum £1000), Parish planting scheme grants etc.. For information about how to apply, please contact me or the Partnerships Officer, kathryn.hawkes@scambs.gov.uk or call 01954 713290. Also check the website at <http://www.scambs.gov.uk/CommunityandLiving/CommunityGrants/default.htm>. I would recommend that any group that makes an application should notify me so that I can monitor and support.

2. Freedom to pray

Parish Councils are asked to read note and or action the guidance note from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which provides advice on (a) holding formal prayers as part of the formal business of Council meetings, and (b) about the commencement of the General Power of Competence for Parish Councils.

In order to be eligible for the General Power of Competence, parish councils must: (i) Have at least two-thirds of their councillors elected (whether at an ordinary election or a by-election) rather than co-opted; and (ii) Have a Clerk who has undertaken suitable training.

3. Local Plan Workshops

Over the past two weeks, a number of workshops have taken place at South Cambs Hall, for Members and Parish Councils to look at the big issues relevant to creating a new local development plan for the district. The plan will set out development proposals to meet the needs of the district as well as other policies to conserve and enhance South Cambridgeshire over the next 20 years.

Members took part in two workshops looking at the big picture and the key policy issues. Parish Councils took part in a workshop looking at roles and responsibilities of each council and how to work better in partnership.

All the ideas generated during these workshops are now being collated and will be used, together with the SHLAA, as the evidence base for developing the new local plan. This is a long process which will take place over the next few months, and updates will be given as we get them.

4. Finance and Housing

On 26th March 2012, SCDC took on a loan of £205.123 million into the Housing Revenue Account, and paid it out to the Government a few days later, as the price for keeping all the rents that come from the council housing stock. The loan is for a term of 30 years.

The council is planning on spending some of that money on new house building in the future, and announced it would build 1000 throughout the district. It expects to deliver half of them in the next 15 years. Money will also be made available to upgrade existing stock.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing has said that the Council are determined to work with parish councils to make sure the homes are built where the local communities want them.

All I can say is "lets wait and see".

5. Bus Nos. 18/18A

SCDC has indicated we cannot use the Community Chest grant to fund the initial costs of the replacement service. The grant cannot fund services that ought to be funded by other agencies. In this case the County is making the cut and this rules out the use of the grant.

I attended the County Cabinet meeting in Wisbech on 6th March 2012 where the bus subsidies issued was discussed and the approval given for the principle of removing subsidies. It was obvious from the discussion that there was no turning back from that strategy. The Council leader went so far as to say that he feels sorry for the residents of the parishes where the Councillors are fighting the cuts because they will suffer. Now its unclear if that was a threat or a promise.

I also attended the County Council full council meeting on 27th March 2012, and asked Cllr Ian Bates to provide the ridership figures used to assess the 18/18A service before it was axed, and how they assessed the impact it would have. Also asked him what alternatives were being proposed and if CC would be prepared to provide funding for our alternative scheme. The answers No, he couldn't provide the figures, it was too difficult, their assessment was just to think that evening and weekend services would give much less impact, they were considering alternatives in the Cambridgeshire Future Transport project and had set aside £1.3M for that. In short – non-answers.

The County have since sent round a briefing claiming that it will work with parish councils that are affected to find alternative solutions, and will do this 6-9 months before the withdrawal is scheduled to take place. Again, we can only wait and see if indeed they will do so.

6. Casework

Your Councillor is 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 or via my website. I hope I can help but even if I can't, then it's highly likely that I know someone who can!

7. Dates for your diary

Tumi

Tumi Hawkins
12-Apr-12

Email me @:	tumi@tumihawkins.org.uk
Follow on twitter:	http://twitter.com/CouncillorTumi
Facebook share:	http://www.facebook.com/itsCouncillorTumi
Read my blog at:	http://www.TumiHawkins.org.uk
Call me on:	01954 210840