

South Cambridgeshire District Councillor's Monthly Report

May 2013

1. SCDC Local Development Plan - Update

I attended the third Member workshop on the contents of the draft Local Development plan which took place on 23 April 2013. We discussed several topics including (1) sustainable development strategy (2) Housing site options (3) Employment site options (4) major joint areas with Cambridge – Cambridge East and the Northern Fringe East, (5) some Parish council proposals (for framework changes etc.).

Three issues that will be of interest to residents in the Ward are:

(a) 3500 homes proposed at Bourn Airfield: There was no appetite from members to build on this site because of the likelihood of creating a ribbon of development along the A428. And there is the issue of transport and that it is not big enough to sustain itself in terms of facilities (schools etc.).

(b) the proposal for the former TKA Tallent site to be redeveloped for employment use. This was given a cautious support, only on its own without housing. But there was still concern about transport to/from it.

(c) the proposal for a community stadium on Bourn Airfield. Most thought it was not a good idea. Too far out from the city, transport and parking issues, and viability.

(d) Proposal to build some houses on land at Bennell Farm, Comberton which is in Toft Parish. There was cautious support with condition that it is not high density and the affordable housing will be allocated on a cascade basis (to local people first).

There will be a fourth workshop this month and I will update further.

2. SCDC Transport Issues

Demand Responsive Transport: SCDC officers are working together with County officers to design a Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) scheme that will potentially replace the local services No.18 through Kingston and Toft and No 2 through Caldecote, when the County removes subsidies later this year. However, we require more information from residents who use the buses as to where they wish to go, what times etc. I would encourage residents to read the DRT information leaflet, complete the questionnaire and return to me or to South Cambs. For those who have online access, the documents can be downloaded from <http://tumihawkins.org.uk/transport-on-demand> or contact me if you want a copy sent to you.

A14 upgrade: Central government has asked that all the local authorities along the section of A14 that needs upgrading should contribute some money to it (not sure but around £5m-to be confirmed). This seems to be an unfair request, particularly when it is a national road which the local taxpayer is already paying for through our general taxes. We also pay road tax, and petrol tax, and to be asked to contribute from our local taxes does not seem right. South Cambs administration seems to think they will want to use the New Homes Bonus or other capital funds that we get. But again, it seems that money meant for local projects should be used for local projects. I would welcome views from residents on whether or not we should contribute to the A14 upgrade.

3. Welfare Reform

The welfare reform kicked in on 1st April 2013, and this means that a number of people will be hit hard in their pockets. SCDC expects that over 3,000 residents in the district will be affected as three measures kick in namely (i) localised council tax where those of working age will see a reduction of about 8.5% in their council tax benefit (1300 residents affected) (ii) the so called bedroom tax for under-occupation of social rented property where the housing benefit is reduced by 14% for one underused bedroom and 25% for two underused bedrooms (632 families) and finally (iii) the benefit cap limiting benefits received to £350 for single adults and £500 for couples (about 30 families).

SCDC has also changed the rules for council tax relief for properties. Anyone with an empty property will now pay 100% council tax for even one day. If a property is empty for more than two years, then it becomes liable for 150% of council tax, so landlords and second home owners are being fined for leaving their properties empty for any reason whatsoever Over 1,300 homes are affected by these changes.

The local authority is writing to each household affected to let them know what it will mean for them and to advise what information and support is available.

Overall, not a good year for our pockets in South Cambridgeshire!

4. Broadband – Connecting Cambridgeshire

I attended a meeting of the Broadband Champions of the Connecting Cambridgeshire project in Alconbury last month. The meeting was organised to explain how BT envisages to rollout broadband to the county by the deadline of end of 2015. It expects to be able to do this using only Fibre To The Cabinet (FTTC) technology. There is no timetable yet as to which community will be enabled first, but it will depend on the infrastructure that currently exists, and the ease of getting communities on the superfast broadband highway. No community will be left out!

5. 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!

6. Councillor Drop-in surgery

Kingston Village Hall: second Thursdays of every other month, next on 11th July 2013, 7pm – 8pm

7. Dates for your diary

16 May 2013	8pm	Annual Parish Meeting of Kingston Parish
6 June 2013		Kingston Blues Band in Kingston Village Hall
6 June 2013	10 am	Planning Committee meeting
11 July 2013	7pm-8pm	Councillor Surgery, Kingston Village Hall

Tumi

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9-May-13

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