

District Councillor's Annual Report – Caldecote Ward

May 2015

1. General

The makeup of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) for the 2014/15 municipal year, was: Conservatives 35, Liberal Democrats 13, Independents 8, Labour 1. Following the elections on 7th May, this changed to Conservatives 38, Liberal Democrats 11, Independents 7, Labour 1

I served as a member of the Planning Committee, was Opposition Spokesperson for the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio, member of Advisory Group for Ermine Street Ltd (SCDC as a private landlord) and a member of the Advisory Board of the Little Footsteps Childrens Centre in Caldecote.

At Parish level, I have worked with the Parish councils on district related issues as planning, environmental health (drainage/flooding), and held councillor drop-in surgeries where residents could come and discuss any issues or problems that they had or needed assistance to help resolve. I have also assisted local groups in their application for funding for a number of local projects. I also continue to be your Broadband Champion.

I want to thank all three Parish Councils for their support. I will continue to work together with you to get the best outcomes possible for all our villages on all matters to do with SCDC.

2. Planning

2.1 Draft Local Development Plan (LDP) 2011-2031

The Draft LDP and supporting documents were submitted for examination on 28 March 2014 to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (CLG) via Planning Inspectorate. The Secretary of State appointed Laura Graham as the Planning Inspector to carry out the independent examination to determine if the plan is sound or not.

SCDC and Cambridge City Council submitted their plans jointly, so that the two plans could be examined together, due to the fact that the two local authorities are closely linked geographically.

The examination is divided into blocks of hearings: Block 1 took place in November 2014 (legal process, overall spatial vision, housing need, employment and retail. Infrastructure monitoring and viability, Block 2 in February 2015 (Green belt general issues, boundary changes in City and boundary changes in South Cambs, transport issues), Block 3 in March 2015 (Housing land supply and delivery) and Block 4 in April 2015 (Areas of major change/development on the edge of Cambridge). The examination is now paused till further notice. The Inspector has not given any indication of how she is thinking regarding the issues already examined and discussed.

2.2 Waterbeach Appeals and Speculative Developments

SCDC lost two planning appeals in Waterbeach, where developers had been refused planning to develop two sites that were outside the village development framework. The planning inspector determined that contrary to legislation, SCDC did not have a 5-year housing land supply, falling short by about 1300 houses.

This has subsequently led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by SCDC and Cambridge City (see below). More worryingly is that it has led to developers submitting speculative applications in the district, with one of those being in Toft (PlanSurv-6 Houses) and another in Caldecote (Gladmans-125 houses). The Toft application was refused, the Gladmans proposal has not yet been submitted to SCDC.

2.2 Greater Cambridge Joint Housing Trajectory

SCDC and Cambridge City, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in September 2014 under the duty to co-operate that the housing trajectories for the two areas should be considered together, for the purposes of calculating 5-year housing land supply. The document can be found at <https://goo.gl/IzEisp>.

This followed the ruling by another planning inspector in two appeal cases in Waterbeach that SCDC did not have a 5-year housing land supply. The MoU relates specifically to the phasing of the delivery, rather than the housing numbers. This type of agreement is without precedent, and it remains to be seen if it is accepted by the planning Inspector Laura Graham, for the purposes of determining the soundness of the Draft LDP.

2.3 Planning Application for West Cambourne

A proposal by McA Developments (Bovis & Taylor Wimpey) to build 2,350 houses was submitted to SCDC. The proposal covers the land, mainly within Caxton Parish, from Cambourne up to the A1198 west and the A428 north. It proposes to include one secondary and two primary schools, shops and community space, offices and light industrial employment areas, segregated cycle and pedestrian routes etc. The Council is now considering the application, which deviates from the circa 1700 earmarked for the site in the Local Development Plan

2.4 Northstowe

Although the planning approval was given in April 2014 for Phase 1 for 1500 houses, primary school, mixed use local centre etc., nothing has been built yet.

The Council considered the application for Phase 2 for a further 3,500 houses in April, but did not grant permission as the committee had very grave concerns about many aspects of the application such as the amount of money available for the civic/community buildings, and the watering down of the green energy to be installed.

The affordable housing element in this development has also reduced from the Council's own target of 40% to just 20%, this at a time when there is a great need in the district for houses that people can afford based on the average wage.

The application will be considered again in July. Northstowe has been 15 years in the planning and is not there yet. Further information on the development can be found at www.Northstowe.com.

3. Finance

The Central Government grant for 2014/15 was £2.65 million, to provide the usual services to the communities. The Council is now generating income to replace some of the shortfall in the grants funding-through investment in housing company (Ermine Street) to provide properties to the rental sector. The rest of the shortfall was covered through "efficiency savings", especially in waste collection (reduction of winter service collection for green waste), and strategic partnerships with other local authorities to share services.

The funding for 2015/16 is £1.83 million, an overall reduction of 76% in the time since 2010/11 when the council received £7.823million. The reduction is expected to continue over the coming years.

3.1 Council Tax

The SCDC element of the council tax for 2014/15 was **£122.86 for a Band D**. For the new municipal year 2015/16, it has increased again by 1.99% to **£125.31**, an increase of £2.45 on the previous year. The council tax figures for each village are:

	Parish Precept	SCDC	Cambs County	Cambs Police	Cambs Fire	Total
Caldecote	£99.99	£125.31	£1144.26	£181.35	£64.26	£1615.17
Kingston	£73.80	£125.31	£1144.26	£181.35	£64.26	£1588.98
Toft	£73.53	£125.31	£1144.26	£181.35	£64.26	£1588.71

The previous figures were: Caldecote £105.50 (reduction of £5.51), Kingston £72.55 (increase of £1.25), Toft £74.55 (reduction of £1.22), County £1121.94 (increase of £22.32), Police including Crime Commissioner £181.35 (no change) and Fire is £62.26 (£2). This gives a typical Band D increase of £26.77 (without the parish precepts).

3.2 New Homes Bonus

SCDC projected to receive £3.2million for 2014/15 and expecting to receive up to £4.15million for 2015/16. This is monies from government given to high growth areas to help with delivering new facilities and infrastructure, and is determined by the number of net new homes built in the municipal year.

This funding is expected to be used to plug the gap in the Council's shortfall in funding from Central Government

3.3 Joint Services

SCDC has agreed joint working with two councils. It now shares Building Control with Huntingdonshire District Council, Legal and ICT services with Cambridge City Council, allegedly saving up to £1.25 million. Waste collection is shared with City Council, allegedly saving around £700,000.

4. Economic Development

SCDC continues to say that South Cambridgeshire is open for business, and that it will continue to support local businesses and assist businesses to move to the area.

4.1 Business Workshops

The council once again ran the now annual Business Support Service, through Exemplas. This is in the form of half day workshops to help those running or thinking of starting a business in the district and cover subjects focusing on the specific needs of local businesses, including business planning, recruitment and websites and social media.

Each workshop costs £10 +VAT, and anyone interested in attending could reserve a place by telephone 0844 346 0755 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm) and pay by credit or debit card. Full details for future events can be found by visiting www.exemplas.com/southcamb

5. Housing

5.1 Ermine Street Ltd

SCDC set up a property company with the objective of generating income for the council. The company, formerly SCDC Ltd, and now renamed Ermine Street Ltd, will buy properties on the open market and then rent them to the private sector at market rates and the social sector at RSL rates. It is also planning to build houses to rent on land that it currently owns that is suitable for development.

The scheme is being financed by SCDC borrowing £7million from the Public Works Loan Board at a favourable rate, and lend to Ermine Street Ltd at market rate, the difference being the income generated for SCDC.

6. Transport – City Deal

6.1 City Deal

The Greater Cambridge City Deal aims to facilitate the continued growth of the Cambridge Phenomenon, by investing in infrastructure and housing in the sub-region. The funding from Government is £100m in the first 5-years, £200m in the second 5-year period, and £200m in the next 5-year period.

In January 2015, the City Deal Executive board to agree the projects to be carry out in the first five years. These are Milton Road bus priority (£23m), Madingley Road bus priority (£34.6), Histon Road bus priority (£4.3), A428 to M11 segregated bus route / A428 corridor Park and Ride (£24.5m), City centre capacity improvements / cross-city cycle improvements (to include Hills Road in the scope) (£22.6m), A1307 corridor to include bus priority / A1307 additional Park and Ride £39m), Chisholm Trail cycle links / Chisholm Trail bridge (£8.4). The total allocated spend is £156.4 million worth of works, and only £100 is certain. The rest will need to be found from somewhere

6.2 A421/A428 Alliance

The Councils (South Cambs, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire) through which the A428 and A421 pass through from West Cambridge to Bedford, formed an alliance with a view to petitioning the Government to find the funds to carry out work to dual the road from Caxton Gibbet to St Neots, and make junction changes to fit for purpose. At the last meeting in April, we were informed that the project has been given approval and that the funding was set aside and works expected to commence by 2020.

At every opportunity, I continue to raise the issue of the improvements that are needed to the Girton Interchange to provide a route from the A428 West onto the M11 to bypass Madingley Rise.

7. Broadband

7.1 Race To Infinity-Caldecote

I re-iterate once again that superfast fibre optic broadband is available in Highfields Caldecote and Childerley. There are still cases where residents are being told by BT Retail that it is not available or will never be available. This is not correct. I established a procedure with BT Openreach whereby these issues can be and are being resolved, so please contact me if BT is insisting you can't get superfast broadband. BT has in the past struggled to cope with the demand but should now have in place a process for incremental capacity increase.

7.2 Connecting Cambridgeshire Project – Old Caldecote, Toft and Kingston

The Comberton exchange which serves Caldecote, Kingston and Toft has now been upgraded. Residents of Toft now have superfast broadband available to them. Unfortunately, Caldecote and Kingston, being furthest away from the cabinets at Toft, still do not have fibre broadband available.

The County Council is now putting together a program for getting superfast broadband to these areas that are considered "difficult to reach" and as your Broadband Champion, I will continue to lobby on your behalf for this work to be done speedily.

8. Councillor Drop-in surgery/Case Work

I have been holding and will continue to hold drop-in surgeries on the first Monday of each month at Toft People's Hall from 6pm to 7pm, and on the first Thursday of each month, at the Caldecote Village Hall from 7pm to 7.50pm. This is so that residents can come and have a chat with me about any issues they wish to raise or is bothering them or want me to help them with at SCDC.

Thank you to those who have dropped and I hope to see many more people over the coming year.

Please feel free to bookmark my website <http://www.tumihawkins.org.uk> so that you can read in more detail about some of the issues that I've reported on here, and of course for information in the coming months.

My contact details are as shown below.

Tumi

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