

District Councillor's Annual Report – Caldecote Ward

May 2016

1. General

The makeup of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) for the 2015/16 municipal year, was: Conservatives 38, Liberal Democrats 11, Independents 7, Labour 1. Following the elections on 5th May, this changed to Conservatives 36, Liberal Democrats 14, Independents 6, Labour 1

I served as Opposition Spokesperson for the Economic Development Portfolio, member of Advisory Group for Ermine Street Ltd (SCDC as a private landlord).

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 rumbled into controversy when on 20 May 2015, the Government Planning Inspector issued a letter suspending the Public Examination of the Plan. The suspension was primarily on 3 grounds:

1. The Council did not provide sufficient evidence to support the need for 33,000 new houses in South Cambridgeshire and the City.
2. The Council provided insufficient evidence to support the level of protection being given to the Green Belt around the City.
3. There was insufficient evidence to support the selection of large strategic sites for development of many thousands of houses along the A428 and the A10, as opposed to more sustainable locations around the City, mainly on the grounds that the roads will not cope and that the City Deal money is not guaranteed.

The Councils asked the Inspector to consider issuing a view on the principle of the Joint Housing Trajectory being taken, to try to mitigate the problem of the 5-year housing land supply shortage situation the Council found itself in following the loss of the two Waterbeach appeals. However, the Inspector did not consider it was appropriate – so the District continues to be subject to lots of speculative applications.

The Council undertook further work to address the issues that the Inspector raised, but these, seem to be superficial. The Council submitted the results of the additional work in March 2016. On the basis of this, the Public Examination will resume on 7th June 2016.

2.2 Speculative Developments

The Council is still considered to be short on the provision of a 5-year housing land supply, therefore the District continues to be subject to lots of speculative applications. It is unclear how much of the 1300 shortfall has been made up in the last year.

2.3 Caldecote – Application for 140 Houses by Gladmans

The Council received a planning application from Gladmans for developing a site on the north end of Caldecote to build 140 houses. Considering the village currently has 600 houses, the 140 will add just under 25% to the village size if given approval. Most consider this level of development as not sustainable for a Group Village with no shop, doctor's surgery, bus transport through the village, and primary school at capacity. The application is to go to planning committee in June 2016 for determination.

2.5 Toft – Application for up to 90 Dwellings Bennell Farm

The Council received an outline application for the development of Bennell Farm for up to 90 houses, car park and football pitch. The site is one of those being considered for development in the draft Local Development Plan. As such I consider it premature that it is being submitted now whilst the LDP is

suspended. The outline plan proposes to build some 3 storey houses, which I consider to be inappropriate in this location, as do most if not everyone (except the Applicants). There are significant infrastructure issues to be addressed if the plan is given approval, including drainage and sewerage, doctor's surgery capacity and traffic. By contrast, the application includes provision for facilities that the Parish does not need or want!

The application is going to be determined at Planning Committee meeting on 11th May 2016. We need to bear in mind that the Council is keen to reduce the shortfall in its 5-year housing land supply!!

2.4 Northstowe

Work has now started on the build out of Northstowe!! Bloor Homes will be the first housebuilder on site as they build the first 92 houses on part of Phase 1. The affordable housing element for the whole of Northstowe is just 20%, a figure arrived on the basis of viability – the developers Gallagher claim the cost of infrastructure was much higher than envisaged.

Further information on the development can be found at www.Northstowe.com.

3. Finance

The Central Government grant was reduced from £2.65 million in 2014/15 to £1,806 million for 2015/16 to , to provide the usual services to the communities. The Council has had to cut costs drastically, share services and generating income to replace the shortfall. Its investment in housing company (Ermine Street) has helped in mitigating some of the shortfall. The reduction is expected to continue over the coming years and in fact has reduced to £0.92 million for 2016/17.

Estimated expenditure for the 2016/17 year is £17,821,580. We hope to get £5.265 million in New Homes Bonus and a couple of other smaller grants. To balance the books the council needs to raise circa £7.852million from Council Tax!

3.1 Council Tax

The SCDC element of the council tax for 2015/16 was **£125.31 for a Band D**. For the new municipal year 2016/17, it has increased again by 4% to **£130.31**, an increase of £5 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	£130.31	£1167.12	£183.15	£65.52	£1746.11
Kingston	£72.55	£130.31	£1167.12	£183.15	£65.52	£1618.65
Toft	£61.86	£130.31	£1167.12	£183.15	£65.52	£1607.96

The previous figures were: Caldecote £99.99 (reduction of £33.33), Kingston £73.80 (reduction of £25.43), Toft £73.53 (reduction of £32.29), County £1144.26 (increase of £22.86), Police including Crime Commissioner £181.35 (increase of £1.8) and Fire is £64.26 (increase of £1.26).

3.2 New Homes Bonus

SCDC projected to receive £5.265 million for 2016/17. 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 help plug the gap in the Council's shortfall in funding from Central Government

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 successfully ran the now annual Business Support Service, this time through a new company called Nwes which claims to be the UK's largest not-for-profit Enterprise Agency

5. Housing

The Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a number of new housing related measures that will cause difficulties for Councils going forward. A major change is that Councils with housing stock must not increase rents, infact should reduce rents by 1% each year. This means that for SCDC, its plans for house building is now in jeopardy as the business case it had a year ago is predicated on increasing rents!

Further to this, the Government has decreed that when any of our high value properties become void, we must sell that applies to most of our housing stock!

The government has also extended Right to Buy to Housing Associations, which means that their business model is no longer viable, resulting in reduced number of houses for rent.

Furthermore, the Chancellor has removed from private landlords the ability to offset their legitimate costs of borrowing against profits, and will be taxed on turnover. This has already resulted in some landlords selling their properties, reducing the number of properties available to rent. In addition, some are increasing rents to compensate for the increased costs. Invariably this is a tax on tenants, as its them that will be affected by this drive by the Government to give first time buyers a leg up on the housing market – to the detriment of renters.

5.1 Ermine Street Ltd

Ermine Street Ltd continues to grow – it is the company designed to generate income for the Council as it acts as a landlord in the private sector.

Following the success of the initial £7m pilot project, the Council approved a further loan of £100million to the company to expand its operation. The Council expects Ermine Street to generate up to £600,000 in the next year and expects to be able to reinvest this revenue in the services it provides to the residents in the District.

6. Greater Cambridge City Deal (GCCD)

6.1 Better Bus Journeys

The Greater Cambridge City Deal aims to facilitate the continued growth of the Cambridge sub region, by investing in infrastructure, housing and skills. The focus of the first year of the GCCD has been on creating the High Quality Public Transport (HQPT) scheme along the A428/A1303 corridor.

The County carried out public consultations on the options for the scheme to be delivered in two stages. Stage/Option 1 which is expected to run till 2020, will be the section running from Madingley Mulch to the City. Stage/Option 2 (running to 2030) is the westward section from Madingley Mulch to Caxton Gibbet roundabout.

Madingley Mulch to Cambridge: Option 1A-£18m (a bus route on existing section from M11-Madingley Mulch-Central), Option 1B-£20m (part along A1303 and part skirting American Cemetry-North), Option 1C-£67m (South of Coton in the Countryside, including new bridge over M11-South).

Cambourne to Madingley Mulch: Option 2A-nominal (along dual carriageway A428-North), Option 2B-£11m (along old A428), Option 2C-£26m (South of Highfields Caldecote and Hardwick to Bourn Airfield-South)

The full report can be found at www.gccitydeal.co.uk . Further work is scheduled for Sept 2016 and more consultation in 2017. Upshot is that the GCCD will not meet the timetable of spending the first tranche of funds within the first year of allocation.

7.0 Council Governance

Boundary Changes: The Boundary Commission wants SCDC to reduce the number of Councillors and rationalise Ward boundaries. The recommendation is that we move to all out elections every

4 years and the number of councillors drops from 57 to 45. It is the expectation of the Boundary Commission that when a review takes place numbers go down in response to greater efficiencies and also to reduce costs. There is a proposal for the new ward boundaries and it is expected that Toft will be put with Hardwick, whilst Kingston and Caldecote will be aligned with Bourn and Longstowe. We expect further consultation to take place before these are finalised.

South Cambs currently has 105 Parishes with more on the way – the Haslingfield part of Trumpington Meadows, Northstowe and West Cambourne likely to be next.

7. Broadband

7.1 Caldecote

I continue to receive messages from residents who are being told by BT that they cannot order Infinity because the cabinet in the village is not being upgraded. This is complete and utter rubbish.

BT's database is messed up, and no one seems to be able to put it right. I re-iterate once again that superfast fibre optic broadband is available in Highfields Caldecote and Childerley. We have Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) which we won as part of the Race to Infinity. I suggest that those who are having difficulty ordering infinity tell the BT operative exactly that to begin with.

Although I established a procedure with BT Openreach to get such issues resolved, that arrangement has now ceased. If there are significant numbers still having problems, then I may consider trying to re-open this arrangement, but as its now 5 years since the Race to Infinity ended, I cannot guarantee such an arrangement can be achieved again.

7.2 Toft, Kingston and Old Caldecote (Connecting Cambridgeshire Project)

The Comberton exchange which serves Old Caldecote, Kingston and Toft was upgraded during the year. Residents of Toft now have superfast broadband available to them and are well served by two fibre cabinets along the High Street.

Unfortunately, Old Caldecote and Kingston, being furthest away from the cabinets at Toft, still do not have fibre broadband available. A solution has been found for Kingston, but we await the solution for Old Caldecote.

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.

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