

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caldecote Ward Annual Report – May 2017

Caldecote Ward comprises the Parishes of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston and Toft

1. Introduction

I want to thank all the Parish Councils for their support throughout the 2016/17 municipal year. I have worked on issues such as planning, environmental health (noise, bins, drainage etc), housing (repairs, allocations), and held councillor drop-in surgeries in Caldecote and Toft 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 projects and continue to be the Ward Broadband Champion assisting to get superfast broadband to our residents.

I hope in the coming year to continue working together with you all for our villages to get the best outcomes possible on all matters to do with SCDC.

2. Governance

District Council –The political makeup of the Council was Conservative 36 (63.1%), Liberal Democrat 14 (24.6%), Independent Group 6 (10.5%), Labour 1 (1.8%). The Committee seat allocations followed suit with Conservatives at 48, Liberal Democrat at 19 and Independent 8. The by-election in May in Bourn Ward, replaced the outgoing councillor with a new Conservative Ruth Betson, so the council makeup remains the same going into the new municipal year.

I reduced the number of my official roles to two, Liberal Democrats substitute for Partnerships Review and Scrutiny Committees.

Unfortunately, the Council administration continue to flout the good practice for Scrutiny by assigning the chair to their party instead of the main opposition. This has not served the Council well and has shown in its overall performance, with planning and scrutiny being criticised in a Peer review done during the year.

SCDC New Chief Executive: The council has appointed a new CEO, Mrs Beverley Ann Agass to replace Mrs Jean Hunter who left last year. Her appointment was ratified by Full Council at an extraordinary meeting held on 13th April 2017, and she will be starting later this year at an annual salary of £122, 969. She is from South Kesteven District Council.

New Ward Boundaries: The Boundary Commission review has resulted in big changes. The number of district councillors is reduced from 57 to 45 and so the number of wards has had to be reduced by a similar 20%. The upshot for us is that Toft is moved to Hardwick Ward. Caldecote Ward will then comprise of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston, Bourn, Longstowe and Little Gransden. We will have all out elections in May 2018, and every 4 years after that.

County Council: The County Boundary also changed, with the number of Councillors reducing from 69 to 61, and bigger wards. Hardwick now includes The Gransdens, Eversdens and Harlton, and has lost Childerley to Papworth & Swavesey (should not have happened !)

Hardwick ward, of which we are a part, now has a new Conservative County Councillor, Lina Joseph. I congratulate Lina on her election, and look forward to working with her, especially on the issues of protecting our communities' identities and our quality of life. I am glad she agrees that "Caldecote is as lovely as our countryside can be", and I hope that the slowing of large development applications she mentioned in her pre-election newsletters can be made a reality so that Highfields

Caldecote does not become a suburb of the proposed Bourn Airfield Village, and villages like Toft and Kingston don't get overrun by speculative developments or grandiose expensive busway projects.

The overall makeup of the County Council is now Conservatives 36, Liberal Democrats 15, Labour 7, St Neots Independent 2, Independent 1, UKIP 0 (lost all their 12 seats previously held).

Combined Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Authority (CA) - This is now a reality, a new layer of local government overseen by the elected Mayor. The new Mayor of the CA is Conservative James Palmer.

So, our Cambridgeshire sub region remains subject to the whims and caprices of the Conservatives!

The deal makes available £800 million of extra funding comprising (1) new £20m annual fund for the next 30 years (£600million) to support economic growth, development of local infrastructure and jobs. (2) £100 million for affordable housing, including for rent and shared ownership and additional £70million specifically for Cambridge City

The annual cost of the new authority will be circa £1.09m for the first year (including Mayoral annual allowance of £80K). All to be met from a government grant in the first year, then from additional levy on our council tax in subsequent years.

The CA Cabinet have now met and adopted the constitution, set a budget and allocated responsibilities. The Chief Exec post (£150-£180k) has been re-advertised, and there is also a number of directly-employed staff at the centre. The Chair of Scrutiny is Liberal Democrat, following good practice, and so can hold the Mayor accountable. Cllr Peter Topping, SCDC Leader, is in charge of Housing, and some SCDC Housing officers are working on CA business.

3. Planning

SCDC was at risk of Designation (due to poor performance) by DCLG due to speed of processing applications that was marginally below the threshold for major and non-major applications between October 2014 and September 2016. Designation would have led to the Planning Inspectorate making all the decisions. The council won its appeal against designation on the grounds of improving performance. Let's hope it stays that way.

The big issues for Caldecote in the past year has been on planning issues, specifically:

- (i) Bourn Airfield Development proposal, as part of the SCDC Draft Local Development plan
- (ii) Gladman application for 140 houses on Highfields Road north of the village
- (iii) CALA Homes application for 71 houses land rear of 18-28 Highfields Road
- (iv) Wellbeck application for 58 houses off Grafton Drive
- (v) Toft – application for 30 houses on Hardwick Road
- (vi) Bennell Farm – application for 90 houses

The prospect of a further 269 houses being built in Caldecote (currently only 619 houses) boggles the mind, especially when infrastructure issues like school places, drainage and sewerage, leisure facility for young people, and transport are not going to be resolved in any meaningful manner.

I spent 3.5 days with two other Caldecote residents at the Gladman appeal hearing, objecting to such a large development in village with limited infrastructure. Outcome expected in June. The

CALA application was granted permission on 10th May, delegated approval subject to S106 agreements being signed. Wellbeck application will be going to planning appeal.

For Toft, Land West of Hardwick Road came up, with an application to build 30 houses. This proposal was withdrawn, but the land in question is coming up for consideration at the Local Plan examination in June, as an omission site.

The Bennell Farm application for up to 90 Houses was also granted planning approval. S106 issues continue being resolved, especially as both Toft and Comberton do not want the football pitch. Affordable housing element will be allocated for Toft and Comberton in the first instance, and cascading to neighbouring villages

For the Draft LDP, the Inspector Ms Laura Graham held the public examination on 4th April, focussing discussion on the area in the boundary as originally submitted, not the boundary as amended by the Council on 8th November 2016. She stated that the Council could not make such major changes without consultation. This means the final outcome of the enquiry may be delayed as further consultation may be needed.

The Council granted planning permission for 2350 houses in West Cambourne. The development will include primary schools, retail and business buildings and what not. There is a S106 requirement for £8.6m to be spent on a bus priority lane from Cambourne to Cambridge.

4. Greater Cambridge City Deal

Cambourne to Cambridge Busway

The GCCD Board in July 2016 selected what is called Option 3/3a as its preferred route for the proposed Busway. The ideal option being a completely off-road solution (Option 3) Officers were charged with working up those options, but with Option 3a being the first preferred and Option 3 as fall back. This option would cost over £140m. Andy Campbell who runs Stagecoach is quoted as saying *the commercial viability and the operational difficulties give me considerable concerns about the current proposal*

The board recently agreed that the Option 6 proposal put forward by the A428 LLF (Local Liaison Forum) should be worked up alongside their preferred Option 3/3a. Option 6 is designed to be mostly on-road, making use of existing infrastructure. Officers are due to report back to the GCCD Board in July 2017.

At the Bourn Airfield public examination hearing, the GCCD officers confirmed that £59million has been set aside for Phase 1 of the project, which is the Madingley Mulch to Cambridge section. Money for the Cambourne to Madingley Mulch section is expected in Tranche 2 of the deal.

GCCD Governance: Due to increasing concerns being expressed about the transport section of its work stream, the Board commissioned a review to get an external assessment of confidence for its work and recommendations for addressing any identified issues. The report was very critical – lack of dedicated resources or strong technical leadership, weak systems and processes, need for more up to date evidence base, mor robust governance and proactive approach to communications! The board appointed an Interim CEO to help implement the recommendations and move it forward! So the GCCD vision and plan is being redefined and governance may be streamlined.

5. Transport

A14 Highways Improvement: Works started during this municipal year. Highways Agency provides monthly newsletter update on key site activities, summarise the progress of previous

month, and explain the plans for the next month. The 24hr public helpline is 0800 270 0114, their twitter account @A14C2H and on facebook at www.facebook.com/A14C2H.

The HA promised to work to reduce the impact of construction on local communities (famous last words), but already, that pledge has been broken with the narrowing of the A428 as it joins the A14, a temporary measure that will be made permanent because “modelling shows the single lane can carry the capacity”. We hope to convince them otherwise.

A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements: Highways England (HE) have proposed some proposals to improve the Black Cat roundabout and three options for the new route of the A428 to Caxton Gibbet. There was a period of public consultation in April. The preferred route seems to be the one that runs mostly parallel to the existing road from Caxton Gibbett to St Neots.

6. Superfast Fibre Broadband for Old Caldecote and Kingston

Considering that my first meeting with Noelle Godfrey took place on 6 July 2015, in which I pressed for a solution for both Kingston and Old Caldecote, this process has been long in the making (and finishing). I want to thank Julie Conder who has been fantastic in following up the installation for Kingston with the Connecting Cambridgeshire team. I've stepped in when knotty issues needed resolving or obstructions removing.

Some Kingston houses now have fibre broadband (hurray), and some still waiting. This two phase situation arose through what I found out was administrative error, compounded by staff movement! Folks in Old Caldecote have had to wait even longer. Latest news is that installation of the cable infrastructure will be completed by 19th May, followed by two weeks of commissioning after which residents should be able to order.

7. Anglian Water – Drainage, Sewerage

In view of the speculative applications being received in parts of the Ward, I re-opened talks with the County Council Highways to discuss the issues of drainage and sewerage as it affects our villages. It has been difficult to get SCDC to assist with this matter but I will not give up.

The plan is to look at these issues for other villages and present a coherent request to Anglian Water (AW) to see if we cannot come up with an overall solution. For Caldecote, the lead on drainage issues is now Cllr Phil Claridge, and I hope to work with him to get somewhere with this issue.

8. Toft – Car Park

This continues to bring its own challenges-with it being used as a repair garage, storage of cars, abandoned cars etc. I have asked the Land department to come up with a plan to solve this issue once and for all – but unfortunately, looks like the system does not allow that sort of thing!

9. Dog & Litter Bins

SCDC have been unable to meet the demand for installation of these bins because it has to date been contracted out. Plans to train in-house operatives have not worked out well either. But a new contractor has been found and there is hope that the back log can be cleared. Toft's dog bins issues not completely resolved yet, but I am glad that the bin at the end of Millers Way is now re-attached. I am working on getting the remaining sorted (Brookside, Stoney Way, Lots Meadow)

10. Village Hero Awards

Congratulations to Martin Sebborn from Toft for winning the SCDC Village Hero Award 2017. Well deserved. And coming on the heels of Nick Nicholson winning the award in 2016, it makes me proud to be associated with such a friendly, lively, hardworking community. I will sure miss you all when the ward boundary changes are implemented in 2018. Till then however, bravo!

11. Casework/Councillor Drop-in surgery

Please do feel free to contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints to do with SCDC services. If you are having any issues with housing, housing repairs, planning, benefits, council tax, bin collection, environmental health etc., please don't fight it on your own, I am available to help you to get the best outcome possible for your situation.

Drop-in surgery normally takes place on the first Thursday of every month, 7pm – 8pm at the Caldecote Village Hall and first Monday of every month, 6pm – 7pm at the Toft People's Hall. If you need my assistance at any time in the interim, I am always available to you, so please contact me in one of the usual ways.

Tumi

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16-May-2017

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