

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caldecote Ward

(comprises the Parishes of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston, Bourn, Longstowe & Little Gransden)

Councillor's Monthly Report – March 2024

This report of previous month events is for all the Ward, so please be aware that some of the content may not be relevant to your particular Parish.

General

Please contact me with comments, questions, requests for assistance, reports, suggestions or complaints to do with SCDC services. These are housing need, housing repairs for council tenants, planning, benefits, council tax, bin collection, environmental health issues etc. Don't fight on your own. I am available to help you to get the best outcome possible for your situation.

Check out articles on my facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/itsCouncillorTumi> and my blog <http://www.TumiHawkins.org.uk>. What I post on there is my view and not LibDem or South Cambs official policy unless I state that it is.

Green Business Impact Programme

The [Green Business Impact Programme](https://futurebusinesscentre.co.uk/programmes/green-business-programme/) can help local SMEs create a practical plan to deliver on Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) targets. More details available at <https://futurebusinesscentre.co.uk/programmes/green-business-programme/>. This is through free tailored advice from environmental experts from [PECT](#) and Allia. I strongly encourage businesses looking to reduce their carbon footprint to apply. Any questions about the scheme please contact the Business Support Team on OpenForBusiness@scams.gov.uk

Planning Updates

Cambridge 2040 and Development Corporation proposals

Michael Gove is still not talking to the Local Government leaders in the area about his plans, still just announcing what he wants to do. This happened again last week, through the Chancellor Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt in his budget speech announcing the Government was committed to a Dev Corporation, and that “£10m to be invested in Cambridge to unlock delivery of crucial local transport and health infrastructure”.

On the same day, DLUHC published “The Case for Cambridge” which gave a broad helicopter view of the Government ambitions without any details. Well, let's wait and see if the promised money comes to fruition. Its all in the details. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-case-for-cambridge>

Adopted Local Plan -v- Water Supply Challenge

The Environment Agency concerns about the impact of water abstraction levels on the aquifers has led to them objecting to 3 major sites in the current South Cambs adopted local plan 2018 (Bourn Airfield, Cambridge West & Waterbeach). We had previously made clear to DLUHC and asked for Government help to resolve so we could deliver the adopted local plan. But realising his ambition could not be delivered without a solution, after the Gove announcement of wanting to build **150,000 PLUS** houses in the Cambridge Area, he set up the Cambridge Water Scarcity Group to address this water problem. The main work for now seems to be reducing demand and consumption and bringing forward supply options such as the proposed new Fens Reservoir.

The update is at [https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures/addressing-water-scarcity-in-greater-cambridge-update-on-government-measures)

Also the Case for Cambridge issued last week by Government states

The government will:

- Deliver a unique offsetting intervention to save water now through improving efficiency and support sustainable growth – set out in detail in a paper published alongside this document.
- Issue a joint statement from the Environment Agency, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, DLUHC and Defra, outlining our commitment to sustainable growth and development on the basis of our water credits scheme.
- Appoint Dr Paul Leinster to chair the Water Scarcity Group to advise the government on future water resource options, including the reservoir in the Fens and the Grafham Water pipeline.

So hopefully that means we will be able to go ahead and issue the decision notices for these sites and get on with the delivery of much needed homes.

New national plan making system

The government is making changes to how local plans are created-the main points being that the formal stages should be completed within 30 months (that is 2.5 years). The LPAs that want to adopt their plans under current system must submit for inspection by end of June 2025! As it is, due to previous points above, we are not in a position to meet that timeframe. So looks like we will be preparing our plans under the new regime. The indicative timeframe is shown in the diagram on page 8

Greater Cambridge Design and Construction awards 2023

The annual awards scheme to celebrate Greater Cambridge's building design and construction industries received many submissions in South Cambs. Our ward has cause to celebrate that Bourn Windmill won an award for Craftsmanship. <https://www.cfc.org.uk/awards/awards-winners/2024-3/bourn-windmill-2/>.

It also was highly commended in the Best conservation/ adaption under £2m category. Well done to CPPF and the volunteers who carried out the work.

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

The SCI describes how residents, businesses and interest groups can get involved in the planning application process, local plan policy creation and neighbourhood planning that helps to shape how our area develops. All councils must have one and review it at least every 5 years. Though we didn't have to, the Planning Service went out to public consultation late last year on the revised SCI, and used the feedback to update the relevant parts of the process.

We encourage applicants to engage with the planning service and the local community early in the process before submitting an application. By engaging early, and getting community involvement, issues that come up can then be addressed so the application submitted aligns with the local plan policies and NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. It also helps with the smoother process of submitting a valid application that will go through more smoothly and quickly.

The revised SCI was adopted at full cabinet this week and can be found on this link.

<https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s134730/Appendix%202%20-%20Greater%20Cambridge%20SCI%20March%202024.pdf>

I highly recommend everyone from residents to parish/town councils, applicants to agents to developers to read it so that we can all work together to make the planning process go even more efficiently, collaboratively and speedily as we create great places to live, work, study and play

Finance and Council Tax

All the local authorities have now met and agreed their Budgets for the forthcoming financial year. South Cambridgeshire District Council will increase its precept by £5 for the average band D home, equivalent to a below inflation rise of around 3%. In addition, £519,000 has been agreed as part of the council's continued Digital Transformation work which aims to make services even more accessible to residents in a way that works for you. The rise sees the average band D home charge £170.31 per year. This is an increase of around 10p per week. This rise continues to maintain the Council's position in the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country.

Unlike many other councils, SCDC is on a sound financial footing. Well targeted commercial investments bring in around £7M per year, which mitigates the huge cut in Government support that all councils have endured in recent years. If it were not for the threat of the Government's Fair Funding Review, which threatens to strip district councils of business tax revenue and give it to bigger, unitary councils, SCDC would have a projected surplus all the way to 2029 (and few councils can say that).

The Council Tax relief threshold has been increased in line with inflation so that people on the lowest incomes can continue to claim. SCDC is one of the few councils offering up to 100% relief for those residents in most need.

To maintain the council's housing stock to a high standard, and to build more council houses, council rents are being raised by 7.7 per cent.

CCC agreed a Council Tax rise of 4.99% (which includes 2% for Adult Social Services) – raising £17.5m of local income to help maintain and protect critical services for the most vulnerable communities. For the majority of our residents in Band A-D properties that will mean between an extra 99 pence to £1.48 a week.

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service plans to increase its share of council tax by 2.99% from April 2024. For a Band D property this is an annual increase of £2.34, totalling £82.26 per year or £1.58 a week. However, a combination of financial and crewing pressures means the service has had to consult on a proposal that aims to increase the number of fire engines we have available at weekends in daytime hours but potentially closing Fire Stations at Sutton, Manea and Kimbolton.

The Police & Crime Commissioner's suggested 4.8% increase to the policing element of the council tax will go ahead after Police and Crime Panel members backed the plans during a meeting at the end of January. This equates to an extra 17p per week for Band A property and 25p a week for the average Band D household (£13 per year); and the Commissioner warned that without the additional income, it would be impossible to protect policing services at their current levels and maintain the performance improvements delivered by the force over the past 12 months.

Lastly, the Mayoral Combined Authority Mayoral agreed an annual precept of £36 a year for a Band D property which equates to £3 per month per household, which will be invested in improvements to dozens of bus routes, including new routes, more frequent services on some existing routes across the region and three demand responsive transport schemes. We shall see

Community Chest Grants

At a time when many other councils are axing all of their community grants South Cambs continues to award up to £2000 to community groups in the district. Recent awards have been made to a scout group, a pre-school and for a nature recovery plan. Applications are really simple so please do apply using the website if you have a good idea

Governance/HR

4-Day Week (4DW) Trial and Best Value Notice

SCDC was shortlisted as a finalist in the Public Sector Transformation Awards 2024 in the Efficiency and Effectiveness category for the four-day week trial. The category is described as looking for an organisation that has “harnessed the real potential in their organisation, delivering elevated performance, creating efficiencies, and delivering outstanding customer service with improved value to their residents. Above all, this organisation has shown its ability to adapt to a fast-paced and ever-changing environment, while achieving fantastic results in doing so.” We were in the final along with Swindon Borough Council (first) and Kent Police (second). **We came third, winning bronze.**

South Cambs trial of the 4 Day Week working model comes to an end at the end of March. A paper went to the Employment and Staffing Committee recommending the 4 Day Week continues until all of the data collected over the past 12 months has been independently analysed and there is clarity from central government regarding their threats to levy financial penalties on any council that uses this working model. Once all of that is known the whole council will be able to vote on whether to become a 4 Day Week employer.

From September 2022 to 31 December 2023 the Council spent £434,000 less on agency staff by filling posts that were previously identified as hard to fill; this includes planners, HGV drivers (waste service) and business analysts.

It is possible to operate a four-day week working practice without jeopardising performance and service delivery. Route optimisation of waste collection (necessary anyway because of the increase in growth in the Greater Cambridge area) has been successful with few resident complaints. There has been a positive impact on colleague health and wellbeing and a reduction in days lost due to sickness. This is especially positive amongst waste crews where musculoskeletal injuries are commonplace due to the physical nature of their work.

Action for Happiness

The Action for Happiness theme for March is at <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendar> - **Mindful March**. The focus is “*Let's pause, breathe and notice, so we can respond more mindfully*”. Have a look at the daily calendar which has some really good ideas for action on a daily basis.

Casework

Please do feel free to contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints to do with SCDC services. I will help as best I can

You will find the current and past reports on my blog at <https://tumihawkins.org.uk/caldecote-ward/reports/monthly-reports/2023-24-monthly-reports/>. Feel free to read, share and/or download.

Tumi

Tumi Hawkins
12 March 2024

Email me @:	tumi@tumihawkins.org.uk
Read my blog at:	http://www.TumiHawkins.org.uk
Twitter:	@CouncillorTumi
Facebook	@itsCouncillorTumi
LinkedIn	TumiHawkins
Call me on:	07802 323269