

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caldecote Ward

Councillor's Annual Report – April 2018

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 2017/18 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.

2. Governance

District Council –The ruling party remained the Conservatives. The political makeup of the Council stayed the same as in previous year 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. Just for interest, 41 males and 16 females.

My official roles were (i) Liberal Democrats member on Scrutiny Committee, (ii) substitute for Partnerships Review Committee,(iii) Scrutiny Monitor & (iv) Opposition Spokesperson for Business & Customer Services Portfolio Holders Meeting.

New Ward Boundaries: It is now official. The new Ward boundaries take effect from 3rd May 2018. Toft has been moved to Hardwick Ward. Caldecote Ward will comprise of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston, Bourn, Longstowe and Little Gransden. Councillor numbers reduce by 20% from 57 to 45.

I am sorry to see Toft removed from Caldecote Ward – goodbye and best wishes to all Tofties.

Cambridgeshire County Council - The ruling party is now the Conservatives (previously hung council). Our County Councillor is Conservative Lina Joseph. The County administration has pleaded lack of funds for the deteriorating level of services but failed to increase council tax until this municipal year. However, the £7.969 million extra raised by the 2.99% increase was put into the Council's savings account, instead of being used to fill potholes or save Children's centres. It is now proposing to charge people who use the computers & internet at the libraries it runs! One good thing, the £1 parking charge at Park & Ride sites was scrapped on 1st April.

Combined Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Authority (CA) - This new layer of local government, led by Conservative Mayor James Palmer, has been making waves, not all of it positive. He has put an end to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) taking over its functions and seems to be aiming to do the same for the City Deal (now Greater Cambridge Partnership)

When the CA was created a year ago, it promised South Cambs would get about 70% of the affordable housing funding provided by central government, because it meets the criteria for priority funding. However, the Mayor is clearly politicising this. First he removed his fellow Conservative Cllr Topping, Leader of SCDC from the role of Housing Portfolio Holder. Secondly. East Cambs (home of Mayor Palmer) was allocated £925k to support affordable housing whereas South Cambs, which is far larger and has higher housing costs, was allocated £829k.

3. Finance

The South Cambs budget agreed for the next year will depend upon reserves - which have built up to a healthy £11million - being drawn down over the next five years to a level of £2.5million. Figure 1 below shows the councils income and expenditure.

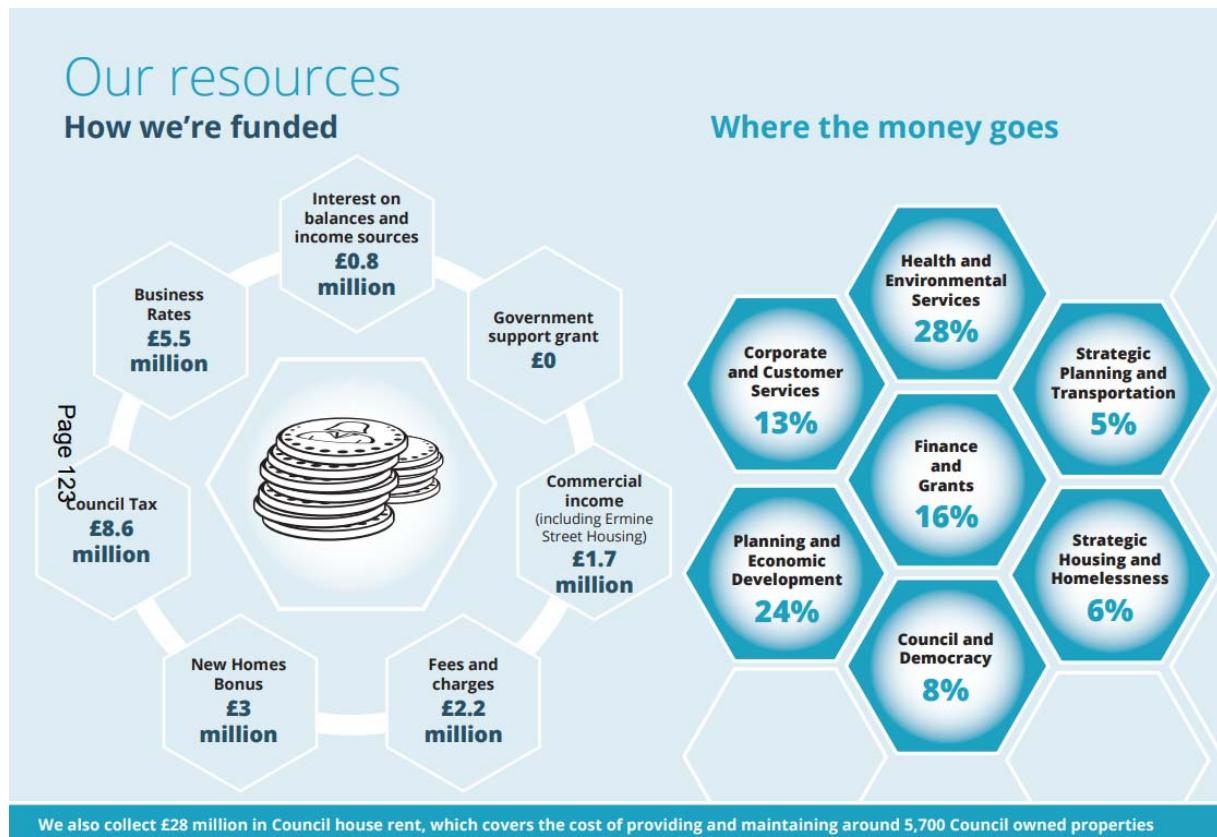
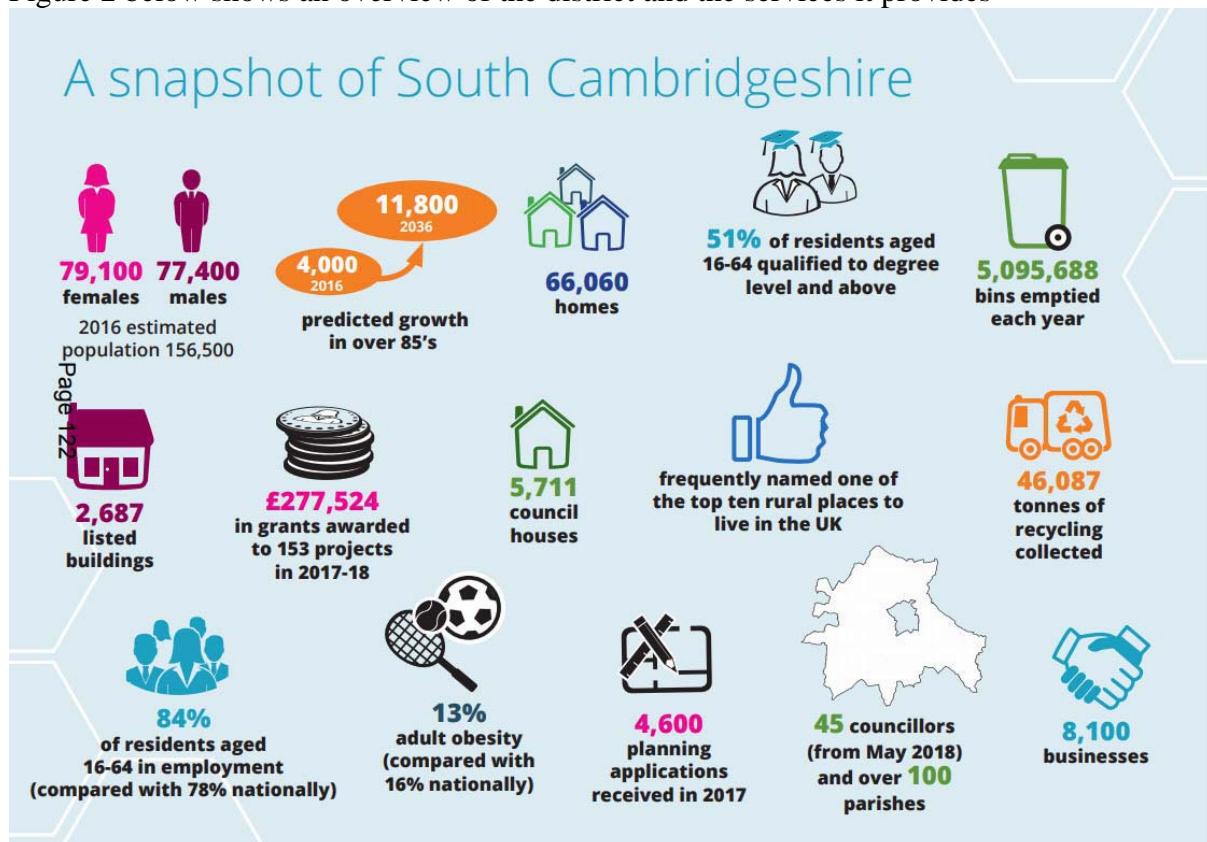


Figure 2 below shows an overview of the district and the services it provides



As you see from Figure 1, the Council no longer receives any funding from central government and has to generate its own funds to run services. The sting in the tale is that under new funding rules, the Council may in fact become a net contributor to government coffers, which would mean our tax payers subsidising other parts of the country. Watch this space.

4. Planning

SCDC avoided being designated in 2016, but is again at risk of designation. This time apparently due to the number of planning appeals that it has lost. Those appeals have come about from developers using loopholes to take speculative applications to appeal on grounds of non-determination. Designation will mean the Planning Inspectorate making all the decisions.

The big issues for Caldecote Ward 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) Welbeck application for 58 houses off Grafton Drive
- (v) Bennell Farm – application for 90 houses
- (vi) Land West of Hardwick Road – 30 houses

CALA was approved by the SCDC Planning Committee, whilst the **Gladman and Welbeck** applications went to appeal, and the Planning inspector granted permission for both. This means that 269 houses will be built in Caldecote (currently only 690 houses) an increase of 40%. I have worked with council officers to get more S106 funds to improve some of the inadequate infrastructure, and for affordable housing on these sites for local people. I hope to be around in the next 4 years to make sure that what was promised is delivered.

The **Bennell Farm** application for up to 90 Houses was re-submitted because the football field was removed from the plans. The S106 funds in lieu have been re-allocated to other community infrastructure, though it is my view that it was not done equitably in the case of Toft. The affordable housing element will be allocated for Toft and Comberton in the first instance, and cascading to neighbouring villages

Bourn Airfield – As expected, further consultation took place, on the main modifications made by the Council and requested by the planning Inspector. The results of the consultation have been collated and sent to the Inspector, and we await further instructions from her. We are however hoping that there will be further hearing, which I, StopBAD and Coalition of Parish Councils have asked for, in order to further examine the modifications proposed for the airfield.

Countrywide Properties, the proposers of the site, held two exhibitions in Cambourne and Bourn Airfield, to showcase their plans and get local feedback. They got a lot of feedback from me.

Land West of Hardwick Road, Toft – The first speculative proposal for this site outside the village envelope was overwhelmingly opposed by residents, and withdrawn. A new speculative proposal was recently submitted for full planning with the proposers seeming to rely on historical appeal decisions in Over, Swavesey and Caldecote for similar located sites that were allowed on appeal. The big difference in this case is that Toft is classed as an infill village and does not have the sort of facilities required to sustain such a large development in such a village. The outcome will likely be decided by the Council planning committee.

5. Greater Cambridge City Deal

Greater Cambridge Partnership – That is the new name of what was the City Deal. That is about all that has changed with this organisation. The main project being proposed is still the Cambourne to Cambridge Busway and attendant Park & Ride sites. This being pushed as a transport solution to help with getting the Draft local plan to be adopted

The GCP now have three options on the table, 2 on-road, 1 off-road for Phase 1 which is the section from Madingley Mulch to Cambridge. Phase 2 is the Cambourne to Madingley Mulch section and the options are yet to be investigated. Their analysis of the costs and benefits of Phase 1 options have been flawed to say the least, favouring the off-road solution that they've been pushing. There is still no date for starting the project as a decision is still not made on which option to go for!

Another sting in the tail is that the Mayor is now responsible for Transport issues across the combined authority and seems to be making his own proposals for solving the transport challenges of the A428 corridor – this including metro line and autonomous buses. The saga continues.

6. Environmental Services

Bin collection – With the service now combined with City Council, this new service has exercised us quite a bit. Initial poor performance has now improved significantly, and hopefully stays that way.

Recycling – with the price of recycled paper now lower than a few years ago, the need for the black bin caddy has been negated. All recycling now goes in the blue bins. In addition, the Council has purchased new single body bin lorries as the previous 2-body ones were at the end of their life cycle. This makes collection now more efficient.

Drainage/Sewerage - The talks that I re-opened with the County Council back in 2016/17 to discuss the issues of drainage and sewerage as it affects our villages stalled – yet again – no surprises there. But I am pleased to say the talks were re-opened in February, following intervention by the new County councillor. Now that Caldecote has to take just under 300 new houses, it is even more imperative that a solution is found.

I hope the talks lead to something positive Watch this space.

General Issues – I have also dealt with and helped resolve various other issues such as getting car parks tidied up, new dog litter bins installed, noise issues, hedges, street lights, you name it.

7. Housing

The cost of housing continues to increase, as does the need for council / affordable housing. SCDC is struggling to build council dwellings at the rate they are sold under Right-To-Buy, mainly because central government takes 70% of the receipt of each dwelling sold. The need to ensure new developments meet the 40% affordable housing criteria is even more critical. Unfortunately, the council has consistently allowed large developers to reduce that, to 20% as in Northstowe and West Cambourne. More is the pity because it is these large developments that stand the better chance of enabling the provision for the level of affordable housing we need.

The Government released the report of a study into the project to develop the Oxford to Cambridge (via Milton Keynes) arch. The proposal includes re-opening the railway line, and building new Garden cities along the arch.

8. Superfast Fibre Broadband

I am so glad to report that finally all of Kingston and Old Caldecote are on the information superhighway, with the installation of the second phase of the fibre infrastructure. It has been a while, but we finally got there. Thank you all for your patience, and thank you to Julie Conder taking on the coordination with Kingston residents, whilst I focussed on pushing Openreach directly – including the contact that Openreach Gavin Patterson gave me when I complained to him.

Highfields Caldecote – even though this village got its fibre infrastructure back in 2012/13, BT was still saying to some that superfast broadband was not available in the village. Following my email complaint to Mr Patterson, CEO of BT, I was assigned a contact who has been helping to resolve the cases that have been raised with me. I know how important it is for our businesses and homes to have fast internet connection and will continue to act as the Ward Broadband champion to make sure all those that want connection get it.

9. Casework/Councillor Drop-in surgery

Drop-in surgery normally took 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. I stopped at the beginning of January this year, but if re-elected will resume, potentially with revised times and locations.

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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01 May 2018

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