

# South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caldecote Ward Councillor's Annual Report – May 2021

Caldecote Ward comprising the Parishes of Bourn, Caldecote, Childerley,  
Kingston, Little Gransden & Longstowe



## 1. Introduction

I want to thank all the Parish Councils for their support throughout the past year. It has been a year of significant change, dominated by the Coronavirus (Covid19) pandemic and the resulting lockdowns and restrictions. This report covers the last 12 months of activities by the District Council and Councillors which I hope will be useful for you.

## 2. Governance

**District Council** – The Council is still LibDem led, with a small change to the composition after the 4 by-elections that took place on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021. There are now 31 LibDems (up one), 11 Conservatives (same), 2 Labour (same) and 1 Independent (down 1).

Significant numbers of Council officers were redeployed from their usual duties to those dealing directly and urgently with the Covid response, such as the newly created Business Recovery team. Although this has meant some disruption to normal council services, most have been delivered in a timely way and hopefully local residents have not been too severely affected.

We continue to build upon our ambitious 5-year business plan for 2019 to 2024 in the four key priority areas we identified:

- **Growing local businesses and economies** – We will support businesses of all sizes, to help create new jobs and opportunities near to where people live.
- **Housing that is affordable for everyone to live in** – We will build vibrant communities in locations where people have good access to facilities and transport links, so they can genuinely afford to lead a happy and healthy life.
- **Being green to our core** – We will create a cleaner, greener and zero-carbon future for our communities.
- **A modern and caring Council** – We will provide our customers with high-quality services, strive to reduce costs, build on what we are good at to generate our own income and make decisions in a transparent, open and inclusive way.

## 3. Covid Support

### Business Support

In response to the pandemic, we created a new **Business Support Team** that has been supporting all local businesses, big and small. The team were able to do this through our website, our business newsletter and by direct contact with the team. We have advised a staggering 2,000 businesses over the past 12 months. We have paid out over **£11 million** in Government grants to **4,834** businesses since November 2020 and **£3.5 million** in discretionary/hardship grants.

### Winter Support Payments

SCDC made small one-off grants to help South Cambridgeshire individuals and families in acute need as a direct result of Covid19 together with other partner organisations such as Citizens Advice and Age UK. This direct payment in most cases went towards food and fuel.

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## **Community Volunteers**

One of the most heartening things that has come out of the pandemic has been the way in which communities have come together to help each other. The volunteer community response was just outstanding. It was estimated that, at the height of the Covid emergency, over 4,500 people were engaged across South Cambridgeshire in helping their fellow citizens get through the worst of the crisis. The larger villages of Caldecote and Bourn had support groups set up in conjunction with and supported by the Parish Council. The smaller villages of Kingston and Longstowe had support through the parish council directly, whilst Little Gransden was part of the wider Bluebell mutual aid group. All with support from many other local volunteers, and we would like to record our thanks to them for their work.

South Cambs council communities team also supported these volunteer support groups with a Lead officer helping a small group of villages in whatever ways was needed. The Council was also able to provide weekly cooked food through donor funding and some Council funds. I took advantage of this to help some in need in our community. My weekly collection outing to Duxford and then when that closed, to Over in some ways provided relief from being on the computer on zoom or teams meetings day in day out. In addition to being the data holder for the Ward, I was also able to help locate and inform some business and organisations of their entitlement to receive the government covid grants and made phone calls to some of those that were shielding.

Now that there appears to be an end to the lockdown and the vaccination programme is reducing the infection risk to us all, SCDC is looking forward at how the community response might be continued into the recovery period. In the coming weeks, council officers will be contacting volunteers to ask them for their views on this. It is appreciated that many will be very tired and looking forward to a break and this is understandable. It may be that a different set of residents step up and continue the work, I know this has happened in one or two villages already. Whatever the volunteers decide, SCDC will support them in whatever way it can.

## **4. Finance**

### **Accounts & Budget**

You may recall that in my first annual report in 2019, I reported that the budget we inherited from the previous Conservative administration for the 2018/19 year had a £450,000 hole in it which we were able to fill. Furthermore that the Authority had not published audited accounts three years in a row including the 2017/18 accounts. I am glad to report that is now all sorted and our accounting is back on track.

The council no longer receives The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) from Government (last one given in 2018). It has to generate its own funds and we now do that through our Investment Strategy enabling the Council to invest in capital projects to generate recurring income to be used for providing services to residents of the district.

The budget expenditure for municipal year 2020/21 was projected to be £21.58 million, of which £9.56 million was set to be raised from council tax. The Average Band D rate was £150.31 up by £5 from the previous 2019/20 year. The rest being raised from a combination of sources including but not limited to Retained Business rates, New Homes bonus, Rural Services grant, interest on reserve balances, Income from other sources including Ermine Street and commercial properties in the Science Park that the Council now owns. The final figures were likely to have been affected by the covid pandemic.

We have a healthy General Reserve balance of around £16.5 million to deal with unforeseen problems.

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## Grants

The restructured grants scheme is working well under the auspices of the Grants Advisory Committee. They consider all grant applications and make recommendations to the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance. Many local organisations continue to benefit from the Community Chest grants, including the Hardwick Guide Unit which serves children from Caldecote.

### Zero Carbon Grant – Green to our Core

As already stated, being green to our core is one of our key objectives, and drives everything we do. SCDC made £100,000 available for the Zero Carbon Community grants scheme. It is for community initiatives to cut carbon emissions and tackle climate change. The scheme has had two runs so far, with themes of Nature, Cycling and Community and over 30 projects have been funded. It will be opening for round 3 in June this year with themes of community buildings, tree planting/nature and carbon emission reduction. More information is at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/nature-and-climate-change/zero-carbon-communities/> and I would encourage our communities to take advantage of this grant.

### Mobile Community Wardens

Some of the grants available are used to fund Wardens schemes. In the last 12 months SCDC has increased the number of district Mobile/Community Wardens schemes by 7 and 20 are now operating across the district. They are run in conjunction with AgeUK and includes the scheme that covers Bourn and Caldecote organised by Paula Rowley. By supporting people in their homes, the wardens help people to live in their own homes for longer. More information can be found here: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/community-development/mobile-warden-scheme/>

## 5. Housing and Planning

### Housing

Housing and the cost of it continues to be a challenge. We are hoping to meet this challenge by getting to the stage where we build at least 70 new council houses per year. Since April 2018 we have completed 105 rented and shared ownership properties, 66 of those in the last 12 months. We also have a further 248 in the pipeline. We have also sold off 8 plots for self-build, generating income for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

### Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS)

The service implemented the new area planning teams. commissioned the Planning Advisory Service, to carry out on the how the planning committee works

We now have some preliminary results from the Issues and Options consultation that took place in the first 6 weeks of 2020. Over 300,000 saw a social media post, our specially commissioned videos gained over 396,000 views across social media platforms (Youtube, Facebook, Instagram), over 32,000 unique pageviews of our website and reached over 6,000 people through the pop-up roadshow events whilst 300 attended the Big Debate at the Corn Exchange. About 7,000 individual comments were sent in and we are still processing those.

This level of engagement is unprecedented in the history of the authority and we are pleased that our decision to use a digital first approach has worked

For the first time in the history of the Council, we put out a call for green sites -specifically to use for green infrastructure such as parks etc.

The full details are on this website <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/first-conversation-consultation-and-call-for-sites/>

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The planning services of SCDC and Cambridge City were merged on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 into a shared service. The re-organisation is now in the second phase and will see one organisation structure and a common working process. It will provide a career path for planners especially in the light of the growth that the district is going to experience in the next decade or more. The new software for the new service should be ready for launch in the summer. All of this is geared to making sure the Council can deal efficiently with the high levels of planning applications it receives more efficiently, in cooperation with communities to deliver great places to live, work and play.

### **Village Design Guide and Neighbourhood Plan**

We introduced the Village Design Guide (VDG) with money from government to assist 8 villages, including Caldecote, to create their guides, identifying unique features of the villages that they want developers to carry into any new developments. The VDGs will carry legal weight in determining planning applications for the villages that have created them.

We also adopted the first Neighbourhood Plan in the district (Great Abington). A second one (Cottenham) has gone through the public consultation phase. We are continuing to encourage communities to consider creating their own Neighbourhood plans

### **Five Year Housing Land Supply – 5YHLS**

Local planning authorities, like SCDC, must demonstrate that they are on track to deliver the minimum number of new homes (in the projected five-year period) that the national government has set. Widely known as the 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) the failure of the previous Conservative administration to demonstrate one led to developers bombarding the council with speculative applications, many of which got approved at appeal. We are delighted to be able to report that the 5YHLS figure for Greater Cambridge (South Cambs and Cambridge City) has recently been reassessed and it now stands at 6.1 years. This means that we can apply our Local Plan policies for affordable housing, standards, sustainable locations, green belt and place-making without the fear of speculative and unsustainable development. Good news indeed!

### **Local Plan**

The Local Plan that was submitted by the previous administration in March 2014 for public examination was finally passed as sound by the Planning Inspector and was adopted by the Council in October 2018. Up to then, the Council was in the untenable position of its planning policies being considered out of date because it did not have a current local plan. In addition to that, the Council's lack of 5-year housing land supply led to thousands of speculative planning applications being given approval, a significant number through appeals process by the Planning Inspectorate.

We have now begun the process of developing a new joint local plan with Cambridge City, as stipulated by the Planning Inspector's decision notice. The process of creating a local plan takes a number of years, but we hope to submit the new one by 2022 for examination.

We are working collaboratively with partner organisations to encourage them to deliver the infrastructure for transport, health, education etc., for the new developments that need to be built out in the coming years.

### **Design Award**

The Council's planning service together with Mole Architects, won the National Urban Design Awards 2019 for the Cohousing development Marmalade Lane at Orchard Park. This is a great example of what can be achieved by communities working together in collaboration with the planning service.

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Our administration is keen to bring forward more award-winning developments!

## **Transport**

**Cambourne to Cambridge busway** – The GCP schedule initially set 2024 as the completion date for the C2C, until the intervention of the previous Conservative Mayor James Palmer threw a spanner in the works. The GCP has agreed to and appointed an auditor to undertake an Independent Audit Review of the scheme, and a report is expected by the Board in July 2021.

## **6. Wellbeing**

### **WELLBEING – Black History Month**

The Council agreed as part of the Black Lives Matter motion adopted in July 2020, to make Black History Month (October) an annual event. I introduced BHM to the Council in 2019 and it was celebrated for the first time with an African themed lunch for all officers and councillors. This year with covid restrictions, the celebration is going online with a series of events throughout the month.

To find out more about Black British History, heritage and culture as you've never heard it before and join in the events, check out the BMH website at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/black-history-month-at-the-council/>

## **7. Drainage/Flooding**

Although the Covid response has played a huge part of all our lives in the last 12 months, there have also been other very notable events, as well as the 'normal' casework. One of these notable events was the flooding that we experienced over the Christmas period and early part of 2021. The exceptional amount of rain that fell during this period tested the drainage systems of our villages to the limit and beyond. Whilst the local authority response to the emergency worked as planned, as one of the category 1 responders SCDC is in talks with Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, the County Council and Internal Drainage Boards and parish councils to see how our joint response can be improved. There will also be a review of riparian watercourses to make sure that they are not obstructed and an impediment to drainage. SCDC will seek to facilitate local emergency plans that tap into local knowledge including that of Parish Councils.

We are pleased that the work, instigated and done by Brian with the other agencies involved over the last 2 years, meant that Sawston drainage system was able to cope well.

## **8. Community Issues**

I continue to assist residents with issues either as individuals or a community group on issues including housing, planning, waste collection, benefits, grants application support.

### **Linden Homes – All Angels Park S/3440/18/OL**

This Liaison forum is a means of facilitating joined up working between multiple developers building out sites in villages and statutory bodies such as Highways. Five new for a have been created for Barrington, Caldecote, Hardwick, Swavesey and Sawston. The selection criteria were villages that had over 20% growth approved to built out over next 3 years, with minimum of 50 new

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houses being built. Caldecote is expected to have 2 developers building out over 100 houses in the short term and a further 76 (Linden Phase 2) if they can re-secure planning permission. The forum will be chaired by the District Councillors and will include Parish Councillors and other residents as are interested. I will update further as we put it in place

### **Bourn Airfield New Village S/3440/18/OL**

This outline application was approved by the South Cambridgeshire District Council planning committee on Friday 19th February 2021. There will be further planning stages called “reserved matters applications” where the detailed planning phases will be submitted for approval. So residents will still have opportunities to comment as the site gets built out. No more than 500 houses will be built until there is visible progress on the delivery of the C2C busway.

The land off Grafton Drive, where Balfour Beatty Homes are hoping to build 58 houses is going to planning committee on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

The new plans for Bourn Quarter (former TKA Tallent Site) were submitted earlier in June. Aitchison, the agents have written to both Caldecote and Bourn Parish Councils, offering to visit to discuss their new plans and answer questions.

The other significant development is the 140 houses Linden Homes site (former Gladmans site in Caldecote). The build out of the 71 homes CALA site in Caldecote is well advanced.

The -home site in Caldecote for the self-builders got approval and two have now submitted their planning applications to the Council. This type of development is the first of its kind in the district.

I am continuing to get to know the new villages in the expanded Caldecote Ward – Bourn, Longstowe and Little Gransden. I attend parish council meeting where I give a monthly report on current issues at SCDC. I have also attended other events, quiz nights, summer fetes, open gardens, jazz evenings, Christmas services/carol singing, licensing of new church minister for the Gransdens etc. I am passionate about supporting all my communities and I look forward to meeting many more residents this coming year.

### **Land West of Grafton Drive, Caldecote**

Planning permission was granted for Balfour Beatty Homes build 58 houses on Land West of Grafton Drive. They decided to move on site prior to discharging any pre-commencement conditions, and Enforcement had to get involved. They have now submitted two applications to discharge pre-commencement conditions and vary one condition.

### **Liaison Forum**

#### **Green to our Core**

The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service took delivery of its very first all-electric bin lorry, one of the first local authorities to do so – and with an option to purchase others. We had gone through a trial of one earlier in the year and this one will be the first in the planned replacement programme for the entire fleet of 55 waste vehicles over eight years.

These vehicles have a much higher upfront cost but running costs are considerably lower and should be cost neutral over the vehicles’ lifespan. We shall be considering other greener vehicle options including hydrogen fuel-cell, and there are plans to install a solar generation park (planned 2021-22) as a renewable source of electricity to charge the vehicles, which will add to the financial case as well as the considerable environmental one

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## 9. Casework/Councillor Drop-in surgery

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, details in the box below.

*Tumi*

Tumi Hawkins  
15 May 2021

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