

District Councillor's Report Nov 26th 2024 - Cllr Tom Bygott

Save the Winter Fuel Payment

My group colleagues and I are fighting to save the Winter Fuel Payment for vulnerable pensioners that is currently under threat from the new government. In October's council meeting, all councillors unanimously supported our joint motion to sign Age UK's petition at <https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/154268/petition/1> to save the payment and to raise awareness of pension credit support.

Age UK research suggests that 2 million pensioners who badly need the support to stay warm this winter will no longer receive the Winter Fuel Payment. With the Energy Price Cap due to rise by 10% in October, the physical and mental health of elderly people in the UK is threatened.

We are continuing to work to raise awareness of this issue, including signing a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urge a review of this decision and to protect pensioners at risk of fuel poverty.

Four-day week update

Despite the four-day week trial ending in March 2024, the council is continuing to work four days a week for five days' pay. The Best Value Notice remains in place until November, when the new Labour government will decide whether to reissue the notice or to endorse charging taxpayers for five days' worth of work when they are only getting four.

It is my understanding that a public consultation on the four-day week will happen at a postponed date of January 2025 – two years after the four-day week trial first began. When this consultation is live, I would encourage all residents to make your voice heard on this significant issue.

I strongly believe that, in these uncertain times, we require more support from our local councils – not less. We are continuing to scrutinise the weekly data and council performance to ensure the four-day week does not jeopardise services for residents.

Water authorities attend council Scrutiny meeting

We were grateful for the opportunity to welcome flood management representatives from Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, and from Cambridgeshire County and South Cambridgeshire District Councils to the council's October Scrutiny and Overview committee meeting chaired by Cllr Graham Cone, Deputy Leader of my group and local member for the Fen Ditton and Fulbourn ward.

The meeting provided a useful forum for councillors to raise residents' specific concerns, including recent flooding in South Cambridgeshire, the impact of new housing developments on water supply and management, and improving communication between communities and the water authorities.

Given recent heavy rainfall, we are encouraging residents to be vigilant about any flooding risk. In an emergency where there is an imminent risk to life, you should call 999. In the event of flooding on the roads, pavement, garden or property, or from sewers or watercourses, please report the issue to Cambridgeshire County Council online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/report-a-flood.

Supporting Prostate Cancer UK and period poverty

In October's council meeting, my group's motion to support Prostate Cancer UK's BOG STANDARD campaign was unanimously supported by all councillors. The campaign seeks to help men who have suffered from prostate cancer by providing incontinence products and discreet disposal bins in male toilets.

You can find out more about Prostate Cancer UK's campaign in partnership with phs at <https://prostatecanceruk.org/about-us/news-and-views/2024/08/men-with-incontinence-missing-out>.

In February's council meeting, my group's motion to tackle period poverty was also unanimously supported by all councillors. We are pleased that the council has since taken swift action to secure a £12,000 grant in partnership with Hey Girls to distribute environmentally friendly menstrual products for up to 700 South Cambridgeshire residents.

Residents can apply at www.heygirls.co.uk/south-cambridgeshire-home-packs/ for a home delivery of free period products. The eligibility criteria are outlined on the Hey Girls webpage.

Awaiting planning policy from Government

We are still awaiting the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) from the new national government. It is frustrating and challenging that this has not yet been decided, particularly as this plan will have a significant impact on South Cambridgeshire.

My group will ensure that residents are updated when the new NPPF is issued. We understand that many residents will be concerned about the new government's housebuilding plans, especially in our area, and we encourage you to get in touch if you have any concerns.

Supporting older people in their homes

I am pleased to see the council pledge £345,000 to Mobile Warden Schemes in South Cambridgeshire for the next three years to help more elderly people stay living in their own homes for longer. It is disappointing, however, that the administration is phasing out support for this vital service over the next ten years. My group will continue to scrutinise this decision and work to support South Cambridgeshire communities in every way we can.

There are currently 16 active Mobile Warden Schemes in 49 parishes, many of which are run by the charity AGE UK. Mobile Warden Schemes are a community lifeline for many, providing reassurance for families that their loved ones are cared for at home.

Please do not suffer at home alone. You can find the contact information for all Mobile Warden Schemes in South Cambridgeshire on the council's webpage at www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/mobilecommunity-warden-scheme.

White Ribbon Accreditation

I support the council's White Ribbon Accreditation, working with White Ribbon UK to work to prevent harassment, abuse, and violence against women and girls.

It is vital to make our workplace and communities safe for everybody. I will continue to support the council's work to raise awareness for this important campaign and support the efforts of council staff to advocate positive attitudes within South Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Tom Bygott
cllr@bygott.net
07765 475 513