

## District Councillor's Report Nov 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 - Cllr Tom Bygott

### **Northstowe's sports pavilion set to open soon**

Construction work for Northstowe's phase one sports pavilion is now complete – with opening dates to be confirmed soon.

The sports pavilion meets the specifications of Sport England, the Football Association and Rugby Football Union – featuring a 4G astroturf pitch, fully accessible changing facilities and a large clubroom with a commercial kitchen. I am looking forward for these facilities to be enjoyed by local residents for many years to come.

This is welcome news for Northstowe residents, who have had to wait longer than expected for these important community facilities to be delivered. Residents will have to continue waiting for many other essential facilities and services in the new town, such as the first shop and a GP surgery. Surgeries in surrounding villages have to cope with an ever increasing patient list, further straining the ability for residents to get appointments. The Co-op in Longstanton, and residents living near by, are also struggling with a lack of parking spaces.

### **District Council four day working week**

At the Full Council meeting on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October, my group submitted a motion that would have allowed all councillors a vote on the four-day week. Unfortunately, this was unanimously rejected by the ruling group – who then voted to refer the issue to their Cabinet, ending the debate.

We made very clear our opposition to this decision, which showed complete contempt for the majority of residents in South Cambridgeshire. Based on the average wage and contracted hours figures for full-time staff as mentioned during the meeting, £3.3 million will be spent in 12 months on salaries alone for hours not worked – and that's before you include paying for part-time and some of the additional costs incurred by employing people.

By prematurely shutting down debate on the four-day week, backbench councillors and those from other groups were denied the chance to vote on this important issue. We are continuing to analyse the facts and figures and will continue to challenge the four-day week, which sees residents paying for five days' work but only getting four days' service.

Despite requests from the national government, the council's leadership has refused to back down and are setting themselves up for a full-on confrontation.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has requested further detail on the impact of the trial under Section 230 of the Local Government Act 1972. In a letter sent on Nov 3<sup>rd</sup> to South Cambridgeshire's chief executive, the Deputy Director of Local Government Stewardship, Max Soule, said the DLUHC was concerned that the council was not "fully analysing the impacts of the trial on services or the productivity of its workforce".

The Government has issued SCDC with a non-statutory Best Value Notice. Under the Local Government Act 1999, the Secretary of State has the power to inspect or intervene in local authorities where there is evidence of "best value failure".

### **Find your nearest pink bin to recycle electrical goods**

Bright pink bins for electrical waste have resulted in nine times more e-waste being collected for recycling since being introduced last year. Over 49 tonnes of small electrical appliances have been collected for recycling in the pink bins – instead of it all ending up in the black bin.

The pink bins are suitable for most small electrical items which have a plug or battery – including phones, toys, kettles, toasters, and many more. Items which cannot be reused are then sent to specialist operators for recycling into new products.

Pink bin locations can be found by entering your postcode at [www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk](http://www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk). For example, locations listed near Longstanton for recycling electrical appliances, batteries and light bulbs include:

- Longstanton Co-op, CB24 3BT
- Bar Hill Tesco, CB23 8EL
- Willingham Co-op, CB24 5ES
- Cambourne Morrisons Car Park, CB23 6FY
- Girton Co-op, CB3 0LW

## **Failure of Cambridgeshire County's policy on weeds**

Numerous residents have complained to me about how weeds have been getting out of control. For example, in Manor Farm Close, Oakington, weeds have destroyed the gutters along almost the entire length of the road. It turns out that the County Council had changed its policy on spraying weeds.

A petition with 1,797 signatures calling on the County Council's ruling rainbow alliance to reconsider its no-spray policy was presented to the County's meeting on 17th October. The petition stated:

"We the undersigned believe the state of the roads, paths and cycleways in Cambridgeshire are in a shocking state and unacceptable condition, due to this administration's change to the weeding policy. Active travel is discouraged due to the state of these roads, cycle ways and foot paths. Any assumed savings they thought the council would make will be eaten up by higher repair bills in the future. Roadside gully's and drains will become blocked more often, this will undoubtedly increase the likelihood of flooding.

"The sight of rapid decay in our town and village centres is unacceptable, as well as the state of the highways between settlements, these all look more appropriate in a post apocalypse movie, than a first world country.

"A policy where common weeds will only be removed when they become injurious is ridiculous (i.e a trip hazard as an example). The new bureaucracy imposed, involved the public reporting those weeds, CCC tasking an inspector to examine those weeds (up to 14 days later) then to decide whether to instruct a contractor or not, is ludicrous in the extreme. We ask for immediate action to return to a pro-active weedkilling regime."

The Council then voted against a motion to return to a proactive weedkilling policy.

The current policy may have been well-intentioned; to foster biodiversity and reduce the amount of man-made chemicals used in the environment. However, our roads, pavements, gutters and footpaths are not built to be strong enough to withstand the out-of-control growth of weeds, which break through asphalt surfaces and shift concrete blocks as they grow. They need active maintenance in the form of proactive weed-spraying to protect them from damage. When this misguided policy has ended, it will cost residents an enormous amount to repair the damage caused, far more than the policy's projected savings of £125K per year.

Cllr Tom Bygott  
cllr.bygott@scambs.gov.uk  
07765 475 513