

DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT

LONGSTANTON WARD

COVERING LONGSTANTON, NORTHSTOWE, OAKINGTON & WESTWICK

FEBRUARY 2022

CLLR SARAH CHEUNG JOHNSON, CLLR ALEX MALYON – DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 3A PLANNING COMMITTEE

The application was approved by the committee, with a number of conditions placed on the developers. They did not have time to determine Phase 3b and this is now scheduled to be discussed at a meeting of the planning committee on 28th February.

We as District Councillors objected to the application as per our original submission, the comments are below.

Unfortunately, ours, Oakington Parish Council, and residents' objections on the distancing of development from Oakington were not addressed. We however are pleased that a condition was attached to ensure that the spur of land towards Oakington edge, that did originally have 3 storey houses on it is now reduced to 2 storeys.

There was extensive discussion by the committee about the concerns over water levels and the impact of further development on groundwater that had been raised by Longstanton Parish Council, Northstowe Town Council, and local residents. We also share these concerns and highlighted them in comments to the committee. However, we were reminded that the committee were determining the application for Phase 3a and that the Environment Agency, the statutory authority responsible for water, had not raised any objection to the application based on current or the future modelled changes in water levels. If the committee were to refuse the application on this basis, they would have to do so against the opinion they had received from the EA. As we understand it, this would give the developer grounds to appeal to the planning inspectorate for determination of the application, reducing the local planning committee's ability to place conditions on the developer. Ongoing monitoring of groundwater levels was placed as a condition.

We would like to thank all the residents who took time to add their comments on the application as well as the hard work done by Oakington Parish Council, Northstowe Town Council and Longstanton Parish Council in responding to this application and making their own representations.

The meeting ran for 6 hours - minutes will be available and we will share these when they are published.

The full set of documents from the committee, including the set of proposed conditions that the developers must adhere to is available here:

<https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=768&MId=9389&Ver=4>

We would like to begin by thanking Homes England for all the consultations, work, and engagement they have given us and local residents for Phase 3a and 3b.

As District Councillors we wish to object to the overall development based on the following specific Issues - I am summarising here the more detailed ones are on the council website.

1. Green separation and inappropriate development including excessive building heights along the 'Oakington Edge'. We still feel that the proposed green separation is not sufficient to provide a buffer between the development of Northstowe and the village of Oakington. In places it is estimated that this green separation narrows to 40 metres. Oakington residents and the Parish Council have raised objections that the boundary of Northstowe will now directly back on to the gardens of existing properties, affecting their privacy. We support these objections.

In addition, we are concerned about excessive building heights along this Oakington Edge. The Northstowe Area Action Plan proposed height restrictions of 2 storeys here so that buildings would be located behind the substantial natural buffers afforded by the existing tree belt. Unfortunately, this application still proposes three storey housing bordering Oakington. We would argue strongly that if approval is given for housing along this Oakington edge, facing Oakington village that it should be at a maximum 2 storey height.

Finally, we support the concerns raised by residents on Station Road regarding the removal of trees adjacent to their property. Without these trees there will be nothing to separate them from the development, and the proposed bus-only access to the site.

2. The location and proposed design of the Southern Access Road East (SARE) We object to the design of and location of the SARE. If the SARE is still required then we would support the locating of this in the vicinity of the new A1037 or existing Dry Drayton roundabout, rather than feeding onto the Dry Drayton Road nearer to the village, near the Oakington Business Park. The proposed route will lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic through Oakington.

3. Drainage and Flooding

Flood attenuation is also essential to Oakington village, much of which is located on a flood plain. The village has suffered several recent flood events, most recently at the end 2020. Unfortunately, this updated submission has not alleviated the serious concerns with the proposals for drainage from Phase 3a and how this will impact upon Oakington.

Should permission be granted, firm conditions and commitments are sought from Homes England to sufficiently mitigate the flood risk to Oakington village to at least a 1 in 200-year event standard (plus a 40% climate change allowance). We would refer the committee to the comments made by the OPC and Oakington Flood Mitigation Group and the proposed conditions which they have asked to be attached to any outline approval.

4. Ecology

We note with concern the comments from the SCDC Ecology that a number of issues remain unresolved by the additional information contained within this updated submission and we would

ask that these important ecological considerations are addressed prior to any approval.

5. Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

We would ask that accurate, measurable, and enforceable conditions are placed upon any development, to cover:

- Development work timings – strict limits on times of construction*
- Specific requirements on noise and dust monitoring, mitigation, and routes to resolve issues.*
- Limits of construction vehicle movement with no construction vehicle access via Oakington village*

We also support NTC comments on phasing that works for residents

In our original comments on this application, we had not raised the issue of dewatering as we did not at that time have the findings of the independent hydrology report, commissioned by SCDC and LPC, for Phase 1. This report linked dewatering in the early phases of Northstowe development to a reduction in the ground water levels locally and the drying up of ponds and wells. We acknowledge and share many of the concerns raised by Longstanton Parish Council and residents about the development at Northstowe and the impact of this on groundwater levels. Homes England have provided an assessment of the impact of their development on groundwater which indicates that groundwater levels within the site may change as a result of new roads and homes. We note that the Environment Agency has not raised objections. We would ask that the Planning Committee consider this matter carefully in their deliberations and require that monitoring of groundwater levels on the site continues ahead of and throughout any development on Phase 3 should the application be approved today.

HOME FARM ESTATE LONGSTANTON ADOPTIONS

We are continuing to chase what is going on with this adoption of road on Home Farm, with assistance from Longstanton Parish Council. To note as Cllrs we have no direct influence on any of this, as they are not "owned" by either Council. We are still chasing many issues, but in the meantime thought it would be useful to provide you all with an update:

- The Barratt Homes and Taylor Wimpey areas of the site are Stevenson's Road, Sheepwash Way and Duddle Drive, all of which formerly connected to the Cofton highways.

The big delay was the outfall of the Cofton administration whereby transfer of all Cofton infrastructure fell through due to issues between the administrators and the solicitors and defaulted to the Crown. Just last December the transfer of Crown land was completed so Taylor Wimpey are now in control of all sewers and highways in the areas of Home Farms mentioned above. From this point the main events to occur are as follows:

- Central open space transfer of unregistered 3rd party land to be completed with the Parish Council. The land is then registered, and completion is imminent
- The parish council to enter into Deed of Grant with Anglian Water for all outfalls to the central open space

- All developers S102 applications or S104 adoption agreements for sewers can then be completed with Anglian Water, thus enabling the sewer adoption process to commence (Barratt's and ourselves have already completed the pre-adoption inspection of sewers and have fresh CCTV of the sewer lines as required). The sewers must be adopted before the highways can be adopted by Cambridgeshire County Council

- Once sewers are adopted of which we are aiming to conclude before the end of this year we can agree for the highways to be adopted via an amicable Section 37 dedication process with Cambs. That in itself will take a minimum 15 months to conclude (3-month legal consideration period, 12-month compulsory maintenance period) and required us to own the land that was Cofton/Crown for it to be a legal possibility for adoption.

The highways could be adopted in realistic terms in about 2 – 2.5 years' time from where we're at now. Despite the time that has passed since the developments were finished it is only because of the completion of the crown land transfer this last December that adoption of anything can proceed.

Persimmon and Tilia (formerly Kier) will be running exactly the same timeline because they will rely on Deeds of Grant for the outfalls in the central open space for their respective sewers with Anglian Water to pursue their sewer adoptions.

There is a clause in the transfer of the central open space obligating the parish council to complete the deeds with Anglian Water to support the adoptions of all of this infrastructure.

- The following sections have been adopted by the County Council:

Over Road to Mitchcroft Road past the entrance of Duddle Drive to the bridge, half of Duddle Road (the Kiers houses), Hardy Close, Bullen Close and Collingwood Drive. We currently have 3 lights out in the Mitchcroft Road section, and we have reported these to be fixed and the County Council has confirmed Balfour Beatty will action these. Once these are completed, the County Council will ensure this is on their inventory and displayed on My Cambridgeshire Maps.

- After much chasing, we have confirmed the section of Over Road from the Home Farm Road roundabout is also formally adopted by the Council. On this section there is also a streetlight that requires repair and formally logging on the inventory, which we have requested.

- We are still awaiting confirmation if Barratts also covers the David Wilson set of houses on Home Farm Estate

- We are still chasing up streetlight replacements for Mitchcroft Road as well.

OAKINGTON RECREATION GROUND PLANNING

Following requests to expedite this we wrote to planning and hope to be able to add amendments to the planning application as requested and to be able to move this project forward

NORTHSTOWE ENTERPRISE ZONE, PHASE 1 AND CIVIC HUB

We are still chasing further concrete action from officers on where community facilities will be displaced to once we are no longer able to use the Northstowe Community Wing and options are being actively worked on. We have made a request for meanwhile uses to be considered, including a shop, even if quite basic, to be part of these initial plans for delivery.

We are frustrated on the lack of progress on the Civic Hub and are also chasing further action from both the CCG on the delivery of the surgery for Northstowe as well as updates from the SCDC new build team on the project to build the Civic Hub itself.

DISTRICT WIDE NEWS

NEW CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT

A route to tackling illegal and inconsiderate parking in South Cambridgeshire has been supported by the District Council's Cabinet.

Introducing civil parking enforcement in South Cambridgeshire will see responsibilities for dealing with illegal parking shift from Cambridgeshire Police to Cambridgeshire County Council. This will mean drivers parking illegally, such as on double yellow lines, could be issued a ticket by Civil Enforcement Officers and ordered to pay a penalty charge. This arrangement is in place in Cambridge City and many other areas.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet confirmed formally they will support the County Council's application to the Department for Transport for civil parking enforcement in the district. This followed the Council initiating conversations with the County Council and Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to see how parking problems could be addressed.

The County Council will now prepare an application to the Secretary of State for a Special Enforcement Area, via the Department for Transport, to introduce the scheme. Subject to the approval of this application, it is expected that civil parking enforcement could begin in South Cambridgeshire in the autumn of next year.


In South Cambridgeshire, the upfront costs of introducing civil parking enforcement will be funded by the GCP, including a full review of road lines and signs. They will also cover any financial deficit of the scheme for the first five years. A funding agreement is being put in place between the GCP and Cambridgeshire County Council that will confirm roles and responsibilities, including how the scheme will be funded by the County Council after the initial five years.

All income generated by fines will be used to help pay for the costs of running the scheme.

SOUTH CAMBS NEW GOLDEN NUMBER

South Cambs District Council (SCDC) introduced a new single Golden Number to be used to contact the council. Please use this new number 01954 713000.

It should help in directing you to talk to the best person within the council to deal with your enquiry.

 A call back facility is also available so that you don't have to hang on the phone during busy periods.

■ Please note you can still report issues or make requests or pay online at www.scams.gov.uk using the menu Pay - Apply - Report

If you have not done so already, we would also encourage you to open a MySouthCambs account as this will enable you to track the progress of your requests. It also means you don't have to keep repeating some or all personalized information each time you contact the council. It is easy to open the account and only takes a couple of minutes to register.

OMICRON BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEME

Applications are now open for the latest business support grants for businesses impacted as a direct result of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. These are:

The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG) supports eligible rate-paying businesses in the hospitality, accommodation, and leisure sectors with one off grants of up to £6,000 per premises (depending on rateable value).

We have received further funding through the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme. This is a limited, one-off fund and it is the Council's intention use this to provide support to eligible businesses that do not have a rateable value and/or are ineligible to receive the OHLG but nonetheless operate in the supply chain to OHLG businesses.

[Click here](#) for more information and how to apply.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT EVENTS

Climate and Environment Fortnight of Events, taking place between the **21st February and the 7th March!** We are excited to bring you a host of insightful and engaging events, held to celebrate climate action taking place in the district, as well as looking at some of the things that the Council is doing to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the future.

Please see the details of the sessions below, including information on how to sign up. Alternatively, visit our website at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature/zero-carbon-communities/zero-carbon-communities-events/>

21 February: 7pm to 8pm: Community Action in Response to the Climate Emergency

What next after you've declared a Climate Emergency? A session with Cambridge Carbon Footprint for Parish Councils and community organisations on how to get community action going in your area. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

23 February: 7pm to 8pm: Cycling for Sustainability

Led by local campaign group Camcycle, this session will explore action taking place on cycling in the district, including campaigns such as School Streets. Come along to this online event for ideas, inspiration, and information. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

24 February: 1pm to 2pm: Making your business greener

This case study-based webinar hosted by our Business Support Team will feature a panel of speakers demonstrating ways businesses can operate more sustainably, reducing not only their carbon and waste but also being more efficient and saving money by embracing renewable energy. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

1 March: 1pm to 2pm: Planning for the Climate Emergency

Want to know more about how the Council is planning for climate change? This session will include information on how the Council is shaping planning policy to help cut carbon emissions and adapt to a changing climate. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

3 March: 1pm to 2pm: Installing Electric Vehicle Charge Points for workplaces and public use

Want to know more about installing Electric Vehicle Charging points? Find out more through our session for Parish Councils, local businesses, and residents, including information on funding options. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

7 March: 6pm to 7pm: Post Covid Community Support Workshop

This session will be held by our Sustainable Communities Team and explore sustainability in the widest sense of the word, exploring community led planning and featuring a talk from HIHUB, Histon and Impington's Community website and communication hub. Tickets are free and available [here](#).

SOUTH CAMBS BUDGET

The latest budget proposals for South Cambridgeshire District Council allocate £6.83 million to tackling climate change in the district during the upcoming year.

The Council's proposed budget for 2022/23 was discussed during a meeting of its Scrutiny and Overview Committee in January, and considered during a Cabinet meeting on 7th Feb. Cabinet members have recommended the budget to a meeting of Full Council. During the Full Council meeting on 22 February, all Councillors will be asked to vote on the budget plans.

The Council's total spend on providing services for the next 12 months is expected to be around £70 million. The total amount expected to be spent on capital costs, that being purchasing equipment, vehicles, and property, is expected to be around £4.8 million.

A total of £6.83 million is earmarked for projects, services and equipment that tackle climate change on a local level in South Cambridgeshire. Through the Council's Zero Carbon Strategy and Action Plan, it is supporting the district to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and reduce them to zero by 2050. Climate change related projects featuring in the proposed budget for next year include:

A £4.2 million plan to install a solar farm at the Waterbeach depot of Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, the Council's shared waste service with Cambridge City Council. This is proposed to be a joint venture between the two Councils, while the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority last month indicated it would help fund the work too, subject to additional checks such as value for money

assurances. This solar farm would power the Council's growing fleet of electric bin lorries and support vehicles / vans.

£1.3 million towards equipment and activities to help tackle climate change at Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, such as the purchase of new electric bin lorries. In 2020, Greater Cambridge Shared Waste began using Cambridgeshire's first electric bin lorry

£667,000 towards initiatives to improve and adapt waste services, encourage recycling, and minimise waste

£500,000 towards land drainage and maintenance of the 275km of awarded watercourses which criss-cross through the District and the Council is responsible for maintaining

£342,000 towards the Council's Zero Carbon Communities scheme, which provides financial support to Parish Councils' and community groups to promote greener initiatives and reduce their carbon footprint.

£150,000 for the installation of electric vehicle charging points in the district

£145,000 to complete the roll-out of energy efficient LEDs to the Council's streetlights

Meanwhile, the Council's £1.9 million retrofit of its Cambourne office is nearing completion. This plan includes measures to dramatically reduce energy bills and carbon emissions from the building. As the electricity grid continues to decarbonise due to new renewable energy generation schemes coming online nationwide, the carbon footprint of the building will reduce to 25% of current levels by 2030 and 10% of current levels by 2050, playing a major role in the reduction of the Council's own footprint. The work is also expected to help the Council avoid steep price rises in energy costs that are expected later this year.

Elsewhere, the Council's Housing Revenue Account – a ringfenced account used as the Council maintains its stock of around 5,500 Council homes – has its own budget plans. They include the creation of two new staff roles who will be focused on providing money and housing advice. They would be a source of support to residents who continue to face pressure on household budgets – particularly due to the impact of COVID and rising cost of living. These new staff would work closely with the Council's existing advice officers, such as those working in benefits. Additionally, the proposals suggest investing £17 million next year in continuing to build new energy efficient Council homes, as part of a business plan priority to bring forward housing that is truly affordable to live in.

In 2019, it was agreed in the Council's Business Plan that the number of new Council homes being built would be doubled by 2024. During 2021/22, 89 new Council homes were built. This compares to 36 being built in 2019/20 and 64 being built in 2020/21. As a result, this Business Plan target has been achieved. During recent years, these new homes have been built in Caldecote, Waterbeach, Balsham, Longstanton, Great Abington, Hardwick, Foxton, West Wickham, Impington, Comberton-Toft (boundary), Sawston, Castle Camps, Melbourn, and Teversham. During the coming years, there are plans for more Council homes in many more villages across South Cambridgeshire.

At Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, another partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils, new funding is being proposed towards encouraging more apprentices to begin a career in planning.

£854,000 is included in the Council's budget plans for economic development initiatives and business support – such as the continued development of the Council's recently launched dedicated tourism platform Visit South Cambs. Greater Cambridge Commercial Waste, which collects business waste, has been targeted with a £25,000 increase in profit.

Vital frontline services that will continue to be delivered by the Council include collecting recycling and waste from around 66,000 households across South Cambridgeshire, handling thousands of planning applications every year across a huge range of sites and projects, environmental health responsibilities, providing homelessness support and dealing with benefits claims.

Around 40% of the Council's annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. The rest of the funding comes from sources outside of the Council's control, including Business Rates and grants. A £5 per year increase in Council Tax for the average band D home is being proposed for the next financial year to ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. The proposed increase would see the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council increase to £160.31 per year. This is an increase of around 10p per week. Any rise would continue to maintain the Council's position in the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country. The majority of Council Tax that is collected by South Cambridgeshire District Council is passed to Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and parish or town councils.

GOVERNMENT PLANNING INSPECTOR OVERRULES SOUTH CAMBS PLANNING OBJECTION

Leading Councillors say they are disappointed that the Planning Inspectorate has allowed plans for a retirement village in protected countryside to progress.

In April 2021, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee refused proposals for a retirement care village and associated facilities on land between Haverhill Road and Hinton Way in Stapleford. The developers behind the application appealed against this decision and, following that appeal, the Council's decision has been overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.

The Council said that the new building would be an unjustified inappropriate development that is harmful to the Cambridge green belt. The refusal was also based upon the Council's view that the plans did not reflect the local area. The Council's Planning Committee agreed with officers' recommendations that the provision of a new park and meeting the needs of accommodation of this type did not amount to the very special circumstances that justified building in this location. Concerns about the impact on transport links were also raised.

However, the Planning Inspectorate disagreed with the Council's conclusions and has overruled the decision and granted planning permission for the development.

NEST BOXES, BAT BOXES AND HOLES IN FENCES FOR HEDGEHOG – PLANNING GUIDANCE

New planning guidance about how to better protect and enhance biodiversity when development takes place has been adopted by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The new SPD is a technical planning guidance document which carries weight in planning decisions. Building on front-line experience from local government ecologists, it was created to guide developers on how to fulfil existing 'green' policies.

There is a growing need for up-to-date and accurate guidance on biodiversity regulations for planning which provides clarity on existing local policy and newly updated national policy. Greater Cambridge is one of the fastest developing areas in the country yet has a relatively small amount of land managed for nature or wild spaces. As such, it is vital that biodiversity is protected and enhanced, both in terms of the amount of land managed specifically for nature, and the quality and richness of biodiversity throughout our urban and rural environments.

On Tuesday 11 January, Cambridge City Council voted to approve the use of the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document when determining planning applications submitted to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning team (the shared Planning Service between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council). Today (7 February), the guidance was approved by South Cambridgeshire District Council's meeting of Cabinet. As both Councils need to approve the document prior to adoption, the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document is now adopted.

The new SPD will now be a "material consideration", meaning that it must be considered and applied appropriately in planning decisions, alongside other existing considerations.

What is in the guidance?

100% of all new homes will require an integrated nest box for species such as swifts

25% of new homes on housing developments will need to include bat boxes

Fences will need to feature gaps for hedgehogs and other species to roam more freely

Green roofs will be encouraged, to create valuable habitats of flowering plants and grasses for wildlife in urban settings

A reduction in artificial lighting which harms nocturnal species in their habitats, woodland edges, hedgerows, and wetlands will be required

Advice related to provisions in the Environment Act that give developers a two-year window to transition from current rules around biodiversity, to new rules that will require a 10% increase in biodiversity as a result of development.

FINANCE UPDATES

Investment Strategy

There is an updated Investment Strategy at S Cambs. Policy remains to generate 20% of income from investment by 2025 to minimise need to raise Council tax.

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s124977/Appendix%20A%20-%20Investment%20Strategy%20-%20Draft%20December%202021.pdf>

Capital Strategy

The Council has updated the Capital spending programme

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s124924/Appendix%20A%20-%20Capital%20Projects%20Performance%20-%202020%202021%20Projects.pdf>

Fees & Charges

There is an updated schedule of fees and charges for 2022/23

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s124979/Fees%20Charges%20-%20Report%20to%20Cabinet.pdf>

HIGHWAYS

GULLY MAINTENANCE: Since being elected in May, we have been looking into solutions for maintaining our gully system, to mitigate the risk of flooding in our communities. As previously we had no record of all our gullies, we opted for a data driven software called KaarbonTech Asset Management, which is being used successfully by other Councils. In September we started the process of recording while cleaning each gully, due to a lack of maintenance over the years the gullies have taken longer to clean, some even required a metal detector to find them through the vegetation! We have to date cleaned 50k+ gullies out of what we believe is around 100k. In October/November, we cleaned Longstanton and Rampton Drift gullies and provided a very comprehensive report with maps and photos to both Longstanton Parish Council and Northstowe Town Council. Summary of which was: out of 616 gullies in – 574 (90.5%) gullies drained normally when recharged with water; 534 (84.2%) required cleaning, 31 (4.9%) vehicles over them, inaccessible; and 9 (1.8%) had broken lids and we were unable to open them. We ask that you keep on reporting any problems on our ReportIt system. The system needs to be updated to include Rampton Drift into Northstowe.

HIGHWAYS QUARTERLY MEETING: A meeting was held on Friday 4 February to discuss and get updates on current issues, next planned meeting will be held in May, I will contact the Parish Clerks to arrange the next date.

NORTHSTOWE NEW SOUTH ACCESS ROAD WEST (SARW) TIE IN CONNECTION TO B1050: As many of you will be aware, the works on the B1050 to re-route to the roundabout have taken longer than anticipated. As Cllrs we have been actively monitoring social media across many groups and flagging issues directly with the Homes England and SISK team on a specially created What’s App group. Whilst they have been responsive to issues, we are disappointed at their lack of planning and proactive management of this and especially monitoring of the lights. We have fed this back and will be applying these lessons learnt as we move to the final stages of the project.

The project is due to finish at the end of March, with a TTRO now confirmed for 4th March 2020 – 6th March 2020 for a full weekend closure. Once completed however, there will NOT be access into Northstowe Phase 2 - we expressed disappointment at this but have been advised that there are still infrastructure works needed on Phase 2 that need to be completed before it is suitable to be used by the public. We are pressing them for a date on this.

WILSON’S ROAD BRIDLEWAY RESURFACING: works was completed mid-October. As this is a new innovative surfacing for our county, we are very keen to engage and work collaboratively and will be offering a site inspection after 6 months to all the members of Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum and Longstanton Parish Council. This new surfacing will benefit the local community and be truly inclusive for all abilities of walkers, horse riders, ramblers, cyclists, wheelchair users and pushchairs. **Please do try out this new surfacing and feedback to me on the email address below.**

COVID-19

At the front of many people’s minds has been the resurgent COVID-19 pandemic. If you are struggling to get to and from your vaccine appointment, Cambridgeshire County Council have agreed to pay for your taxi journey, it’s called a Taxi Vaxi scheme, more details here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8fradm>

Rates of the virus in Cambridgeshire are currently the highest they have ever been and continue to rise. In Cambridge they are particularly high—the city has the sixth highest rate in the country.

Omicron symptoms are milder than those for other variants of the disease with the protection of the vaccine, but high case rates lead to high numbers of people self-isolating which impacts public services—the running of schools, care for vulnerable children or older people, or refuse collections for example. A high number of people in hospital with COVID-19 is creating additional pressures. Other routine appointments with the NHS such as planned operations might need to be cancelled.

CASE RATES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE: The following shows the number of Covid cases per 100,000 population in the local Director of Public Health’s most recent report, with the highest first.

Area	Cases per 100,000
Cambridge	1,412
Fenland	1,240
South Cambridgeshire	1,195
Cambridgeshire	1,180
East Cambridgeshire	1,123
Huntingdonshire	999
National average	985

COVID IN SCHOOLS: A majority of COVID cases are in the pre-school and primary school-age population where the virus continues to spread rapidly and where there is currently no protection. For the week ending 20 January, Cambridgeshire recorded 2,956 cases of COVID-19 across 392 educational settings. This is a significant increase on the previous week when there were 1,421 cases across 342 settings. Attendance in state schools has also declined and stands at 88.3 per cent in Cambridgeshire, compared to 88.1 per cent in England overall. In addition, 8.6 per cent of teaching staff in Cambridgeshire were unavailable for work due to Covid.

General Covid information

- <https://twitter.com/CambsCC>
- <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-overview>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine>

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND

Reminder! This fund aims to help those struggling to pay for food, energy or other essential items this winter. Cambridgeshire County Council has been allocated £3.58 million as part of the Government's Household Support Fund to help people who need financial support.

The Household Support Fund itself is a new one-off grant, which is live until 31 March 2022. This usually provides £49 (for a family) or £29 (for an individual) to cover food or household energy costs, but more funding may be available for people who can demonstrate a higher need – for instance for higher costs of filling an oil tank or buying a new cooker. To be eligible for the Household Support Fund residents will need to earn less than £17,940 or receive any of the following: Income Support; Income-based Job Seekers Allowance; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Pension Credit; Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit.

Details of how to access the scheme are available here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund>

HOLIDAY ACTIVITY & FOOD IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Enriching experiences and a nutritious lunch are being made available in the Easter holidays for the children of families receiving benefits-related free school meals.

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme offers fun with friends and free food for primary and secondary school children in Cambridgeshire. Sessions will include a healthy meal, a variety of exciting activities or sports and the opportunity to socialise with other children. Any child receiving benefits-related free school meals is eligible for the programme.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for the next three years, the HAF scheme enables councils like Cambridgeshire to coordinate free holiday childcare and enriching experiences locally. The programme will be delivered by approved providers, and co-ordinated locally by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Each eligible child will be able to access up to 16 hours of free holiday childcare or enriching experiences through the school Christmas holiday period. Bookings have already opened and information about how to book with participating providers can be found at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/haf

As part of the HAF programme, eligible children will be able to access:

- Fun and enriching play opportunities or new experiences that provide children with new skills and knowledge.
- At least one meal a day.
- Guidance on healthy eating and getting children involved in food preparation and cooking.
- Support for parents, carers or other family members with guidance on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.
- Information and signposting to other services and support which might be helpful.

The Council is working with local schools, voluntary and community organisations, and childcare providers to deliver the HAF programme. <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>

Registered Holiday Scheme Providers and childminders are welcome to sign up to deliver the programme, by emailing HAF@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. It would be great to see the programme expand into some of our larger villages locally. There are 29 providers in South Cambridgeshire but none in Longstanton, Northstowe, Over and Oakington & Westwick, it would be great to have a few signed up.

NEW INVESTMENT TO BOOST BIODIVERSITY ACROSS CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Investment to boost biodiversity in Cambridgeshire will help make the county's countryside a more inviting and enjoyable place to visit.

Cambridgeshire currently has one of the lowest levels of biodiversity in England, but the county council's Joint Administration is seeking to drastically improve that through a new strategy which will be put together later this year.

Funding for the strategy has been set aside under new budget proposals, with the overall aim of improving existing county council biodiversity sites as well as making it easier for people to enjoy nature close to where they live. The pandemic has led to many taking to the county's parks and open spaces to improve their physical and mental wellbeing, and by pushing forward with the new biodiversity strategy the Joint Administration is committing to making nature more accessible in the future, for instance by boosting wildlife.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/new-investment-to-boost-biodiversity-across-cambridgeshire>

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - BUDGET

Cambridgeshire County Council's Full Council on 8 Feb approved the Council's Business Plan, setting out how it will deliver a balanced budget for 2022/23.

In doing so it sets out how it will bridge a projected £22.2m in next year's budget with efficiencies, savings and the one-year government finance settlement – as well as working to bridge a projected gap of more than £80m over the next five years. It sees the County Council share of general council tax rising by 4.99% - a 1.99% rise in the general fund alongside a 3% rise in the Adult Social Care precept, using the 2% brought forward from the decision made by Council last year.

It will mean an extra charge of 9p per week for a Band A household, £1.04 per week for a Band B, and £1.19 for a Band C household, these three bands accounting for 61% of households in Cambridgeshire. The increase in Band D, which accounts for a further 16% of households, is £1.34 per week, which even after the increase will be below the average for Shire Counties.

“The effect of the pandemic has been very unequal. People in Cambridgeshire whose lives aren't affected by illness or disability, whose income is secure, who have been able to work largely from

home, have been less affected," said Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council. "But those who were struggling before are facing a more precarious situation now, and sadly more people have joined them. They are also affected most by increases in energy bills, national insurance or a loss of universal credit. If we take steps now to close the budget gap we were left with, we can also protect essential services that vulnerable groups need and use most in the years to come. But while we do this we plan to offer a direct safety net for the most vulnerable," she added."

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/cambridgeshire-sets-balanced-budget-for-202223>

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT PLANS AS PART OF NEW BUDGET PROPOSALS: The Highways and Transport committee have worked up draft plans to achieve the Joint Administration's vision and priorities for Cambridgeshire, as well as making progress towards closing the budget gap in 22/23 – subject to Full Council on 8 February.

The Highways and Transport proposals include:

- Maintain spending levels on highways maintenance such as proactive treatment and maintenance of roads, bridges and footpaths
- Pothole funding – maintain the level of funding identified for pothole repairs
- Wheatsheaf Crossroads – the extra funding needed to deliver a traffic signals scheme as part of the road safety programme.

Whilst the Highways and Transport priorities will be:

- Adopt latest innovative technology for our condition surveys and data collection to anticipate and address highway maintenance issues
- A new active travel strategy for the county
- Work in partnership with the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) on a review of the road hierarchy in Cambridge
- Review the 20mph policy and the qualifying criteria
- Agree an HGV management policy
- Establish protocols for Residents' Parking Schemes in consultation with GCP and in-line with the Integrated Parking Strategy
- Continue development work on Huntingdon and Fenland transport strategies to include support for modal shift
- Implement a new highways drainage strategy as part of the surface water management plan
- Street lighting review
- Investigate how we deal with waste and materials from our maintenance activities so we recycle and reuse as much as we can
- Work more closely with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority on transport.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/highways-and-transport-plans-as-part-of-new-budget-proposals>

THIS LAND

One of the commitments of the Joint Administration on taking office was a thorough review of the council's development company This Land. The independent report, by Avison Young (AY), a multi-national real estate services consultancy with no prior involvement with This Land, was discussed by the council's Strategy & Resources Committee at the end of January.

The report referred to 'unusual' accounting practices, and to 'shortcomings [which] require immediate attention'. It said, 'Overall we do not consider that there is a full understanding within This Land of the level of risk exposure the business is under,' and that 'it did not seem that there was a sufficient level of familiarity and understanding of the sites during the meeting [between consultancy AY and This Land].'

AY made a number of recommendations to the council, most to be carried out within three months. The committee will receive a further report in March.

ADULTS & HEALTH – INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM

Along with every other part of the country, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough is preparing for the 'Integrated Care System' which will become statutory from April. This will involve health and social care systems coming together to meet health and care needs across an area, to coordinate services, and plan in a way that improves population health and reduces inequalities.

ICs are based on Primary Care Networks, groups of GP practices serving 30,00-50,000 people. This is a whole new way of working for the NHS and for council social care systems, with a lot of adjustments to make.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

YOUNG PERSONS' MENTAL HEALTH HUBS: A motion was passed in January at Full Council, calling for a network of mental health hubs to meet the needs of young people received unanimous support by the County Council. Work is beginning on putting this into practice.

SCHOOL ADMISSIONS REVIEW: The Children & Young People Committee has agreed to undertake a full and comprehensive review of admission arrangements for all own admission authority schools. This should include the published definitions of existing school catchment areas, and admission policies for schools with a sixth form.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS: The numbers of children in Cambridgeshire eligible for free school meals has continued to increase significantly across the county. The numbers were included in a report to the Children & Young People Committee. The Committee have ensured that all children on FSM across Cambridgeshire will receive £3/day supermarket vouchers during all school holidays for the next financial year, up to and including February 2023 half term.

	Jan-18	Jan-19	Mar-20	Apr-20	Jan-21	Oct-21	Increase since Mar-20	% of children eligible
East	1,029	1,349	1,697	1,838	2,138	2,254	33%	17%
Fenland	1,978	2,438	2,926	3,160	3,631	3,863	32%	28%
Hunts	2,121	2,715	3,546	3,811	4,430	4,599	30%	19%
South	1,115	1,497	1,821	1,981	2,397	2,639	45%	11%

COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY GOVERNMENT FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

If you have a problem or concern do not worry too much about who can solve it just ask the question and we will endeavour to signpost to the right person. The organisational structure of Cambridgeshire is complex, but it is important to identify where responsibility lies.

<p>County Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, Waste management, Maintaining their estate.</p> <p>Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.</p>
<p>District Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p>Parish/ Town Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</p> <p>'The local delivery body for a City Deal with central Government worth up to £500 million over 15 years, to vital improvements in infrastructure (decarbonising transport), supporting and accelerating the creation of 44,000 new jobs, 33,500 new homes and 420 additional apprenticeships.'</p> <p>Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.</p>
<p>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</p> <p>'A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.'</p> <p>What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.</p>
<p>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge, and Peterborough</p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</p> <p>The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is made up of Cambridgeshire County Councillors and Peterborough City Councillors.</p>

COUNCILLOR UPDATE

Monthly email newsletter - with updates on local news as well as wider district issues which will impact us all. To sign up please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/email_signup_longstanton

(Note to help us manage GDPR it is easier for us to host from the LibDems webpage, but we absolutely promise this link will NOT subscribe you to LibDem news)

For all the latest news & updates so far please go to: https://www.sclibdems.org.uk/longstanton_news

For those on social media we have a highly active Facebook group covering the whole ward here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/>

Contact Details

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about these, or any other matters.

Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson

District Councillors for Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick and Northstowe

Firouz Thompson, County Councillor for Longstanton, Oakington & Westwick, Northstowe & Over

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