

**LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT JANUARY 2024**

**LONGSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL (4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024)**

**OAKINGTON & WESTWICK PARISH COUNCIL (11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024)**

**NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL (26<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024)**

**CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN**

## **SCDC Budget**

Full Council recently voted to approve the administration's Budgets and Business Plan for the next 12 months.

Unlike many other councils, SCDC is on a very sound financial footing. Well targeted commercial investments bring in around £7M per year, which mitigates the huge cut in Government support that all councils have endured in recent years. If it were not for the threat of the Government's Fair Funding Review, which threatens to strip district councils of business tax revenue and give it to bigger, unitary councils, SCDC would have a projected surplus all the way to 2029 (and few councils can say that).

When it comes to Council Tax, SCDC remains one of the lowest taxing authorities in the country, with a £5 per year increase – 42p a month - for the average band D home, equivalent to a below inflation rise of around 3%.

The Council Tax relief threshold has been increased in line with inflation so that people on the lowest incomes can continue to claim. SCDC is one of the few councils offering up to 100% relief for those residents in most need.

Two more Environmental Enforcement Officers (Envirocrime) are being employed to tackle the increasing problem of fly-tipping and two new posts created for highways litter-picking.

We're also adding more staff support to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme – so it should be easier than before for parishes to get support from SCDC on projects to help save energy or generate it.

## **Other News from Full Council**

SCDC passed a motion where it will now treat care experience as a protected characteristic – meaning that when the council makes decisions moving forward, as part of its Equality Impact Assessments, it will now also assess the impact on care leavers. This is a positive step towards treating care leavers more inclusively in society and was agreed unanimously by district councillors. The County Council, Combined Authority, Peterborough City Council and Cambridge City Council have all passed similar motions. Part of the motion was to call on town and parish councils to also take a similar step in support of care leavers.

SCDC also passed a motion in support of the White Ribbon Campaign, after a decision was taken to seek accreditation with them. White Ribbon are a domestic abuse advocacy organisation who work to provide education about domestic abuse, in particular violence against women. This motion was also agreed unanimously.

SCDC also approved all the parish council precepts at full council. We also approved an updated pay policy, which included the pay ratio between the highest and lowest paid workers at SCDC (1:6.1), this ratio is fairly typical for local government and is lower than that City Council's ratio.

### **Longstanton & Willingham GP services and Northstowe**

As with all GP surgeries, the Longstanton & Willingham GP surgery is a private practice. They are under contract to the NHS to provide medical services for Northstowe with the expectation that they will expand them as the town grows and the NHS advise that they are currently fulfilling their contract. The Longstanton surgery currently does not open in the afternoons and it is assumed that this is where the practice plans to expand its service. These medical service arrangements for Northstowe are in place until the Northstowe Civic Hub is built during phase 2 and have not changed since the beginning of the Northstowe project.

At the moment, Northstowe has the population of a medium-sized village rather than a town and it has a young demographic. Although GP services are through Longstanton & Willingham, health visitors and midwifery services are available now in the temporary community centre "The Cabin".

There are reports of long waiting times for GP appointments at both Willingham and Longstanton surgeries but, as the joint Practice has said on a number of occasions, this is not due to their obligation to accept Northstowe patients. It is a consequence of a recruitment and retention crisis of GPs and practice nurses. It is a national problem.

### **4-day week update**

SCDC's 4-day week trial is due to finish at the end of March. The Council undertook the trial because of the acute recruitment and retention issues it faces, which is amplified in Greater Cambridge due to the high cost of housing. A full report where we will assess how well the 4-day week has gone will be compiled after the end of the trial, although it will not be possible to complete the financial analysis until there is clarity as to whether the Government will carry out its threat to "pull financial levers" in their bid to stop the democratically elected administration at SCDC from using an innovative approach to improve the services to the residents they serve.

You may be interested in a few highlights that are already emerging:

- From September 2022 to 31 December 2023 the Council spent £434,000 less on agency staff by filling posts that were previously identified as hard to fill; this includes planners, HGV drivers (waste service) and business analysts.
- It is possible to operate a four-day week working practice without jeopardising performance and service delivery.
- Route optimisation of waste collection (necessary anyway because of the increase in growth in the Greater Cambridge area) has been successful with few resident complaints.
- There has been a positive impact on colleague health and wellbeing and a reduction in days lost due to sickness. This is especially positive amongst waste crews where musculoskeletal injuries are commonplace due to the physical nature of their work.
- There is considerable support from other councils and local government organisations for SCDC's 4-day week trial. The council has been shortlisted for two prestigious awards by the iESE (Public Sector Transformation Award) and the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Innovation award, both citing the 4-day week.

## Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency

Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (Cambs HIA) is a strategic partnership between SCDC, Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council and is dedicated to enhancing the living conditions of residents, particularly focusing on older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with limited incomes. Last year it helped more than a hundred families in South Cambs to access grants such as Disabled Facilities Grants and Special Purpose Grants to undertake adaptations and repairs in their homes to help prevent accidents, assist people to cope with long term health conditions and to live comfortably and independently. Further information can be found here: [frances.swann@cambsia.org](mailto:frances.swann@cambsia.org) or 01954 713456.

## Western Park Sports Pavilion, Northstowe

The management company running the pavilion, Elite Sports, is encouraging sports clubs of all kinds to the facility. In the coming months, they plan a number of specific action days to draw attention to the facilities available and to the sports and community groups (including those from Willingham) that are, or will be, using them. They have appointed a Sports Development Officer who will join the team in April, who is tasked (amongst other things) to establish a wide programme of activities for the Northstowe community and the surrounding area.

The 4G pitch is open at certain times for use by young people free of charge. The facility is open for bookings here: Email [westernpark@elitesportsuk.com](mailto:westernpark@elitesportsuk.com)

Facebook page: <http://tinyurl.com/5dsc8bnb>

## 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.

### County Council

Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.

Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.

### District Council

Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.

### Parish/ Town Council

Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.

### Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)

'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.'

Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.

**The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor**

'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.'

What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.

**Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough**

To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.

**Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority**

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.

**CONTACT DETAILS**

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or any other matters.

Cllr Natalie Warren-Green for Longstanton Ward including Longstanton, Northstowe, and Oakington & Westwick

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For those on social media we have a highly active Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/> - Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe