

LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT MAY 2023 FOR NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING (23RD MAY 2023)

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Four day week trial for SCDC officers

I am topping my report this month with news of the SCDC 4 Day Week Trial since this is something that I have been asked for more information about recently. In addition to this, in the last couple of weeks there has been much press interest in the SCDC's Four-day week trial and the CEO Liz Watts' PhD studies. Unfortunately, much of what has been said and written has been inaccurate, hostile and politically motivated. I would like to offer a brief update on the situation in the Press, and an update about the Trial itself.

It is common practice for senior staff to undertake post graduate qualifications whilst working, and these will often involve workplace projects as part of their dissertation or thesis. Sometimes these are funded by the council, but in Liz's case her doctorate is entirely self-funded, and her studies are conducted in her own time. The four-day week trial has the backing of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet (as do her studies) especially since the establishment of a four-day week might provide a partial solution to SCDC's acute recruitment and retention problems and the associated cost of having to use agency staff, which is currently running at £2m per year.

The results of the trial are now available. All local authorities across the country are facing huge problems in recruiting and retaining staff. It is impossible to compete with the private sector especially for planning and environmental officers and so councils have to offer something other than money. The cost of having to use agency staff to fill unfilled posts is currently running at £2m per year - which is a lot of money for a District Council like South Cambs. For these reasons South Cambs District Council has had to think laterally and hence the Four Day Week trial. Officers have had to work very differently and more intensely in order to do 100% of the work in 80% of the time to receive 100% of the pay. The results have been enormously encouraging: performance (which has been independently assessed) has been maintained and in some instances improved and staff who were thinking of leaving are now likely to stay. Officer feedback was 88% positive; and satisfaction feedback from residents was not impacted. The recommendation is to extend the trial for a further year.

Councillors are also to be asked to include the refuse collection services in the 4 Day Week trial as of this summer. Many councils already do not collect bins on a Monday because of all the disruption caused by bank holidays so this is being looked at as a way of extending the benefits to more colleagues.

Proposed Waste Collection Round Changes

The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service is currently working on a review of its collection rounds. The rounds are normally reviewed every few years to make sure that they are still as efficient as they can be. This time the service is also seeing how the above-mentioned four-day week might work for this service with a similar trial to that already in operation for desk-based staff. At the time of writing, details have not been published but I will let the PC know of the plans as soon as I can.

£224k funding approved for Community Wellbeing Hubs

I am delighted to report that SCDC has secured funding to tune of £224K from the Integrated Care System (ICS) to further develop our Cost-of-Living Project work. The emphasis will be on the evolution of Warm Hubs, which will be rebranded Community Wellbeing Hubs. These will continue to provide much needed social connection for residents but will also improve outreach to other services which support health and wellbeing. I will share as the project develops.

Right to Buy

Council house tenants have long had the 'right to buy' their home at a discount. What has been frustrating for councils who own the houses is that government takes most of the money from these sales which makes it really hard to replace sold homes with new ones. Finally, it appears that Government is allowing us to keep our Right to Buy receipts but only for 2 years. We sell about 30 properties a year and this will mean that we have to borrow less when we build new houses.

Civil Parking Enforcement update

I thought you would like to hear that we recently took another step towards the introduction of Civil Parking enforcement (CPE) in South Cambridgeshire. The plan is for the GCP to support the project in the first few years of operation but, in time, it will have to be financially self-sufficient. There is still much to do and setting up the scheme requires multi-agency involvement, including that of central government but SCDC officers have been working on this as a priority, and it is not beyond hope that it could be introduced within a year.

South Cambs magazine

SCDC uses both private delivery and Royal Mail to deliver the South Cambs magazine. We are aware that, in some villages, there have been glitches with the service recently and I would encourage anyone who misses out to let us know via scdc@smartdistribution.co.uk or by phoning 0800 6444 011. The magazine is an important source of information on SCDC's services (including changes to bin collections) especially for those people who do not use the internet.

Electric Vehicle Charging points (EVCP)

May I remind you that grants of up to £5K are still available to help with the purchase and installation of EVCPs for public use, including electrical works, ground works, bay markings, barriers, and signs. The EVCPs must be located in off-street car parks and the grants are available to Parish councils, Village Hall or community centre/community building Trusts, Charitable and not-for-profit organisations directly involved in running village halls, community centres, and community buildings with parking. <https://tinyurl.com/y4jwynfc>

SCDC grants for voluntary groups

Community groups in South Cambridgeshire have been given a funding boost thanks to grants from SCDC. Eleven voluntary sector groups are to receive funding this financial year as part of the Council's Grants to the Voluntary Sector scheme with an emphasis on projects that support people impacted most by the cost-of-living crisis.

The groups receiving grants are Home Start Royston & South Cambridgeshire, Cambridge Dial-a-Ride, Care Network Cambridgeshire, Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service, Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise, Arts and Minds, The Voluntary Network, REACH Community, Disability Huntingdon, Royston & District Community Transport and Citizens Advice.

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