

### **Scope of this Report**

This report covers 12 months of activity by the Liberal Democrat-Led South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC), and for Longstanton Ward focuses on my activity as a Liberal Democrat District Councillor .

As the person submitting this report, the detail represents the ward activity in the discovery and early activity phase of my role since my election in the November 2022 By-election.

### **SCDC WIDE ACTIVITY 2022-2023**

This has been the fifth year of the New Administration in the Council from May 2018.

The council now has 45 councillors instead of 57, lowering costs although increasing work per councillor.

There has been a re-structure of the council management with the introduction of a new CEO and a new officer structure to meet operational needs and to be resident focused.

#### **SCDC has continued its' focus on 4 key themes this year:**

Business Support, Affordable Housing, Modern & Caring Council, Green to our Core.

#### **1. Business Support**

##### **Actions completed 2022-23:**

- Implemented a new and improved policy to support the street trading sector across South Cambridgeshire. This policy will ensure high levels of safety compliance and enable the sector to thrive through the introduction of flexible trading models.
- Created an SCDC specific operational/implementation plan based on the Nov 2021 refreshed CPCA Employment and Skill Strategy.
- Provided business support advice to over 100 businesses.
- Completed a feasibility study looking at how South Cambs Hall could be used to provide workspace for businesses, including start-ups.
- Established an up-to-date list of Business Premises for start-ups.

##### **We are on target to complete by end of 2022-23:**

- Expanding our Visit South Cambridgeshire brand alongside wider collaboration with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough partners, to support local businesses.
- Delivering at least 8 Sector specific events/webinars/support initiatives as part of an ongoing engagement programme.
- Providing a new space for growing small businesses or shared workspace for start-ups or micro businesses.
- Appraising our own commercial inventory (including South Cambs Hall) and investigating meanwhile/partial let use for start-ups during void periods and/or designate space specifically for this purpose.

#### **2. Housing that is Affordable to Live In**

##### **Actions completed from 2022-23:**

- Produced a report assessing feedback provided by local people from the first Local Plan consultation. This will inform the next steps in the Local Plan process.
- Produced an Asset Management Plan. This will improve the energy efficiency of existing Council housing to reduce carbon impact and running costs.
- Delivered 53 new affordable homes.
- Implemented new maintenance contract for all council housing stock.
- Adopted an Empty Homes Strategy fully considering affordable home requirements.

**We are on target to complete by end of 2022-23:**

- Completing 74 New Homes (acquired or built) this year.
- Continuing to support liaison meetings in Cottenham, Sawston, Hardwick, Caldecote, Swavesey and Barrington, and community forums in Northstowe, Waterbeach, North-West Cambridge, Cambridge East, North-East Cambridge and Bourn Airfield and Cambourne.
- Approving a work programme for insulation measures over the next four years to narrow the gap on the zero-carbon target for all new homes.

**3. Green to Our Core**

**Actions completed from 2022-23:**

- Provided equipment and information kits to minimise waste and separate recycling at community events.
- Reviewed the impact and outcomes of the existing food waste collection trial and the future of the scheme including budget requirements.
- 2 electric refuse collection vehicles to replace the diesel versions have been received.
- Annual Statutory Status report for air quality has been submitted to DEFRA and accepted.

**We are on target to complete by end 2022-23:**

- Reviewing community rooms and other small sites to identify and deliver opportunities for carbon reduction.
- Developing planning policies consistent with zero carbon by 2050 for adoption in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, in partnership with Cambridge City Council.
- Identifying and delivering opportunities to invest in publicly accessible electric vehicle charge points in priority locations in the district, working with partners - pilot installations of fast EV Chargers at Sheltered Housing Schemes for public use, and install one rapid charger for public use.
- Identifying and delivering new opportunities to plant trees, establish wildflower strips and in other ways enhance nature on our own estate, in consultation with residents.
- Working to ensure that development in South Cambridgeshire contributes to the goal of doubling nature by developing planning policies for adoption in the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and by adopting a new Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document in partnership with Cambridge City Council.
- Working with partners to develop landscape-scale habitat creation projects.
- Delivering '6 Free Trees' initiative to increase the amount of tree cover of parish council land, enhancing biodiversity and carbon capture.
- Defining and implementing required improvements at the depot to prepare for further electric refuse collection vehicle (eRCV) charging.
- Procuring up to 3 electric refuse collection vehicles to replace diesel version.
- Developing outline business case for on-site solar PV energy generation with partners to aid the charging of vehicles.
- Delivering fourth round of funding through our Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme, awarding grants totalling £100,000 to community-based projects.
- Continuing to strengthen the Zero Carbon Parish and Community Network through our programme of workshops, web-based resources and e-bulletins for community-based zero carbon and nature recovery initiatives - at least 6 workshops to be delivered.
- Submitting annual statutory reporting to DEFRA on-time; monitor air quality in at least 6 targeted areas utilising portable equipment; compile report following each monitoring period and publish this on the council's website.
- Providing required technical inputs to consultations on major developments to ensure good air quality is experienced.
- Subject to air quality monitoring results, exploring the feasibility of creating a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) specifically targeting idling vehicles.
- Developing campaigns to improve recycling based on the outcomes of the waste composition analyses.
- Reporting of all sites (existing and new) that take up recycling / food bins & note our increased volumes / tonnes collected with associated savings.
- Installing cameras at 6 locations and monitor numbers of visits required at those sites to establish a baseline to minimise fly tipping.
- Delivering targeted educational campaign in the area about fly tipping and increase awareness of responsible methods for disposal. To include the delivery of at least 12,000 leaflets.

#### 4. Modern and Caring Council

##### Actions completed from 2022-23:

- Complete and analyse a staff satisfaction survey.
- Introduced hybrid working arrangements, and introduced 4-day week trial to be assessed Summer 2023, further increasing our attractiveness as an employer.
- Introduced a modular management skills program for middle managers.

##### We are on target to complete by end 2022-23:

- Using the Council's Community Led Plan toolkit to support local communities identify, plan and address the issues they identify in their communities.
- Supporting 150 new clients through the housing department's visiting support service.
- Spending £500,000 in total in the form of disabled facilities grant and repairs grant to allow people to live independently and safely in their homes.
- Preventing homelessness for at least 50% of the people who approach us who are at risk of becoming homeless throughout the year and offer support to those who are homeless.
- Continuing the proactive working relationship with the job centre in delivering mentoring circles plus upskilling and cross training initiatives throughout the year.
- 100% compliance with landlord safety checks to council housing including, electrical safety, gas installations and where appropriate fire risk assessments and water safety tests.
- Completing a survey of all council tenants to better understand their priorities and to be able to compare satisfaction with other organisations.
- Refreshing caravan site licencing policy, fees and charges. The new policy will ensure that caravan sites are inspected periodically and that residents have suitable housing provision.

**In addition, SCDC has been supportive across the District of initiatives driven by current public affair situations to manage, including Homes for Ukraine and Cost of Living Crisis Support:**

##### Homes for Ukraine:

- SCDC has been highly active in the local administration of the government's Home for Ukraine scheme.
- Communication with both hosts and guests has been key to success and we have issued a weekly community update for hosts and, recently, one for guests.
- Throughout the scheme, South Cambridgeshire has remained one of the local authorities with the highest number of Ukrainian arrivals which shows how keen South Cambridgeshire residents have been to support and provide homes for Ukrainian refugees.
- The key statistics for the district at year ending March 2023 were that 408 hosts have welcomed 787 Ukrainian guests into their homes, 914 DBS checks have been completed and 405 welfare visits made.
- **In our ward, Longstanton currently (17.04.23) has 11 Ukrainian guests, Oakington & Westwick have 2, and Northstowe has 3.**
- The council is now heavily engaged in the next phase of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. Whilst many guests will remain with their hosts, some will want, or need, to move on and the council is helping these people to find a new host, apply for social housing, or to rent privately.
- **The council is still looking for potential hosts, so if you feel you can help, please contact [duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk)**

##### Cost of living support:

- The cost-of-living crisis affects everyone and SCDC has been supporting residents throughout, providing a package of support to help South Cambridgeshire residents through the winter.
- We supplied more than 300 residents who are 'just about managing' with free electric blankets and slow cookers - low-cost methods of staying warm and cooking food.
- Extra funding was provided to support an extra 100 eligible families with housing costs through Discretionary Housing Payments, Discretionary Council Tax discounts and a Warm Hubs programme.

- A further £200,000 has recently been allocated for further support.
- Amongst other initiatives, a series of roadshows are planned, giving cost-of-living talks designed to highlight the support available to the most vulnerable.
- It is hoped that this will improve the reach and uptake of grants and other support services that many people do not know are available to them.
- We also plan to evolve the successful Warm Hubs into Community Wellbeing Hubs, offering more services.

### **Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority Committee Membership: Skills**

I became the SCDC representative member of the Combined Authority Skills Committee in January 2023. This committee is critical to skills education and to employability matching the needs of the labour market.

### **LONGSTANTON WARD ACTIVITY**

#### **By-election November 2022**

Further to the resignation of Cllrs Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson, both Longstanton Residents, who resigned in October 2022 to spend more time with their families, a by-election was held in Longstanton Ward in November.

Having spent 4 years serving this community, the hard work and commitment throughout the tenure of Cllrs Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson has been recognised by many residents and taking over from them has been made easier due to the good will of the residents as a result of the work that the departing Councillors had done to lay the ground for community support over the past 4.5 years.

It is also a privilege to be working with my Libdem colleague County Councillor Firouz Thompson who has been very active and supportive as I have become accustomed to the role. I would also like to thank the members of the two Parish Councils in the Ward, Oakington & Westwick, and Longstanton, and Northstowe Town Councillors, for their support and fast response to questions I have had in my first few months. Your willingness to work with a person asking many questions to get up to speed is greatly appreciated.

#### **My Focus November 2022 to April 2023**

Taking over the work of the previous councillors meant hitting the ground running and while I started to attend Parish and Town Council Meetings, and undertook discovery into the priorities for the Ward residents, I have also been covering case work for individuals as it arises. I am not reporting the individual case work.

#### **Key Concerns Across the Ward**

A clear message I have received from residents since November, is that they trust the LibDem run District Council, but that we need to show progress on local themes including:

1. Public transport for the ward
2. Local planning across the District
3. Loss of Groundwater in Longstanton
4. Environment in Oakington and Westwick
5. Delivery of facilities in Northstowe.

#### **1. Public Transport**

There is no doubt that people across the ward realise that more bus services are required and that they feel let down by the reductions in bus services.

**Related to this, of major interest to residents across the ward has been the GCP “Making Connections” consultation which includes the proposed introduction of a “Sustainable Travel Zone” (widely known as a Cambridge congestions charge).** The GCP’s consultation document was designed to stimulate nuanced feedback, asking a range of open and closed questions to discover whether or not respondents support the scheme, which elements they did or did not support, what they might like to see done differently and what alternatives they would like to see in the proposals. Since the consultation closed, the GCP has been processing around 24,000 responses. The analysis is ongoing, but the majority of concerns seen so far have been related to the how the proposals will affect patients and visitors to the Addenbrookes Hospital Campus, those wishing to visit friends and loved ones and those needing to enter the zone for business reasons. It was always intended that the issues raised

by the consultation would be dealt with by positive, practical changes which are likely to include exemptions, dispensations, and discounts, underpinned by the latest technology. This is what the GCP is now working on, and they have a clear remit to protect the least well off. What is clear is that, going forward, messages about the benefits of the scheme (such as significant improvements to public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure as well as less congestion and cleaner air in the city) need to be made clearer and more forcefully.

**The results of the consultation will be included in a final report on the proposals and next steps, scheduled for the GCP Board in June 2023 after which they will make a recommendation to Cambridgeshire County Council on whether to proceed with a scheme.**

## **2. Local Planning: Growth in the Greater Cambridge area and the Local Plan**

Economic growth in the Greater Cambridge area is one of the main drivers of the GCP's "Making Connections" proposals. Companies of all kinds want to move to the Cambridge area, creating jobs of all kinds and the prosperity that goes with them. These companies need people, and those people have to have somewhere to live. This is the reason that the government requires local planning authorities (like SCDC and the County Council) to plan for greater numbers of houses and the infrastructure (schools, medical facilities, roads) to go with them. As we all know, one of the consequences of growth is an exceptionally high cost of living, making home ownership impossible for many people and leading to people choosing to live in areas further away from the city that have lower rents and house prices. Many then commute to their workplaces in Cambridge, leading to greater congestion, poorer air quality and higher energy use.

You may ask why we need to accept the projected growth, but this is not a decision that local authorities like SCDC can take. The government requires that all planning authorities produce a Local Plan and expects them have a clear understanding of the 'objectively assessed' needs for housing and jobs. A 'carrot and stick' approach is adopted; local authorities that deliver the number of houses that the government agrees are needed continue to have control over development planning whereas, those that do not, can lose the ability to decide what is built and where. This was the case prior to 2018, which resulted in hundreds of houses being approved or built in Over and Willingham outside of the agreed village limits.

SCDC is currently working to the Local Plan that we inherited from the previous (Conservative) administration and discussions are currently being held as to how the government's growth requirements can be delivered (especially given the potentially serious consequences for water supply in the area) without leaving us exposed to the 'stick' that I describe above. Meanwhile, work on the next Local Plan is ongoing and the all-important draft plan consultation is due in autumn 2023.

## **3. Loss of Groundwater in Longstanton**

Progress has been made into understanding the route to the ongoing Groundwater problem and how this may be resolved. Working with LEGG, the Parish Council, and the second Ward District Councillor, we have put into place regular catch-up sessions with SCDC Planning Leads and progress is being made on understanding the situation. The analysis is ongoing, verbal updates have been received by LEGG, and a written report on the current hypothesis is due to LEGG in April/May from SCDC. Momentum is high and we will continue to discuss ongoing research regularly at the monthly meetings. When findings are made available to LEGG and the Parish Council, the insight will lead to actions to resolve the problem. We are all very pleased with the progress and the focus being given to this by SCDC. Findings, outcomes, and actions are set to be available in the coming months of 2023.

## **4. Environment in Oakington & Westwick**

The Parish Council and the EAG warmly welcomed me into my role in the Autumn and it soon became clear that the environment is important to the villages. I soon gained a briefing about the solid work the EAG does to clear leaves blocking paths and drains, monitoring flooding which is an ongoing concern for the villages, and the passion the Parish Council has for preserving and improving the environment. I arranged for the Chair of SCDC to visit the village and plant the 6 trees allocated with members of the Parish Council. I have also confirmed in feedback on the proposals for the stretch of the new greenway cycle-path-bridleway that is planned to run from Oakington to Cottenham, that I support the feedback on the proposals submitted by the Parish Council, and working with County Councillor Firouz Thompson, added some additional comments to the feedback related to safety (lighting and mud clearance) and tree planting. I am still in early days of my role as District Councillor so am in discovery about the flooding concerns and will continue to find out more about this to see where I can help.

## 5. Delivery of Facilities in Northstowe

My work focused on facilities in Northstowe has been twofold. One, working closely with Northstowe Town Council and the Delivery Group comprising NTC, the SCDC Community Team, the Cabinet Lead for New Communities and members of the New Communities Planning Team, to achieve progress on planned community facilities and forward plans for amenities. Two, volunteering to help with interim measures while plans are starting to be realised. I am delighted to be part of the delivery team which has been focusing on getting approval for the plans for an interim community centre and seeing the process of building begin, has physically supported the launch of the community gardens, and supported the activity to mark the start of construction of the Sports Pavillion. All these things show progress, and I am keen to continue to be closely involved in decision making as the roadmap for other amenities plays out. I am fully aware of the concerns of residents about bus services, health services/doctor, and shops, and I am fully committed to continuing to work with the Delivery Group, NTC, Northstowe Community Groups and SCDC to keep the momentum going in the development of Northstowe. In the meantime, I have personally volunteered at the monthly market, and participated in the Warm Hub, the Christmas festival of lights, monthly community group meetings, the half marathon, and have been available at the Northstowe Forum for Q&A.

### 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><b>County Council</b></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><b>District Council</b></p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p><b>Parish/ Town Council</b></p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p><b>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</b></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><b>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</b></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><b>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</b></p>

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