

DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT- LONGSTANTON WARD

COVERING LONGSTANTON, OAKINGTON & WESTWICK & NORTHSTOWE

JUNE 2021

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

PHASE 2 HR WALLINGFORD REPORT INTO DEWATERING IN LONGSTANTON AND NORTHSTOWE

Concerns were first raised by residents and the Parish Council in 2015, regarding reducing water levels in the Kingfisher Ponds and other ponds and wells in the Parish. Concerns were continuously raised throughout the period until the end of 2017 when it was reported that the Kingfisher Pond had completely dried out. To our knowledge no action was taken regarding these declining water levels by our predecessors at the District Council. When we were elected as District councillors in 2018, we immediately sought to engage with residents and the Parish Council on this issue, arranging meetings with residents, the Parish Council, the developers L&Q and SCDC officers. We requested both the Leader of the council and our Chief Executive meet the Parish Council to speak on these issues. An invitation was also extended to them by Parish Councillors to attend their meeting.

Initially we asked for a report to be prepared by an officer at SCDC. Finally, we fought for and succeeded in getting funding from SCDC for a fully independent report into the water levels, the results, and recommendations of which we have committed to act on.

The consultants who prepared this independent report, HR Wallingford, were chosen by the Parish Council and commissioned by SCDC. Their report was prepared in three phases. Phase 1, which was delivered to LPC in February 2021, reported on the hydrology and hydrogeology of the area. Phase 2 presents the consultants view of changes in the Kingfisher Pond and how the groundwater water levels, and other hydrogeological features have changed since 2015. The final phase of the report has been very recently delivered to the Parish Council. It summarises the reasons for the changes that have been seen in groundwater levels in the local area and the Kingfisher Pond.

We are committed to full transparency of the final report. Each phase of the report has been sent directly to the Parish Council and other contributors. Residents can also obtain copies on request from the Parish Council. We plan to publish the report once the Parish Council and other stakeholders have had a chance to comment on it. We will fully accept the conclusions of this expert report and will work with officers at SCDC and the Parish Council to understand its implications and what further investigation and action needs to be taken.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the immense amount of work that has been done by the Parish Council, the Longstanton and District Heritage Society and other residents on this issue and their persistence in highlighting the concerns, pressing for investigation, and demanding action be taken.

COTTENHAM GROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

As previously reported, we have been working hard to object to plans to route construction traffic from the latest Cottenham housing development via Oakington. With the Parish Council, we met with both District Planners (who approve housing) and County Planners (who look after highways) to raise our objections. We are still awaiting a formal confirmation from the County Council on this but at the time of writing we are expecting the traffic management plan to be approved which directs the construction traffic for this development via the B1049 that runs via Cottenham and Histon and not Oakington.

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL

Our short time as representatives on the Interim Northstowe Town Council is over and we are very glad to hand over to the newly elected Northstowe Town Council. One of their first decisions was to opt for the designation Mayor (rather than Chair) so congratulations to the new Mayor of Northstowe Richard Owen and Deputy Mayor Paul Littlemore

Full text of the interim Chair's address that Cllr Sarah Cheung Johnson gave opening the Town Council is below.

On behalf of Alex Malyon and myself, we became District Councillors for Northstowe just as the first residents of Bloor were moving in. We have been so impressed and proud of the community spirit that you all as pioneering residents have shown since those early days. You have proactively started many different groups, societies and arranged community events and really come together and this spirit has carried you through the lockdown period still intact.

Alex and I argued for a larger town council for Northstowe - and there were naysayers to this! - because we knew we had an engaged community who would be ready to take up the mantle and were indeed, keen to get stuck in and have their own say on how Northstowe grows - we were so happy to see our faith in you all justified as 20 of you were happy to step up and we are so very pleased to see now 15 of you ready to take on responsibilities as the first Northstowe Town Council. That said, one of the reasons we argued for 15 was because we know the demographic of this council would be much younger and more diverse than pretty much any other parish council in the District, but it would also mean that members were more likely to have full time jobs and young families to juggle with council work. And there will be so many important decisions you all have to make, it is better that there are more Cllrs to spread the load amongst you.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the work of Longstanton Parish Council and Libby White who have been up till now the parish council for Northstowe and for the handover work they did particularly in finances and accounts. To South Cambs officers Clare Gibbons, Ellen Bridges, Liz Davy for their work on the Community Governance Review during COVID and lastly to Rosie Hughes who in a short time has proved why a good parish clerk is worth their weight in gold and we hope to see a clerk of her calibre recruited as our permanent town clerk.

Town and Parish councils are incredibly important layers of local government and you have an enormous amount of power and responsibility. We are confident you are more than up to the job and we look forward to working with you as partners in this endeavour, to grow Northstowe together so that it works for residents of Northstowe and beyond and for it to fulfil its potential.

We wish you the very best and we are both here for every one of you should you ever need to - please just contact us directly. Good luck!

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 2B – KEEP MOAT

Plans for the next phase of Northstowe have now been submitted by Keepmoat Homes. The application considers the design, layout, open spaces, affordable housing provision and appearance of the 300-home development. Following our feedback to the developers and planning officers, the planned 5 storey apartment block that was in a first design opposite the Rampton Drift play park has been moved, so that now houses along the Rampton Drift edge will all be two storeys. We have confirmed that this will not be a "technically" two storey solution where the houses immediately behind the two storey houses were three storeys. The proposed houses are all two storeys, we feel attractive and with own driveways on that edge. The higher 3/5 storey blocks are ones facing the town centre and not Rampton Drift edge, and further back into the development.

Residents can view the full proposals and have their say by visiting the [planning application portal](#) and searching 21/02310/REM, before Friday 25 June.

Currently there are no plans for this planning application to go to full planning committee as planners consider it to fit the Design Code. This can of course, be called in by Longstanton or Oakington Parish Councils or Northstowe Town Council and we would be happy to support this call if there are material considerations that will merit this call.

HOMES ENGLAND UPDATE

We met with Homes England to get a general update as well as for Firouz to be introduced to the team.

- They hope that all landscaping & infrastructure work for Phase 2 will be complete by Autumn, including the greenways, waterparks, and the connection of the Southern Access Road West. They are pushing Sisk to meet these deadlines.
- Track from Wilsons Road to the new non-motorised users bridge over the Southern Access Road West – we have been asked by residents if this will become a more cycle friendly track and Homes England are currently reviewing this as it is still used as a farm track and the churn is largely caused by farm vehicles needing access.
- Town Centre – they are working on phasing plans for the Town Centre works which they are not yet ready to present but are almost there.
- Civic Hub – progress on this is slower than desired by both Homes England and South Cambs, we are awaiting feedback and participation from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)

OVER DAY CENTRE MEAL DELIVERY SCHEME

South Cambs has been working with Over Day Centre we have been able to run a meal delivery scheme for almost a year, with residents from our local area being recipients we wanted to give you an update on this. With the help of Covid-19 community volunteers doing deliveries, the service has enabled us to provide a weekly meal for our most vulnerable residents. The aim of the scheme was to provide a nutritious meal to residents who were perhaps missing out on receiving a weekly meal due to their Day Centre or lunch club being closed as a result of the pandemic. When schools were closed, we also expanded the scheme to support families who would normally receive free school meals, but this element ended in September. With the government's roadmap easing restrictions each month we have already started to see recipients no longer require the scheme. With the final restrictions, bar travel, expected to ease on 21 June, more activities such as Day Centres, lunch clubs and coffee mornings will be reopening. This seems the appropriate time to bring the meal scheme to an end.

Community groups/volunteers and recipients have always been aware that the scheme would need to end and when the roadmap was announced we informed them that it was likely to be at this point. The last weekly service is planned for week commencing 21 June. We are working with community volunteers and recipients to ensure they are aware, and any issues can be picked up in advance.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL FINANCES

The council held its AGM in Duxford Air Museum's big hangar as the County did. So, as well as putting councillors and South Cambs officers at risk this also cost a considerable amount of public money (£7,000 for the day). So, it is just as well the council now has a sound and strong financial base and has indeed come a long way in the past three years. The budget for this coming financial year is in the region of £28 million whereas it was £20 million in 2018.

Income from commercial investments has grown from around a £1 million to £5.6 million this year largely because we diversified our portfolio and no longer have all our eggs in one basket. The income from Business Rates has grown from £5 million to £9 million and we led the way in Cambridgeshire in getting other authorities in the county to join us in pooling all our Business Rates. This has brought us an extra £1.4 million this year. Finally, the council's safety net the General Fund Reserve has doubled from around £6 million in 2018 to around £12 million now.

All this would not have been possible without the dedication and support of the fantastic finance team together with an ambitious Business Plan.

As part of South Cambs District Council's investment strategy, but also as part of our focus on providing affordable homes and new jobs, we have now purchased 3 pieces of land at Cambourne. This includes the infrastructure for the Enterprise Zone, a large plot of land for office and workspace next to South Cambs Hall and a bigger piece of land opposite on which our investment partnership with Hills will build high quality homes including hopefully 40% that will be affordable.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Thank you very much for electing me on Thursday 6 May as your Cambridgeshire County Councillor for the next four years. I have received many kind messages and will do my best for the residents of this beautiful part of Cambridgeshire.

The outcome of the County Council elections was that the Conservatives now have 28 seats on the Council, the Liberal Democrats 20, Labour nine, and the Independents four. This means that no one political group has a majority on the Council. On Friday 14 May the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent groups announced a new [Joint Administration](#) for the Council and published an agreement about its priorities and how it will operate.

Within the agreement, the Joint Administration placed Covid-19 recovery for all of Cambridgeshire – children and families, local businesses, and working people - and bringing forward targets to tackle the climate emergency, at the top of its ambitious policy agenda and pledged to work closely with partners inside and outside the council wherever possible.

I am privileged to be sitting on the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee as a Lead for Liberal Democrats and Children and Young People Committee.

I look forward to delivering our joint administration priorities with my fellow Councillors over the coming years.

WILSON'S ROAD BRIDLEWAY

Concerns have been raised by Swavesey & District Bridleways Association at the end of May over the proposed surfacing of this bridleway. We are currently looking at options for a suitable surface for horses, as well as wheelchair and pushchair users and cyclists, to ensure that the project can commence as originally planned in mid-June.

Firouz and the new County Chair of Highways & Transport, Cllr Peter McDonald met with Sue Rogers and Tina Yates from Swavesey & District Bridleways Association and Lynda Warth from County Access & Bridleways Officer, Cambs/British Horse Society to discuss this matter further at the site of the proposed changes. Firouz and Peter will follow up with County Officers w/c 7 June.

HIGHWAYS

The problems with road maintenance, especially potholes and blocked road gullies is high on the list of priorities for the new Joint Administration at the County Council. Residents are painfully aware of the short-term nature of much of the remedial work - within a year it has failed again. A more fundamental rethink to the approach is required. There is a big backlog, and the new administration cannot promise to rectify the problems overnight, but the new team is going to look critically at contracts and quality of work and drive improvements as soon as they can. Doing more inadequate repairs will only increase costs without fundamentally improving the situation.

Quarterly highways meetings have been re-instated with all the Parishes within my division: Longstanton, Northstowe, Oakington & Westwick and Over, first one taking place at Longstanton Village Hall mid-June. Present will be: Two Local Highway Officers and Parish Chairs/Vice Chairs and Clerks. All current highway problems will be sent in advance of this meeting, to enable officers to be able to acquire specific information for the meeting.

Residents are kindly reminded to report any problems on Highways using [Highways Reporting](#).

SURFACE TREATMENTS SCHEDULE:

Surface dressing treatment, Micro/Gripfibre is scheduled for Thatcher's Wood, Longstanton starting 14 September for three days. Road will be closed whilst the work is in progress with a diversion, unless stated otherwise. Please note dates may change at short notice as surface dressing is dependent on the weather.

WATER LANE, OAKINGTON

Early May the drains on Water Lane beside Oakington Primary School were jetted due to a flooding concern. Local Highway Officer has reported that the nearby Willow Tree roots may have caused drain damage. There is a planned drains camera inspection to further investigate.

DISTRICT AND COUNTY WIDE NEWS

COVID-19 UPDATES

RATES: In the past week, we have seen a slight rise once again in the number of cases of Covid-19 in Cambridgeshire, although all districts continue to remain below the national and regional averages. For the week ending 5 June there were 16 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population, well below the England average of 47.7 and the regional average of 24.2.

Hospital Covid admissions across Cambridgeshire remain very low and there has been one death in the past month. Although it is a small rise at this stage and rates of the virus are much lower than we are seeing in other parts of the country, we do need to keep a watch on the data and take action where needed to ensure this upward trend does not continue.

One of the actions we can take is to carry out proactive PCR testing for people without symptoms in areas where we have identified a number of positive cases. Last weekend we carried out PCR testing in Great Staughton where a number of cases had been detected. The testing was successful, with thanks to the Parish Council and the community for its support in organising and taking part in the testing.

We really need people to get involved in the testing, as this is one of our best defences against the virus. By detecting cases early and supporting them to self-isolate. In addition we are now following up as many cases as possible to identify where they think they may have caught the infection so that we can put in place preventative measures to help stop its spread and keep our rates as low as possible.

We expect an announcement w/c 14 June on Stage 4 of the Government's Road Map, which of course will see even more restrictions removed. With this even greater freedom, it's important we remember

that Covid has not gone away. The virus is still circulating in our communities and we need to take precautions to make sure it is not allowed to spread in the way it has done previously.

PILOT: A pilot to address Covid-19 transmission in areas of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough where rates remain stubbornly high has been given the green light by Government. These areas are known to have 'enduring transmission' which means that the virus is embedded and spread across our communities. As a result, Peterborough City Council and Fenland District Council, along with South Holland District Council, where rates are also persistently higher than average, submitted a proposal to Government for funding to provide additional support for employees and employers in specific sectors.

The Government confirmed on 23 May, that it is allocating £2.6 million to allow the pilot to be rolled out across the three areas over the next three months. It is the first pilot of its kind to be given the go-ahead by Government.

VACCINES: We would like to encourage people to accept their vaccine when offered one. People aged 25 and over, or those who turn 25 before 1 July, are now being called to book their vaccine which they can do so at www.nhs.uk. The latest statistics on vaccine delivery for local authorities are available under the 'weekly data' heading on [Statistics » COVID-19 Vaccinations \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/covid-19-vaccinations)

People are also still being called to have their second vaccine. We cannot stress enough how important it is for people to have both doses to give them the best possible protection.

NEW MOBILE RAPID TESTING VANS: There are now even more ways for people to take a rapid Covid-19 test in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough following the launch of three new mobile testing vans.

The vans will be stationed at popular public venues giving people the chance to take a rapid test or collect a testing kit for home use. Fully trained staff will be on hand to discuss issues around testing and answer any questions residents may have. The vans will initially be stationed at various locations, nearest to us is Sidney Street in Cambridge. For more information, including the opening dates/times, plus any changes to site locations, visit our [rapid testing webpage](#).

EDUCATION

COVID TESTING: There has been some discussion nationally about the potential for children aged 12 and above to receive the vaccine before the start of the new school year. A decision is still to be made on whether this will happen or not. In the meantime, we continue to encourage secondary school students to take a lateral flow test twice a week and – importantly – to register the result. New posters are being displayed in schools this week. The data we are receiving tells us that more younger people, particularly those aged 11 to 24, are contracting the virus, so it is really important people in this age group take regular rapid tests to break the chains of transmission.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS- Holiday Activities and Food Programme: The programme is aimed at providing healthy food and enriching activities for primary and secondary school aged children who are eligible for benefit related free school meals. During the Summer holidays, eligible children will be able to access four, four-hour sessions for four weeks of the holiday, at no cost. The sessions will include a

healthy meal and a variety of exciting activities and sports. Further details can be found, to either check if your child is eligible and book your place (from 7 June), visit [Holiday Activities and Food Programme](#).

WIDER SUPPORT: We understand that as a result of the pandemic, there are many families that may need further support who are eligible for the Direct Food Voucher Scheme. We also know there will be families who do not meet the above criteria but are in need of support. Therefore, there is a network of hubs run by the city and district councils that will be able to help you to access further support. Details of support can be found: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/wintersupport. If you are unable to access the information online, you can call your local hub on 0345 045 5219, the team is available Monday – Friday 9am-5pm.

LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN CONSULTATION

Cambridgeshire County Council has begun [a consultation](#) on the creation of a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Cambridgeshire. Please do add your thoughts and feedback.

This Plan is an early-stage policy document which seeks to outline new and existing walking and cycling routes and consider which routes should be created or improved, as and when funding becomes available. In many cases, it may be several years before monies come forward for these projects and works can take place. However, identifying the best routes and putting a Plan in place means that the County will be in the best position to bid for future Government funding and progress new cycling and walking routes.

[Please look at the proposals](#). Are these the right routes for the local area? Are there alternatives routes which we should consider? Please let the County Council know your thoughts [via the survey](#). The consultation is available through to the end of the day on Tuesday 13 July 2021. Respondents are invited to complete the survey and/or mark cycleways and footpaths they would like to see created or prioritised on our map. This information will then be analysed and presented to the County Council's Highways and Transport Committee for their review.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

The GCP Joint Assembly and the Executive Board is currently dealing with a bumper agenda that includes key decisions on all four key corridors – Cambourne to Cambridge, Cambridge South East, the Waterbeach Corridor and the Eastern Access Corridor. I suggest that parish councillors should maintain a watching brief on what is going on at these strategic meeting because, one day, their decisions could affect us all. <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/>

BUSINESS RATES

In 2020/21 the Cambridgeshire Business Rates Pool was set up with South Cambridgeshire being the pool lead and administering authority. The purpose of setting up a business rates pool is to minimise or if possible, avoid the payment of 50% of business rates growth in the district to Central Government. Because of the way the pool was set up it has been possible to eliminate any payment to Central Government and an initial estimate was that this would benefit the Council to the tune of £1.1m. It was agreed by members that this would be passed to the Renewables Reserve.

The provisional outturn has now been calculated and the pool benefit to the Council is £1.431m an increase of £0.331m on the estimate.

Overall, the additional income retained for use within the County as a result of the Pool is £5.846m.

FIRST HOMES

On 24 May, the Minister for Housing, Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP, published a Written Ministerial Statement in Parliament on First Homes, a new scheme which provides homes for first-time buyers at a discount of a minimum of 30 per cent. The Planning Practice guidance has also been updated to provide further information on First Homes and their implementation. The statement and the guidance updates include detail on the First Homes definition and the qualifying criteria, eligibility criteria, and the role of plan-making and decision-making.

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes>

Written Ministerial Statement:

<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-05-24/hlws48>

Collection:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>

TOGETHER FOR OUR PLANET CAMPAIGN AND TOOLKIT

Ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 in Glasgow this November, the government has launched a new campaign to encourage UK small businesses to join the fight against climate change. The Together for Our Planet Business Climate Leaders campaign encourages small and micro businesses to commit to cutting their greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030, and to net zero by 2050 or sooner. The campaign is the latest phase of the government's UK-wide Together For Our Planet campaign, which is encouraging everyone to do their bit to cut carbon emissions and help reach net zero by 2050. The government has produced a toolkit to help councils to promote and invite local small businesses to join the campaign. BEIS has made available pre-written social media posts and visuals to help councils with local communications and to use in their own social media messages, newsletters, and emails. The toolkit can be used to promote the campaign alongside any locally available support schemes or green business networks in your area to help businesses to take action on climate change.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/calling-all-small-businesses-to-lead-the-charge-to-net-zero>

Campaign:

<https://businessclimatehub.org/uk/>

<https://beis.frontify.com/d/GsFSAG4sV5D2/together-for-our-planet>

Toolkit and resources:

<https://beis.frontify.com/d/GsFSAG4sV5D2/together-for-our-planet#/stakeholders/promoting-the-campaign>

COUNCILLORS UPDATES

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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