

## South Cambridgeshire District Council Report July/August 2017

The **Finance & Staffing PfH** approved Community Chest applications in July and August that included a grant to Cottenham Community Centre. Such is the popularity of this scheme that the £52,000 allocated at the start of the financial year was close to depletion. However, a further £30,000 has now been transferred from the now extinct Capital Grants scheme. This resulted from the fact that a grant awarded through this scheme had failed to be taken up despite one previous extension of time.

At the August meeting the PfH also agreed a support package that will see around 300 SCambs companies benefit in the current financial year through relief from increases in business rates. This follows the Chancellor's announcement of a £300m fund to support those firms facing the steepest rises in business rates due to changes in the way their rates are calculated. SCambs has been allocated a total of £849,000 over 4 years for this purpose. The average award under the new Discretionary Business Rate Relief Policy [DBRRP] is anticipated to be £1,200. Any business with a rateable value of under £200,000 facing an increase of at least 10% is eligible to apply for relief. A separate fund of £50,000 will also be created from the funds that the Council has been allocated. This will be used to help SCambs businesses that do not qualify under the DBRRP but who can demonstrate that the revaluation is causing hardship.

SCambs' **Elite Athlete Award** scheme is now open for applications. Promising able-bodied and disabled athletes living in SCambs can apply for a Council grant of up to £2,000 to push their training on to the next level. The scheme is open to sportsmen and women competing at every level from regional competitions to world class events like the Olympics and Paralympics. A total of £10,000 is available this year. The funding is designed to provide support with things like equipment, training and travel. To apply, go to : <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/eliteathlete> Closing date for applications is 30 November 2017.

The Council recently issued additional advice for Parish Councils and private landowners following several illegal Traveller encampments in the area. These are not directly related to the action that is underway at Smithy Fen. SCambs traditionally sees more movement of **Gypsies and Travellers** across the district in summer as they attend fayres and other events. However, a single group this year has been much larger than usual. A refreshed set of guidelines has also been published to advise these transient groups. You can read details of both types of guidance at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/services/gypsy-and-traveller-information>

The action at Smithy Fen continues. Half of the 22 pitches that were in breach are now compliant. Of 56 residents on those pitches in breach who were given general advice on housing by the Council immediately action commenced, 14 households subsequently made housing applications. 6 of those pursued their applications the other 8 choosing alternative options. 4 of the 6 have already been housed in self-contained, temporary accommodation and the other 2 will be similarly housed imminently. Housing Officers have done a great job of supporting those who have been affected by the illegal activity of a few landowners, balancing this need with those of others in different circumstances presenting as homeless at the same time. The Council will be pursuing legal action against those landowners who persist in breaching the conditions of their planning consents.

**Bin collections** were unaffected by the recent fire on land next to the location at Waterbeach Recycling Centre where blue, green and black bin recycling and waste is tipped. However, your councillors are aware that there has been interruption to the regular collection of waste from litter and dog bins due we understand to the necessity to redeploy staff from this activity to general waste collection services. In some but not all cases we have succeeded in having the situation fairly promptly rectified but resolution of this issue is also being pursued at the highest level.

The Council's **Housing** Service has sought to provide further reassurance for tenants after thorough, independent fire safety assessments showed no issues requiring urgent action. The assessments that began before the recent tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London have provided assurance that buildings are in good condition. As previously reported the Council does not own any tower blocks; the largest block of flats it owns is 3 storeys high. The most recent of the Council's regular safety checks were carried out on communal areas and the small blocks of flats in its ownership. The checks looked at many safety aspects as well as compliance with current regulations and are intended to inform the Council's planning of service upgrades and improvements to benefit residents and their visitors. The Council will be acting on the recommendations made in the report that it has received and carrying out checks on work such as the replacement of doors by those who have purchased their homes to ensure that there is compliance with fire safety regulations. In recognition of the importance of having clear and safe escape routes new advice will also be given to residents about not obstructing fire escape routes or leaving combustible materials in communal areas or stairwells. The Council will also act on any recommendations that come out of the Grenfell Tower investigation that are applicable to the types of properties that it owns.

**Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority** [CPCA] has approved grant funding for 11 new **affordable housing schemes** across the authority's area. £4.56m of the £100m housing grant included in the devolution deal will facilitate the building of 253 affordable new homes in schemes which are expected to start on site between the end of this year and the end of March 2018.

Meanwhile demolition work has started on a SCambs owned site in Gamlingay to make way for 14 new homes, 10 of which will be affordable. The existing site which was both owned and managed by the Council was built in 1973 but in recent years the layout of the properties has made the units difficult to rent and the Council therefore sought and achieved planning permission for regeneration of the site.

SCambs is also proceeding with a contract to purchase the 9 **affordable homes** on a site at Waterbeach which has permission for 22 homes in total. The expected start on site is February 2018 with build out taking around 15 months. The 9 affordable homes represent a 45% contribution and the scheme mix is a policy compliant 70% rented and 30% shared ownership. An appraisal has confirmed that the scheme is viable and pays back within the terms of the Council's Business Plan of 30 years. The scheme costs are circa £1.45m and will allow the Council to spend around £270,000 of Right to Buy Receipts before deadlines would require its return to the Treasury. It also facilitates the spending of £100,000 of commuted sum funds [money received in lieu of affordable housing on other planning applications].

August saw the signing of a key legal document that will enable construction work to begin on a **new ice rink** which will be built next to the Park & Ride site on Newmarket Road. The legal agreement which was signed by the Council and Cambridge Leisure and Ice Centre [CLIC] sets out the conditions of the £1.85m loan, approved last year by Full Council, that SCambs is providing to CLIC. The project can now progress to the construction stage of the 56m x 26m permanent rink which will have capacity for up to 1,000 spectators and which will be built to international standards. The facility will be open to the public and to sporting groups and will be built using the latest construction technologies to reduce its environmental impact and make it one of the most energy efficient ice rinks in the UK. The project which has been in the pipeline for many years is expected to be completed by summer 2018.

Simon Edwards  
[cllr.edwards@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.edwards@scambs.gov.uk)  
07711 079089  
Follow us on Twitter:  
[@Cllr\\_S\\_Edwards](https://twitter.com/Cllr_S_Edwards)

Lynda Harford  
[cllr.harford@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.harford@scambs.gov.uk)  
01954 251775/07889 131022  
[@2whit2whoo](https://twitter.com/@2whit2whoo)

Tim Wotherspoon  
[cllr.wotherspoon@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.wotherspoon@scambs.gov.uk)  
01954 252108  
[@TimTheMan1](https://twitter.com/@TimTheMan1)