

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

NORTHSTOWE 2018

CLLR SARAH CHEUNG JOHNSON & CLLR ALEX MALYON

NORTHSTOWE TOUR

Sarah attended the Northstowe Tour hosted by Homes England along with fellow District Cllrs and Longstanton & Oakington Parish Councillors. Key points from the tour, which was very informative and useful are summarised below

- Good progress has been made, helped by the good weather over the summer, especially with work on the Southern Access Road which they anticipate to complete Spring 2019.
- Phase 2B has gone out to tender and an announcement on which developer this will be done by is expected in the next 4-6 weeks. This parcel contains 40% starter homes and 20% affordable rent so indications are this will not be one of the 4 major housebuilders as this is not a mix of housing they usually bid for. Homes England are putting in specific constraints on room sizes so that unlike Phase 1, the minimum room size must be observed by developers
- Further parcels of land for sheltered housing and SME builders are anticipated but details yet to be confirmed
- I was heartened to see many of the major trees protected by specific individual fencing and tree experts have already given their views on which should be maintained
- Consultation workshops with SCDC are planned for the Town Centre and Community Centre
- Work on the Secondary School is making good progress

Homes England plan to do a future tour next year, probably in Spring and I would heartily recommend fellow Cllrs to attend.

NORTHSTOWE PHASE 3 CONSULTATION

Consultations on plans for Northstowe Phase 3 are resuming in November. There are two public drop-in events on Thursday 22 November 4pm - 8pm at the Oakington Community Café and on Saturday 24 November 9:30am – 4pm at the Northstowe Community Wing (Pathfinder Primary School).

Northstowe developers and designers would like to hear your views on the draft masterplan of the third phase of development. Representatives from Homes England, project masterplanners, planners and technical specialists will be available for questions.

To find out more visit www.northstowe.com or contact northstowephase3@outlook.com

If you are unable to attend - all information will be made available on the Northstowe website and we will post updates.

NORTHSTOWE COMMUNITY FORUM

The latest Northstowe Community Forum took place on 17th October. It was an informative meeting, with a number of updates provided on progressing work and on ongoing plans.

Staurt Field from Gallagher's provided an update on Phase 1 works. He reported that a contractor has been appointed to begin work on the local square; work should have begun on 5th November. He also announced that this area would be named 'The Green'. He reported that planning permission had been submitted in July for the main formal park, the main play area of Northstowe, which includes a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and areas for younger children to play. Construction will begin in Spring and take approx. 6 months- the contract for this is still to go out to tender. This area will be called Pioneer Park. Work has also begun on seeding the southern sport pitches but this will take around 18 months to establish and so they will not be available for use for some time.

Dan Connolly from Sisk provided an update on Phase 2 works. This included details of the progress on Wilson Rd Bridge. Currently the piling operations to Wilson's Way Bridge are scheduled to take place in late November and to have a duration of 2 to 3 weeks. The timescale may slip, as with all things, depending on progress and the weather.

The piling system will be bored piles which will involve excavating the volume of the pile and then placing reinforcement and filling with concrete. At this stage there is no intention to use driven piles which would have a noise impact on the local community. The deliveries will be coming directly off the B1050 so hopefully the works should cause no disruption to the villages.

Sisk are very keen to engage with the local community and to be a 'responsible contractor'. They are particularly concerned about Rampton Drift residents and have asked that residents report any issues with construction. This can be done by contacting us or Jon London, the Northstowe Community Development Officer.

Philip Harker provided an update on Phase 3 and plans for consultation, as already detailed above.

Further notes from the forum, including responses to residents' question can be found on our Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/pg/longstantonoakingtonnorthstowe/posts/?ref=page_internal

TEMPORARY PATH TO BUSWAY IN NORTHSTOWE

Work on the temporary footpath to allow residents to safely get to the busway from Northstowe is now in full swing and is due to complete by mid-November. The temporary surface will be compacted stone. It will be suitable for bicycles, pushchairs (if they have big wheels!) but not suitable for wheelchairs. The route goes along land earmarked for commercial use in a later stage of development.

CONSTRUCTION NOISE

There have been ongoing issues with breaches of planning conditions on Northstowe Phase 1, including Sunday working on the Linden site. These incidents have been reported to enforcement and they will take action if the house builders continue to fail to respect working conditions.

If there are further issues on site then we would encourage residents to contact us or report directly to planning enforcement via SCDC website <https://www.scams.gov.uk/report-it/website>

LOCAL CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

We have been asked by our Community Policing team to remind residents of the need to report crime, concerns about crime and incidence of anti-social behaviour. They have re-iterated that residents should be encouraged to report concerns to them directly (either via 101 or online <https://www.cambs.police.uk/report/Report>) and not via a third party, e.g. the Parish Council or Councillors as evidence taken from third parties is treated differently to direct reports. Reporting will help them to target existing resources and make a case for further policing locally.

There has been increasing interest in Neighbourhood Watch and so to remind residents that Tom Baugh, Longstanton PCSO is running a training session for those interested and hopes to bring together other PCSO's and senior police members. This will be held at the Longstanton Village Institute on 28th November at 7pm.

OAKINGTON RURAL TRANSPORT HUB PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Greater Cambridge Partnership team will be consulting on plans for the Oakington Rural Travel hub through November, with the emphasis being placed on two designs, one with parking and one without. Both designs include a bus turning circle, disabled parking bays, and secure cycle lockers.

This consultation will be a formal process and the team say the hub designs are aligned with the feedback received during the previous engagement phase. Although this will be a formal consultation they have confirmed there is still the potential for the hub to not go ahead should there be an overwhelming lack of support.

District Cllrs for Oakington and Cottenham and Oakington Parish Councilors have now met with the GCP team to discuss concerns about the plans for the Travel Hub.

Public consultation events, where it will be possible to speak with members of the travel hub team, are planned for:

- Oakington Pavilion, Wednesday 21 November, 17:00 - 19:00
- Crossways Communita Café, Oakington Thursday 22 November, 10:00 - 12:00
- Cottenham Village Hall, Wednesday 28 November, 19:00 - 20:30

STAGECOACH AND GUIDED BUSWAY

Many of you will already be aware of the news that Go Whippet are cancelling their Busway service C from 10th November. This means that Stagecoach will now be the only operator on the Busway, which we believe is not good news for passengers. Residents continue to raise concerns about the quality of the service provided, in particular with buses not turning up or being full and not picking up passengers at Longstanton and Oakington stops. We have been logging the concerns from residents and will be

feeding these back to Stagecoach. We will also be writing to the Mayor, as the Combined Authority is now the Strategic Transport Authority for Cambridgeshire. We will be campaigning for improvements to the Busway service.

If residents are affected by these service changes or any other issues with the Busway services, then please let us know and we can collate your complaints.

A14 HIGHWAYS DROP IN

The A14 Highways Mobile van came to Northstowe and reported decent attendance. Good progress is being made on the Bar Hill bridge and dual carriageway section to meet the B1050. The local road is likely to be opened in Spring 2019 but will become the A14 temporarily as traffic is rerouted off the old A14 onto the local road as they do work on the existing A13 – so no quick respite for Longstanton/Northstowe drivers on B1050 for now.

CAMBRIDGE COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE DROP IN WITH NORTHSTOWE

CCVS came to run a session in Northstowe for residents who wanted to form Community groups and gave advice on how to do this. As a reminder for an annual fee of £30 any community group can access CCVS's wealth of advice and guides on how to form, run and get funding for a community group.

COUNCILLOR UPDATES AND SURGERIES

We continue to be keen to meet residents, especially for those who might find contacting us via email or social media difficult

Our final councillor surgery of 2018 we held:

November 24th 9.30am – 11.30am, Oakington Pavillion

We have started sending out email newsletters and have been posting regular updates on our Facebook group. Details are here:

- 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 very active Facebook group covering the whole ward here:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/>
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DISTRICT WIDE UPDATES

COMBINED AUTHORITY AND MAYOR JAMES PALMER

There are concerns on the lack of oversight at the Combined Authority with important issues not being put forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is meant to review and scrutinise important decisions.

Only after journalists made Freedom of Information requests did the Committee members know that the former chief executive of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, was paid a 'golden goodbye' of £94,500 when he left the job. This is despite not serving out any notice period of his £182,000 a year job, for which he was also paid £15,000 'accommodation allowance'.

The last meeting of the combined authority's overview and scrutiny committee heard Mayor James Palmer, had made the decision to award the payout on his own, having taken "independent legal advice". This legal advice cost £11k plus VAT.

He has since told a local BBC reporter that the public are "not the interested" in why this payout was made.

During his election campaign Mayor Palmer had promised to keep his staff costs low (20) and said his office would only cost £850,000 a year to run. The org chart for the Combined Authority shows 71 (24 transferred over from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which the Mayor took over).

CAMBOURNE TO CAMBRIDGE CORRIDOR REPORT

The Combined Authority have commissioned a report by consultants Arup on the Cambourne to Cambridge Corridor but have not released its full contents and instead have only issued a brief advice note. This note contains Arup's conclusions on routes for the section between West Cambridge and Maddingley Mulch, saying that "the currently proposed corridor [the off-road route to the south of Maddingley Rise close to Coton village] was the most attractive in terms of programme, planning and environmental constraints, as well as journey time." However, the report did not provide detail about how that conclusion was reached and raises more questions that it answers, namely on why other routes e.g. via the Girton Interchange were deemed "less optimal".

LibDem Cllrs representing the area say that this report must be published in full so that the public can scrutinise and challenge where necessary and that the Mayor cannot make decisions that impact South Cambs and residents of Coton without showing the evidence that he is relying on to make that decision.

WASTE TRUCK SAFETY CAMPAIGN

South Cambs and Cambridge City Councils have launched a campaign to ensure drivers act safely behind waste trucks. They have released a video which is well worth watching as it's pretty shocking on their website: http://www.scambs.gov.uk/cctv-footage-released-to-bin-bad-driving/?fbclid=IwAR3y_KHRnvPoRjizOeWghQdBllzlrJOVQdr6syVTZhogYZFgeJYFHOgnohA

They feature top tips from 6 year old Finley Edwards whose dad Kristian is a waste worker safe are contained in a short video which has just been published by South Cambridgeshire District and

Cambridge City Councils, which share a waste service. The video also shows recent CCTV of cars driving on the pavement rather than waiting behind bin trucks. Finley's tips are:

- Be patient behind dustcarts
- Look out for his daddy and his friends while they work
- If you know the dustcart is expected on your street, allow extra time

Most local drivers help crews by driving safely and patiently. However, national figures from waste firm Biffa suggest there are 30,000 reports of drivers mounting pavements to get around collection trucks every month. Since June, several similar reports have been received locally, including:

- Hinton Avenue, Cambridge: A car mounts the pavement and drives between the fence and parked cars to navigate around a collection vehicle
- Silver Street, Litlington: A motorcycle mounts the footpath and drives along it to get around staff collecting bins
- Chesterton Road, Cambridge: A car drives up the pavement and between the side of a collection vehicle and a wall to get in front of a collection truck

SOUTH CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATIONS & NEWS

SCDC would like your views on whether Council Tax should be higher for empty properties:

<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/Consultations?fbclid=IwARoSvIQWgqoYuemnUpoZolzLPfySpBHUGedCLx bu3YskFxPuQr8ASDo-l-M>

They also invite your ideas on how their website should be improved: www.scambs.gov.uk/please-help-us-improve-our-website

SCDC are hiring Customer Service assistants apprenticeships:

<https://www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk/Search/Jobs.aspx?id=91781>

COUNCIL HOUSE BAN LIFTING DETAILS SOUGHT

The scrapping of a limit on the amount Councils can borrow to spend on building homes is being welcomed in South Cambridgeshire – with leading Councillors calling for the small print to be confirmed as soon as possible.

The Chancellor, Philip Hammond MP, gave confirmation in his autumn budget that the cap on the amount authorities can borrow to invest in new Council homes will be lifted. This announcement follows an indication of this course of action by the Prime Minister at her party's conference earlier this month. The borrowing cap has been widely seen as the greatest restraint on the ability of Councils to build new homes.

Members of South Cambridgeshire District Council are now calling for the precise details around the scheme to be confirmed rapidly, so they can understand exactly what it will mean for South Cambridgeshire and the authority's ambition to build more homes that are affordable for people to live in as quickly as possible.

A CAMBRIDGESHIRE HEADTEACHER SPEAKS:

“The £400 million announced by the Chancellor barely scratches the surface of what is needed to make up for the erosion of school funding over the last few years.

His comment that the money will help schools ‘to buy the little extras they need’ shows a complete misunderstanding of the prevailing funding pressures. Many schools do not have enough money to provide a full curriculum or individual support for pupils, let alone ‘little extras.’ What they desperately need is improved core funding.

The increasing demand for adequate provision for the growing proportion of children with special needs is particularly challenging. School funding in real terms has gone down by nearly 8% since 2014. ‘Real terms’ means what the money can buy. The gross figure has increased but there are more children going through the education system. The reduction in real terms money is confirmed by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The proportion of children needing some kind of special help is increasing due to improved medical care, societal and domestic pressures caused by instability in housing and poverty, greater stress in terms of academic expectations in the system at far too early a stage.

There are welcome if small increases in teachers’ pay this year – but this scratches the surface and isn’t enough to stop the exodus of teachers from the classroom. Schools are having to pay higher pension contributions and NI, and an apprenticeship levy as well as higher salaries.

The teachers’ pay rise is not fully funded – schools have to find the first 1% out of their existing budget – and there are different pay rises for different grades of teacher, with teachers on the upper pay scale and leadership scale being awarded below-inflation pay rises. This makes them feel undervalued and will do nothing to halt the recruitment and retention crisis in senior leadership positions. Particularly badly hit is post-16 where the funding per student has not increased for some years and consequently, the curricular range is being narrowed.”

POTHoles (YES, ALREADY)

The Government announced it will allocate £420m to local authorities in 2018/19 to tackle potholes, repair damaged roads, and invest in keeping bridges open and safe. At this stage, there is considerable uncertainty as to the basis of the allocation and the proportion which will be allocated to county councils, but we do expect it to be allocated for this year.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL FINANCES

Due partly to the gradual removal of Central Government support next year’s finances are set to be very challenging with increasing pressure on non-statutory services and it was announced that 1800 staff will be taking 3 days unpaid leave over Christmas to save money.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL GOES COMMERCIAL

The County Council has just reported the acquisition of a student accommodation block, Brunswick House, in Cambridge. It confesses to spending £38 million and says that it will earn £1.9m a year for vital frontline services. The deal has been reported as a 'record' deal with a yield of 4.76%. 4.76% of £38 million is close enough to £1.9 million so we can take that for the basis of the Council's press release.

But. The Council borrows money to fund such purchases. It can do so cheaply from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) because it's a local government entity. The rates for new loans run from 1.7 to 2.3% depending on the period of the loan. Paying for the loan reduces the yield to somewhere between 2.5 and 3%. Still good but not so good.

The other consideration is occupancy. The declared yield is at 100% occupancy. There are 251 beds in total so if some are not let, not likely this year but what about future years, then the margin gets reduced. And it's likely to be doubly so if rentals soften to keep occupancy up. With such a small yield it's easy enough to imagine a scenario in which they go negative because debt service is such a high fixed cost.

Investing in commercial property is something for the experts who understand and can mitigate the risks involved. Is it right for a local council?

Meanwhile the 'This Land' the development company wholly owned by Cambs County Council has appointed a new director, Steven Norris, a former Conservative MP and London Mayoral candidate.

ELY SOUTHERN BYPASS

By the time you read this the Ely Southern Bypass should be open. Hopefully it will be quite something to see with a new walkway which will feature on the bridge over the River Great Ouse providing a walking route for residents and visitors to Ely. The new road will connect the A142 at Angel Drove to Stuntney Causeway and has been a much awaited scheme for 20+ years.

The scheme includes a 1.7km long single carriageway road including a viaduct crossing the Great Ouse and bridges over two railway lines. The road will solve long-standing problems and reduce journey times for drivers. The area around Ely station is heavily congested with lorries and other larger vehicles not being able to use the low underpass, once the bypass has opened, work on the existing underpass at the low bridge will begin, to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists.

For background on how this came to cost £13 billion more than planned see this Cambs Times article: <http://www.cambstimes.co.uk/news/ely-bypass-and-the-pressure-put-on-to-get-it-built-1-5750797>

UNIVERSAL CREDIT.

Universal Credit was rolled out for new applicants in South Cambs last month. Help is available on the South Cambs website and in the latest South Cambs magazine. A number of officers have also been specially trained to deal with any problems and you can make an appointment to see one of them at Cambourne. If you experience any difficulties and are not able to access the help you need please do contact us as soon as you are able.

HOME IMPROVEMENTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

If you own your own home and are struggling with minor repairs there is help available from CHIA - Cambridgeshire Homes Improvement Agency. South Cambs supports this initiative and they will help you to stay safely in your own home. <https://www.cambshia.org> or phone 01954 713330

HEIDI ALLEN MP BREXIT BRIEFING

Heidi Allen MP hosted a Brexit briefing recently which a few LibDem cllrs attended. Key points:

- Heidi scored herself as about 7 out of 10 on the need for a Peoples' Vote. On her scale, Anna Soubry is a 24.
- Heidi will vote for a deal that PM Theresa May negotiates but not a "no deal".
- Heidi repeated her assertion that she will resign from her party if Boris becomes leader and has now added Jacob Rees Mogg to her quit list.
- Heidi plans at least one more public meeting as the Brexit process continues, possibly more. Tentative location for the next meeting is Sawston VC.

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 and Northstowe

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