

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – January 2021

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is /for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA

District Councillor Bridget Smith (Gamlingay Ward, SCDC) is on 01767 650510 or Cllr.BridgetSmith@scambs.gov.uk and District Councillor Aidan van de Weyer (Barrington, Orwell, the Eversdens & Wimpole SCDC Ward) can be called on 01223 870 869 or email him aidan@mishmush.com You can also follow your councillors on Twitter: [@Cllrbridget](https://twitter.com/Cllrbridget), [@SebKindersley](https://twitter.com/SebKindersley) [@aidanvdew](https://twitter.com/aidanvdew)

Seasons' Greetings

We would like to wish all readers a very peaceful and prosperous New Year 2021. Here's to hoping that 2021 is not quite the rollercoaster that we endured in 2020! Things have not started well....

2021 Lockdown

Although it is really tough having yet another national lock down it is undoubtedly the right thing to do in order reduce the ever increasing burden on the NHS. At the time of writing we are seeing over 50% increase weekly in cases in South Cambs and unprecedented pressure on our hospitals. Most of the outbreaks locally appear to originate from workplaces but then they very quickly transfer into family households and into schools. The County Council will be working with the NHS to identify high risk workplaces and to roll out lateral testing in them to pick up the 20%-30% of people who are infected and not showing symptoms.

We cannot emphasise strongly enough how vital it is that you completely isolate yourself and your household for the required time if you have either had a positive test or been in contact with someone who has. This is the only way that transmission to vulnerable people who are most likely to die can be stopped. The vaccine is going to take time to roll out and people will die while they wait for it if we do not all do everything we can to protect them. Though the new variant is 50-70% more transmissible the rules to control it are exactly the same - Hands, Face, Space. The end is in sight but we can get there quicker by all playing our part.

We are expecting further funding from Government to help support local businesses that have had to cease trading or which have seen significant reductions in their income. Please keep a close eye on the South Cambs website, sign up for our newsletter or contact either the council or your councillors if you need help.

Pubs in South Cambridgeshire, where under half of the income comes from food, can now apply for Government financial support via the District Council. The Government's Christmas Support Payment (CSP) has been introduced as a form of additional support over the festive period for 'wet-led' pubs. To claim the grant, which is administered by the Council, local pubs which derive less than 50% of their income from food sales can receive a one-off payment amounting to £1,000 each. Businesses may receive more than one grant where they have more than one eligible property. Applications close 31/01/2021.

Gamlingay Gym

As reported last month South Cambridgeshire District Council is working with the CAM Academy Trust to find a solution to the possible closure of the gym. The council commissioned an independent report (which is now with both organisations) which has drawn on evidence from the people who have run the gym in the past as well as more recently and has come up with a number of options for further investigation and debate.

We very much hope that a solution will be found and that the gym can remain open. However, any facility like this can only survive if it is financially sustainable. The gym has managed in the past but it has been quite tight at times and so if we want to keep it we have to use it more than is currently the case. The more people who use the gym the better it will be. Better equipment can be leased, staff can be paid for opening longer hours and so on. Covid has shone a light on the importance of physical health and the gym is a year round solution for many people of all ages and abilities.

Vaccine Delivery

Gamlingay and the Hatleys are served by the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group whereas most of the rest of the Division is served by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group. This makes it quite hard at times to know what exactly is going on. We get weekly briefings from Cambridgeshire and we are very grateful to the Practice Manager at our surgery for answering questions about what is to be offered to residents. A message has been sent to all patients of the Greensand's Surgery explaining that patients will be called according to their place on the priority list and may have to attend the Weatherly Centre in Biggleswade to receive their vaccine. This is obviously impossible for those without a car and it's also difficult to understand how people who are shielding (and therefore not meant to get in a car with anyone outside their household) are going to get their jab. We have a list of questions we are

awaiting a response to – if there is anything you want us to add please do contact us.

If you are contacted with an appointment and cannot get there please let us know. We are not sure yet what the solution will be but it is helpful to have evidence of a need. Lastly please be aware this is a very fast moving situation so please be aware things may have moved on by the time you read this!

Shops

Villages such as Gamlingay, Orwell and Barrington are so much more fortunate than many other villages because we have good high quality local shops. For many of us life would have been so much more difficult without them. It is undoubtedly safer to shop locally as well as ensuring that our shops survive to serve us once the pandemic is over. A big thank you to them all.

What is the OxCam Arc?

The OxCam Arc, also known as The Green Arc, is a geographical construct stretching from Oxford to Cambridge taking in 5 counties, 10 universities and 4 Local Enterprise Partnerships. 3.8 million people live in the Arc participating with 2 million jobs and contributing £111bn to UK plc. Government sees it as a driver for economic growth which will benefit the national economy.

Local authorities of all sizes need money to do things and the argument is that by working together through the Arc we stand a better chance of attracting significant amounts of investment into infrastructure, including green, water and energy infrastructure, economic growth as well as housing to address our huge problems of housing affordability.

The imminent improvements to the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet is an Arc project. Admittedly this work is 10 years overdue but anyone who has seen how dangerous and how congested it is will know that it's really important. On a much larger scale, East West Rail is an Arc project – at least geographically.

So it is important that we all engage with the Arc because if not we could end up with things being done to us with little opportunity for influencing it. Bridget leads the work on the Environment work stream and intends to make the greening of the Arc the most significant thing about it. This will mean agreeing to a set of principles for protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural environment. Land returned to wildlife, streams and rivers flowing all year round, clean air and significant biodiversity net gain. We also need low carbon transport accessible for all, greatly reduced car use and ownership and zero carbon homes which are cheap to run. The list is as endless as the ambition is great!

If you want to know more there is a growing library of publications including an Economic Prospectus and an Arc Joint Recovery Strategy. The Arc Universities Group has its own report and website, The RSPB has published The Green Arc and we will soon publish the Environment Principles. The Government is starting work shortly on developing a Spatial Framework for the Arc. This is a project that will last decades and it is up to us to make it positive for Cambridgeshire, for South Cambs and for every individual Parish and – most importantly – for YOU!

Christmas in Gamlingay

An early Santa delivery in South Cambridgeshire saw almost 1,000 traditional festive turkey dinners delivered to the most in-need families and vulnerable and elderly residents across the District and many thanks to all the volunteers (including the chefs!) who did such a brilliant job.

The mammoth operation was in the planning for just a few weeks funded with money from DEFRA and the Government's Winter Support Grant administered by South Cambridgeshire District Council. Of the meals delivered, 880 were cooked by the C3 Church group and sent out to 41 villages across the district. 122 of those meals were for families with children under 18 and the rest for older residents who may not otherwise have had a Christmas dinner. They were in frozen form for reheating on Christmas Day.

On the subject of Christmas Sebastian was very happy to be able to cut through the red tape that had wrapped itself around the issue of Christmas lights in Gamlingay. His appeal to the County Council CEO in the end meant Gamlingay was suitably festive!

Laptops for Children

Do you know any family that might need help getting online – especially for homeschooling? South Cambridgeshire District Council is using part of a £30,000 grant allocated to the county to support local charities and community organisations, such as Cambridge Online. The long-established digital charity helps provide data packages and/or devices to children in families who currently have no internet access, enabling them to get online to learn and keep up-to-date with school work and to socialise.

Digital exclusion creates additional problems for those already experiencing poverty, with nine million people in the UK struggling to use the internet independently. School closures during lockdowns and staggered returns to classrooms have meant that children in households without internet connectivity have been particularly impacted in their education by not being able to access online learning.

In response to the pandemic, Cambridge Online has been providing free computer tablets and internet connections to isolated people across

Cambridgeshire, giving them access to the outside world, such as when ordering food deliveries online or keeping in touch with family and friends.

For more details see Cambridge Online, email help@cambridgeonline.org.uk or call the Cambridge Online helpline on 01223 300407, quoting 'South Cambs Winter Support Grant'.

The District Council is also supporting Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service (CCVS) with a £5,000 grant and from 06/01/2021 parishes and community groups will be able to apply for sums of up to £500 for local projects which provide food, fuel and essential supplies.

Planning at South Cambs

South Cambs have welcomed the findings of an independent review of the District Council's Planning Committee, which says members have "a clear understanding of their role" and "good accountability for their decisions". The review by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) was commissioned as part of continuing work to further strengthen the South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) Planning Service, which it shares with Cambridge City Council.

The report praises the Council for reacting quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic and adopting new guidance, protocols and procedures to enable the Planning Committee to meet virtually. It praises the Committee's accessibility, saying accessing it is "relatively easy both in its live form and via web casting". It adds that the size of the South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee appears to strike the right balance of skills and experience and that "the Council has maintained a good focus on public engagement, especially through maintaining the capacity for public and parish councils to speak at Committee."

In addition, the review also looked carefully at specific processes – including how Parish Councils can provide feedback and make a request for an application to be decided by Committee. This process is covered by the Council's Scheme of Delegation. The Report says the current scheme, which was adopted last year, is "a much more transparent model". As suggested by the report, this scheme will be reviewed this year.

The PAS report endorses existing plans for the service to provide additional training and support to Parish Councils on planning matters to foster closer working relationship and further improve Parish Councils' knowledge and understanding of the planning process. It is also supportive of the service's recently refreshed member development programme as a key way of helping members and officers to explore together the wide ranging challenges facing South Cambridgeshire.

Redeployment of County Council Officers

Please be aware that as CV figures mount officers from all parts of the County Council are deployed to manage various pandemic-related

functions eg to run temporary mortuary facilities. As of December, there were 360 members of staff available for redeployment of which 18 are currently redeployed although currently most support is to the hub and contact tracing. We will likely see in the next few weeks these redeployment rates increase to support mass vaccinations and lateral flow testing which means – apologies! – that all other services provided by CCC will take second place in the queue.

Cambridgeshire's New Town?

Sebastian writes: "A West Sussex speculative development company is proposing to create a new sprawling town of 25,000 homes between and encompassing the villages of Shepreth, Melbourn, Meldreth, Whaddon, Bassingbourn, Wimpole, Orwell, Barrington and Foxton. The new town, dubbed 'South West Cambridge,' would profoundly change the hinterland of a multitude of villages and eradicate the rural nature of much of South Cambridgeshire.

The developer, Thakeham, has missed the deadline for the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan's 'Call for Sites,' in spite of having spent the past two years preparing its scheme, during which time it will have been fully aware of the South Cambridgeshire Planning process. It now proposes a late submission in the Call for Sites. While it has contacted relevant landowners, Thakeham has made no contact with local residents or their elected representatives.

The South Cambridgeshire development hierarchy is structured around its largest population centres at Cambourne and Northstowe, which are served by the A428, the Guided Busway and the planned new Cambourne Station, as well as its new schools and health services.

An action group - South West Cambridge Action Group - has been set up and you can see their website at www.swcag.org for further information. Although Planning is a District Council matter District Councillors have been advised not to comment as this might prejudice their position later on in the process."

A meeting with the developers – Thakeham – revealed that they had not intended to use the Local Plan process. They were asked to – and are doing so – but concurrently they are looking at ways of delivering their town by leapfrogging the Local Plan. So that's worrying. As is the fact that they informed a wide range of Government departments of their plans before they become public – not least Homes England. Why?

Winter Support Packages

Cambridgeshire County Council will be offering Winter Support Packages to families to make sure that, not only all children have access to food whether they are eligible for free school meals or in a range of other categories, but also that families and individuals who might struggle with other essential bills, such as utilities, can be supported.

The food support will come via a voucher sent to families automatically, using a system many schools are already using. Each eligible child will receive a £15 voucher for each week of the school holidays (two weeks at Christmas and one week in February).

Those eligible for the voucher will be those eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, funded two year olds, eligible for Free School Meals (including those not currently on a school roll) and eligible for 16+ bursary.

In addition to the Food Vouchers, the scheme is also available to support these same families and individuals, as well as many more, with other immediate needs, including (but not limited to) other essential supplies and food, household energy and water bills and essential white goods in addition to those listed above, those eligible for this additional support will include: households who receive income-related benefits and households facing financial hardship – who councils are aware of; families identified as 'just about managing' by schools, anyone with an Education, Health and Care Plan, Care Leavers, Young Carers and people with 'No Recourse to Public Funds' status – such as asylum seekers. Anyone in need of additional support can access it using 0345 045 5219 or going to the website.

EU Regional Development Fund supports 'Shop Local' South Cambs Directory

A £140K grant from the EU Regional Development Fund has helped make possible a new South Cambs business directory aimed at encouraging and facilitating patronage of local businesses who are invited to register at <https://www.scamb.gov.uk/local-business-directory>

Government Covid Business Support Grants.

Updates about the government grants continue to go to Gamlingay Businesses for whom we have contact details; including the regularly updated council business newsletter, Open for Business. Bridget has contacted all those businesses who should be eligible for the last round. If any local businesses think it might have been missed out - especially if they can evidence hardship as a consequence of Covid, please get in touch straightaway.

Housing Refugees

Up to 12 refugee families, around 48 individuals, from war-torn countries will be offered homes in South Cambridgeshire in a three-year plan agreed by the District Council. Following a decision in 2019 to house a small number of families as part of our contribution to the national and international commitment to assisting refugees, South Cambridgeshire District Council has already helped four families (15 individuals) start new lives in the District. Councillors agreed to continue to provide help for up to

four new refugee families per year for each of the next three years, if funding and support continue to be available.

This will include those who have been forced from their homes in Syria, Iran or Sudan, who require urgent medical treatment, who are survivors of violence and torture and include women and children.

It is anticipated that the waiting time for local families who are already on the Council's housing waiting list, and who are in the greatest need, will not be affected. The Council will be able to decide which housing it offers to the programme, thereby ensuring the least impact on existing levels of need within the District. The Council is working with an existing resettlement team at Cambridge City Council to integrate the four families who arrived during 2019/2020 into their new homes and communities, and to ensure practical support is in place.

Face Masks

Face coverings must now be worn on transport to secondary school or college. If you have children over **11** years old, please be aware of the new guidance.

Council Finance

Despite Covid and other financial pressures facing every council, South Cambs District Council is in a good financial position going forward to 2023 and we will be working on plans to meet the need to find some £5million in savings over the course of the coming five years through efficiencies and new income streams which we have every confidence in achieving.

The current Medium Term Financial Plan has taken a worst case scenario approach with no provision for the Government providing support for the loss of Business Rate income arising from Covid 19 and an expectation that the Fair Funding Review will now happen for the financial year 2022/23 and that it will result in the council losing a substantial amount in Business Rate income as a result of the redistribution of that income to council's with adult social care responsibilities.

In Quarter 1 it was difficult to give a full assessment of the impact of Covid 19 on the council's finances. Unfortunately Quarter 2 is just as difficult, because Government support for the loss of income for the first four months of this financial year has only just been received and we have only just been asked to submit our bid for the next four months. Moreover we still await the Government's decision on whether or not it will reimburse us for the loss of Council Tax and Business Rates due to Covid 19.

The loss of income has impacted on Commercial Waste and Planning but Government has promised to make good for most of these losses,

but the money is slow in coming through. As to additional costs arising from Covid 19 the Government has promised £1.9m to support us with so far £1.8m received.

The Government emphasises in the Spending Review that spending power for local authorities (i.e. the total amount of money that a local authority has to spend) will increase by around 4.5% for 2021/2022 however the majority of this will be funded by Council Tax. This will worsen the situation in rural areas for rural residents. Already in 2020/2021 rural residents pay, on average, 22.7% (£105) per head more in Council Tax than their urban counterparts due to receiving less government grant and rural residents fund 68% of their Local Government Spending Power through Council Tax compared with urban residents who fund theirs by 55%. So, rural residents pay more, receive fewer services and, on average, earn less than those in urban areas and that is inequitable – don't you think?

What does my Council Tax buy?

Councillors often get asked “What does my Council Tax buy?” so we thought we'd supply some examples over the next few months. You may be aware that when a child comes into care, the County Council becomes that child's Corporate Parent. This means we have the collective responsibility as a Council, ie elected members, employees and partner agencies, for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for the children who are looked after by us until the age of 25.

Latest data shows we have 714 children in care for whom we are responsible. 74 of them are unaccompanied children seeking asylum and 229 are in long term placements or foster homes. Sadly this figure is declining – mostly due to Covid – and so if you are interested in fostering do please get in touch! 65 are disabled and 77% come from a white ethnic background. At any one time between 20 and 30 of these children are 'missing'. The good news is that the number of adoption orders granted is up by 15% and increasing.

Barrington Quarry

Cemex have advised that train movements are planned to restart now that HS2 drilling machines are back in action. A Liaison meeting is being planned to bring residents up to date.

Barrington Issues with Mud on Road!

Following a series of complaints Seearo advise that the front area of the site is now in the process of being concreted. In addition, a wheel-washer is being trialled at another site before installation at Barrington and a road sweeper has been contracted to clear the road daily at Foxton Road until further notice. Please me know if there are any further issues with this stretch of road; and don't forget to plot any problems online at <https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

146 Cambridge Road Wimpole

South Cambs Planning Committee is being asked to agree the following in relation to 146 Cambridge Road Wimpole:

It is recommended that the Planning Committee authorise the Head of Legal Services, in consultation with the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development that in the event that engagement with the owner/occupiers of the site is unsuccessful in securing compliance with the condition, to initiate measures required to secure compliance with condition 1 of Planning Permission S/0583/14/FL through an application to the Court for an injunction under S187 B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

Parking at Arrington

The parking situation at Arrington continues to deteriorate. National Trust visitors who cannot get or don't want tickets (which allow access to the car park) are parking dangerously on Church End and Church Lane Arrington and on the A1198 itself to access the Wimpole Estate. This effectively blocks the local roads to farm traffic, bin lorries and – most recently – the bus whose operator is now threatening to stop accessing the village (and hence Croydon). An emergency meeting is scheduled to discuss next steps.

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can!
