

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – October 2020

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@scamb.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)

Planning

South Cambridgeshire is maintaining a 5 year housing land supply when about a third of District Councils cannot. Obviously Covid is not helping the situation but building is continuing here and at the time of writing stands at 5.4 years. Regrettably a PINs Planning Inspector recently made a mistake when reviewing a planning appeal and wrote that we did not have a 5 year supply. Thanks to very quick action by council officers this was withdrawn within a matter of hours.

You may recall some years ago over 4,000 homes were given permission in villages where they had not been planned because housing delivery was not meeting the government set targets. We do not want that to happen again.

Covid 19

Incidences of Covid-19 are increasing in South Cambs and in nearby places such as Bedford and Peterborough. We know that people are finding it difficult to get tests and that tests are taking a long time to come back so we are very cautious about the figures we have as they are likely to be an underestimate. Admissions to hospitals across the county are increasing even though numbers are low but the sad fact is that some of those people who go into hospital will not recover.

Can we please encourage you to download the Government Covid-19 App <https://covid19.nhs.uk/?> It can be used to login into to more and more

venues using the QR codes that are being displayed at front doors. No personal information is gathered. Annoyingly, a great number of older phone models cannot use it but it is nonetheless an important tool.

It is now the law that masks are worn in shops, cafes, bars and restaurants and can only be taken off when eating or drinking. Obviously some people are exempt from wearing them on medical grounds. We are also now restricted to groups of 6 or less indoors be it in public places or in our homes.

It is difficult to enforce mask wearing and the Rule of 6 and as a council our job is primarily to Engage, Encourage & Explain. Enforcement is a last resort and we are awaiting instruction from government on how they want us to do this for people and places that refuse to abide by the rules. Some premises have put up signs saying 'No Mask, No Entry'. It is difficult to argue with that. Less impressive has been people's behaviour on trains where people like carers, the vulnerable and the elderly are put at risk by others who just don't seem to care.

South Cambridgeshire is one of the safer places at the moment and keeping it that way is absolutely in our gift. If we do not abide by the rules : Wear a Mask, Wash your Hands, Keep your Distance, then it is a matter of a couple of weeks before we have the same restrictions as the North of England and all the misery and mayhem that will go along with that.

Testing

There is a shortage of testing capacity and new guidance now applies. Please only book a coronavirus test if you have any of the key symptoms; and booking is essential - there are no walk-in options available nor at A&E. If you can't get an appointment straight away, please try again in a few hours. New appointments go live throughout the day. By calling 119, members of the public, who don't have online access, can book a coronavirus swab test and ask any questions relating to having a test and getting results. This includes about drive through test sites, mobile test units and home tests.

Self Isolation Payments

All the information you need to apply for a government grant should you officially be required to self isolate and as a consequence experience a loss of income is on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website. There are a number of eligibility checks such as what benefits you are in receipt of but once you have made your application the process should be quick and you should receive your payment within 3 days. More than one person per household may apply and you can apply again if you are required to self isolate again. <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/coronavirus/self-isolation-payment/>

South Cambridgeshire Hall.

Having just re-opened South Cambs Hall it has now been closed again as part of our efforts to do all we can to minimise the spread of Coronavirus locally. We feel this is the right and responsible thing to do following the latest Government announcements. Residents and businesses have been able to carry out the vast majority of transactions without visiting and for the small number of tasks that have required people to visit in-person, such as pension verification, we have made arrangements to continue delivering them in a safe way. Please check the website for further details.

Business Support

We continue to regularly update the information on our website for businesses – please sign up for the excellent newsletter which contains all the latest information. We now have a great team of 4 officers focused entirely on business support and recovery. If you are struggling, as many businesses are, please make contact with them - their job is to help you.

Before Covid-19, it would often give great pleasure to visit businesses in South Cambs to learn about what they are doing and what their plans for the future are. Obviously this had to stop but it was lovely to be invited to Cambridgeshire Lakes in Gamlingay recently. As they are essentially an outdoor business it was safe to do so and a real pleasure to learn more about this new company which is doing an excellent job of adapting to Covid-19 and at the same time making a really positive contribution to our village economy.

The Economy

We know that the economy is taking a huge hit throughout the country. That is the case for us too although we started off in a good position in South Cambs with low unemployment and lots of jobs of all types. 25% (19,900) of employees in the district have been furloughed though some are now returning to work. Unfortunately others are losing their jobs. 3.5 % (3,370) of our workforce is claiming universal credit which is an increase this year of 2.6%. So it could be much worse but we are aware that some of the jobs that have been lost, especially in retail, hospitality and leisure are unlikely to come back quickly.

Greensand Cycleway

A long time ago we reported the Greensand Country project was planning to extend the Greensand Cycleway from its current terminus in Sandy via Potton to a gateway feature at the Eco Hub at Gamlingay. Additionally a more direct Potton to Gamlingay route may become available in the future. The route will be signed once permission is obtained from County Council Officers.

Public Health Intelligence team: Covid-19 updates

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Public Health Intelligence team produces frequent detailed updates on Covid-19 cases and settings. You can find these the reports here:
https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/coronavirus_cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-public-health-covid-19-reports/
A concerning rise in cases among young adults in the 18-30 age group has been logged in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and while hospital admissions and deaths have been low, there is concern about transmission to the wider population.

Poor broadband?

The Cambridgeshire County Council Connecting Cambridgeshire team has launched a top-up scheme for rural gigabit vouchers – topping up the voucher value for those on the slowest speeds. If you experience slow broadband speeds and live at the edge of the village have a look at www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk

Groups of rural premises with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps can apply to the national Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme and pool vouchers worth up to £1,500 for homes and £3,500 for small to medium enterprises (SMEs) towards the cost of installing a new full fibre connection.

In addition, eligible rural properties getting less than 30Mbps will automatically receive a ‘top up’ to the voucher – offering an extra £1,500 per household or business towards the installation cost of gigabit-capable broadband. This means premises in group projects with the slowest speeds will get vouchers worth up to £3,000 per residential premise and up to £5,000 per business.

Road tax or vehicle tax?

It’s worth noting that ‘Road Tax’ was replaced by ‘Vehicle Tax’ in 1937. Vehicle tax is now based on emissions and revenue goes to the Treasury, not local councils – so this is not directly available for repairing roads. A seismic shift in government funding down to local authorities for road maintenance is needed but isn’t on the horizon, and we are literally stuck between a rock and a hard place. Nevertheless, relentless reporting is continuing, for which thanks to everyone who is taking the trouble to do so – and hopefully some genuine improvements to roads in dire need will come.

A reminder of the reporting link for highways faults – please do use it!
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

‘Call for Sites’ & the new Local Plan

The “Call for Sites” is the first stage in the statutory process of creating a Local Plan – a responsibility of South Cambridgeshire District Council. The process must be transparent and needs to identify as many potential opportunities as possible. Around 600 sites of varying sizes have been submitted by landowners across South Cambridgeshire in response to the Call for Sites. These have not yet been assessed or filtered in any way, and therefore have no planning status. It is a list of potential sites that may be used in the plan-making process, after the council has decided on what spatial strategy to use. This is the same process followed in making the current Local Plan.

Following on from feedback received from the public during the Issues & Options First Conversation, there will now be a process of working out which of the spatial strategies will be selected for providing jobs and homes that are affordable for people in the district, whilst meeting our zero carbon and sustainable living objectives. Just as in the previous plan, where only a small number of submitted sites were selected – less than 10% – the district council envisages that only a very small number of sites on this list will be used in the plan.

There will be further consultations with the public later in the process, to present and discuss the preferred spatial options. **Until then, none of these sites has any planning status.** Lots of background and information here:

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/first-conversation-consultation-and-call-for-sites/>

Difficulties with Water bills?

Are you or do you know someone struggling to pay their water bills because of COVID-19? Contact Cambridge Water via the website, by Facebook or Twitter or give call 0800 587 7701. More information can be found online at <https://www.cambridge-water.co.uk/covid-help>. They can offer tailored support including the Assure social tariff (for customers whose household income is less than £16,380 a year); the Assure Covid-19 tariff, which is available for a 12-week period for customers whose household income has been impacted by the Coronavirus outbreak and is temporarily less than £16,380 a year as well as a number of other plans.

EastWest Rail

You may be aware of the rail route proposed and campaigned for by CamBedRailRoad. This is along the A428, and now seems to be the preferred route for the East-West Rail from Bedford to Cambourne. There are differences of opinion regarding the best entry point into Cambridge. A new pressure group, Cambridge Approaches, has some ideas regarding the railway's approach to Cambridge. Although the route of the new East West railway line is not going to affect Goringay Division Parishes as

directly as it could have done, anyone travelling into Cambridge will be affected as it seems that whichever route is eventually chosen it will be placed to the south of the City and not to the north, as CBRR is still campaigning for.

If you wish to follow the work of Cambridge Approaches, there is a facility to sign up for news updates etc. via their website.<https://cambridgeapproaches.org/>

If you would like to see what CamBed Rail Road has achieved and continues to work towards, their website is <http://www.cambedrailroad.org/>.

Plans for North East Cambridge

The joint planning services of City and South Cambs Councils have consulted on their proposal for a new high-density urban centre in the north east of the city, which would accommodate 5,000 new homes, 5,000 new jobs and 3 new primary schools as well as some green space. To enable this new urban centre to be built, the Cambridge Sewage works will need to be relocated and the government is providing £227m to pay for this. Anglian Water is proposing three possible locations, all of which are in green belt countryside to the north of the A14.

St Denis Church East Hatley

Very good news! The Friends of Friendless Churches has been awarded a grant of £58,200 from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage for repairs to the chancel of St Denis' church: plain-glazing the windows in the north and south walls (to match those in the nave) and repairs to the chancel walls – consolidating tiles and plasterwork. Appropriately, the news came through on St Denis's day, 9 October.

Community Covid-19 Grants

In the current phase of the pandemic it is expected that community groups could be required to support people at short notice especially if individuals and families are asked to self-isolate without warning. However, no national programme of groups needing to shield is in place at this time. In this phase there is also a need to ensure support is available, for items such as food or heat and light, for anyone who is in acute and urgent financial hardship. This one-off support would fill the gap while further support is put in place, such as a benefits application or self-isolation grant.

South Cambs is making a funding pot of £50,000 available for groups to ensure support is there when it is needed. Of the total pot, small upfront grants of between £100 and £400 (based on the number of homes in the community) are to be offered to each parish/local community group so money is readily available for those who need it for items such as

sanitiser, printing and supporting those in acute need due to hardship and an immediate need to self-isolate.

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!
