

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – January 2023

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. 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 or District Councillor for The Mordens Heather Williams: cldr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk / 07885 774 775.

Making Connections Consultation

The Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 consultation closed on 23 December.

This was about proposals for public transport improvements, better cycling and walking options, and a Cambridge congestion charge. Around 23,000 responses were received, and the Greater Cambridge Partnership expects to publish a final report on the consultation outcomes and next steps for consideration by its Board in June 2023. Significant work in the coming weeks to take on board the consultation responses will then inform that report.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

Buses continue to be a hot topic across Cambridgeshire. The Combined Authority is the transport authority responsible for passenger transport across our area, working within a legislative framework and a deregulated bus system.

The Combined Authority Board agreed a draft Bus Strategy on 30 November—consultation is planned to start in the week beginning Monday 9 January for six weeks. The Strategy will then go to the Combined Authority's Transport & Infrastructure Committee and the Board in March. The Strategy will form part of the suite of documents associated with the Combined Authority's emerging Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough was one of a majority of local transport authorities to be given no funding by Government for its Bus Service Improvement Plan. The Combined Authority is working with partners to prepare a revised Plan reflecting the priorities of the emerging LTCP and the draft Bus Strategy. This will be presented to the Transport & Infrastructure Committee and the Board in May / June.

Bus franchising is the Mayor's preferred solution for bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Under this model the local transport authority takes control of the public transport network, specifying and contracting bus services, as opposed to the deregulated free-for-all in place since 1986. Work is ongoing to refresh the outline business case for franchising. This will explore all potential funding options and assess the benefits of franchising against the current system. The business case will also review other issues including geography, contracting, depots, vehicles, and branding. The majority of bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough are run commercially by private operators, and the Combined Authority has no control over these.

The Combined Authority currently subsidises 73 services across its area. Full support for eighteen services and partial support for a further five began in October 2022 after Stagecoach withdrew from these services. There is an option to extend the contracts for these by one year from the end of March, and final decisions on these will be taken in February or March following the setting of the Combined Authority's budget and taking account of the draft Bus Strategy. Contracts for a further six of the 73 services expire at the end of March 2023 and a procurement process has begun to retender these. The Combined

Authority will set its budget for 2023/24, including bus support, at its Board meeting on 25 January. The Transport & Infrastructure Committee will consider a Bus Assessment Framework in January.

The GCP Making Connections proposals include an enhanced bus network and mechanisms for both upfront investment and ongoing subsidy. The Combined Authority will need to consider the effect of this on its own work. The GCP would develop any necessary outline business case, and any decision on road charging would rest with the County Council. In an initiative with Stagecoach and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Combined Authority secured Government funding for thirty zero emission buses for Cambridge. These are expected to be available from March.

20MPH schemes

The Highways & Transport Committee approved the changes to the Council's policy on 20MPH speed limits. The proposed timetable for applications for funding for new 20MPH speed limits is as follows: Go 'live' with application process on-line for new schemes in February 2023 with applications between February and April 2023. Prioritization of the submitted schemes will take place in May to June 2023 with Committee report for approval in July 2023 and thereafter programming and delivery of schemes from August.

King Charles III coronation street parties

Cambridgeshire County Council has published guidance for local groups seeking to organise street parties and highways events to mark the coronation of King Charles III in May 2023. All street party applications must be received by the County Council at least eight weeks in advance (Friday 10 March 2023) via the Council's website. Highway Events applications must be submitted at least twelve weeks in advance (Friday 10 February 2023). More information about the process can be found at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roadsand-pathways/highway-events/coronation-events>

POPs in WUDS (I know!)

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are found in various Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) such as sofas and upholstered dining chairs. Such materials should not be landfilled. The law against landfilling of POPs was introduced in 2007, but the Environment Agency recently announced it would become more rigorous in its enforcement. The Environment Agency announced in August 2022 that it would soon expect councils to cease landfilling upholstered seating, and instead to incinerate it. It published its Final Regulatory Position Statements on this matter on Monday 19 December 2022, with implementation starting on Sunday 1 January 2023. The short notice over Christmas has provided little time to organise incineration capacity (which we do not use here in Cambridgeshire) and is a perfect example of the damage that stupid decisions made by third party organizations can do.

The good news is that after a short period of frenzied activity by Councillors and officers an interim solution for accepting waste items such as sofas, upholstered chairs, cushions, and beanbags at all recycling centers has been agreed; and so bulky waste collections offered by all of the county's City and District Councils can resume.

Government settlement

Just before Christmas the Government issued its 'provisional local government finance settlement'—the annual indication to councils of the money they will have available for local services next year. The Government proposes that Cambridgeshire County Council's 'core spending power' (the overall revenue funding available for council services) should increase by 9.5 per cent. Unfortunately however that is less than the current rate of inflation, so overall it will buy less. Half of the 9.5 per cent is from the council's power to raise council tax—in other words, the Government expects local tax payers to shoulder a lot of the extra costs.

For the District Council the settlement is somewhat better than expected. New Homes Bonus stays and SCDC will get more than we thought from the Rural Settlement Grant as well as from Business Rates. Council tax is likely to be increased by £5 for a band D house (equivalent to 3.5%) which represents a reduction in income with inflation running above 10%. Council house rent will also need to increase by the maximum of 7% in order for us to continue delivering the new council house building programme though housing benefit does increase in line with inflation so 40% of tenants will not be affected by the increase.

The Police & Crime Commissioner advises that with the current cost-of-living pressures impacting on people's incomes "asking you to contribute more to police funding is not something I want to do." but proceeds to do so in any case because "inflation applies to policing as well – with police vehicles, fuel and training all costing more than they did this time last year" thus proposing a 19p weekly increase (for Band A properties), 29p for Band D properties.

Business planning for the next financial year continues.

Flooding

A new highway flooding tool is being used by the County to focus on a number of smaller flood locations to ensure we achieve the broadest impact across the road network and communities as quickly as possible. We started works in November at the first of the 50 locations including Station Road, Steeple Morden, Chapel Hill in Haslingfield and Potton Road St Neots – often requiring the existing system to be fully cleaned out with minor repairs to pipes or new grips cut to get water off the road and into the ditches and watercourses.

Adaptive Grants

Cambs Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has a range of grants available to people with disabilities living in South Cambridgeshire to help adapt homes. This may be particularly relevant to those who are elderly, vulnerable or have family members with disabilities as well as friends or neighbours.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is a mandatory Government grant aimed at people with disabilities and older people on low incomes or low-income benefits, which helps towards the costs of making changes to their home to allow them to continue living there safely and comfortably. Each year Cambs HIA enables around 300 older people and people with disabilities to adapt their homes. Although some work such as ramps, stairlifts, specialist toilets, automated door entry systems and level access showers require an Occupational Therapist's referral, other work such as new boilers, roofing repairs, new doors and windows do not. The agency can help homeowners or those in housing association properties make a wide variety of adaptations and repairs (www.cambshia.org). We can also help self-funders who are unable to organise and oversee the work themselves. You can reach Cambs HIA

colleagues at hia@cambshia.org or take a look at their Facebook page ([Cambs Home Improvement Agency | Cambourne | Facebook](#)) for more info.

Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund

Village halls in England can now apply for grants to improve and modernise their facilities through the [Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund](#). Village halls interested in applying for this national scheme can request grants from £7,500 to £75,000, and up to a maximum of 20 per cent of eligible project costs. Capital grants will be allocated to support infrastructure improvements, the refurbishment of facilities, such as kitchens and toilets, and measures to improve energy efficiency. The application window opened just before Christmas and will close on 20 January 2023. Successful applicants being able to draw on the funding from April 2023.

Road Closures

Anglian Water will close Mill Street Gamlingay for a new sewer relay across the road to prevent blockages between 20/03/2023 and 28/03/2023. South Street Litlington will be closed on 28/03/2023 for a new pole for Openreach to be put up. Station Road Steeple Morden will be closed between 02/02/2023 and 06/02/2023 at Flitton's Farm to allow for new water connections.

A428 Dualling & Black Cat Roundabout

The highways Agency has sent a message as follows: We are disappointed to let you know that we won't be starting construction on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet scheme this month like we had initially planned. Planning permission was granted by the Secretary of State back in August 2022 and we have been busy preparing for construction.

However Transport Action Network (TAN) submitted an application to the High Court for permission for a judicial review of the Secretary of State's decision to grant the A428 Development Consent Order. They are challenging the Secretary of State's decision on the grounds of biodiversity, need for the scheme and climate change. The court is expected to decide whether the claim can proceed to a full hearing, and on what grounds. We were hoping a decision on the application could be made before the end of the year but the decision is now looking as though it will happen early 2023. As this is an ongoing legal case we can't provide any further information. However, we are continuing to assess the impact and will provide you with further updates as quickly as possible.

Steeple Morden Post Office

The Post Office has advised that following the resignation of the postmaster and the withdrawal of the premises for Post Office use, Steeple Morden PO will be closing temporarily on Tuesday 31 January 2023. Looking after a nationwide network of Post Office services, the PO have a responsibility to make sure every service makes the best possible use of resources, while ensuring customers can still access products and services (which importantly includes banking). Currently there are limited retail options in Steeple Morden from which to operate a Post Office service but the PO will continue to work to find a solution for the local community.

Gamlingay Footpath 10

Following the statutory process CCC confirms no objections to the new routing were received and the Order creating/moving the footpath has been confirmed. The final stage is for the County to check it has been built to the correct adoptable standard after which the process is complete.

Relas (Reject Luton Airport Stacking)

Relas is holding a further public meeting to discuss the new flight paths into Luton. It will be at Lt Gransden Village Hall, 7.30pm on February 23rd. In the meantime please continue with your objections & complaints to noise@ltn.aero on any excess noise and disturbance. Remember to copy in your local Parish and District Councils to all objections/correspondence to Luton Airport. In your complaints to Luton Airport, you are encouraged to refer to the sub-standard consultation process and the poor design of AD6 which pollutes air further, by lengthening flight times. There were no mention of night flights in the consultation documents. Refer to the current poor design of AD6 and the need to rethink before it is made permanent. For instance, Relas have been made aware that the sudden screeching and howling sound experienced under the flight path is due to pilots braking suddenly, on instructions from Luton Airport for a rapid descent over a short distance. This phenomenon was also omitted from the consultation document.

Cam Vale Bus User Group – what people said:

Three December meetings of the Cam Vale Bus User Group, which covers the area served by the 17 and 915 buses, resulted in a strong consensus around basics for an improved bus service for our area, which has been submitted as the Group's response to the landmark 'Making Connections' consultation on the future of travel options in the Greater Cambridge area.

It was not common knowledge that government's refusal to award any support for Cambridgeshire's Bus Improvement Plan was due to 'insufficient commitment to road charging.' No road charging, no government support for buses.

All buses in our area are now subsidized from a limited pool of public funds which must be raised via council tax. It's not enough to provide what people need.

'Making Connections' proposes a low bus fare (£2 here) and doubling the current timetable. A Cambridge congestion charge after an improved bus network and new active travel links are embedded, would fund the bus network into the future. Initial set-up investment in a bus network would come from the Greater Cambridge Partnership, a time-limited body set up to disperse government funding for this growth area.

The Cam Vale Group consensus was that bus services should

- **be redesigned, rather than replicate long-standing routes as is proposed, in order to attract new users:** commuters to education, training and employment; evening and weekend travellers for leisure and social life; and daytime travellers to health appointments, business and household needs
- introduce new multiple daily links to all local rail stations – Ashwell and Mordens, Royston, Meldreth, Shepreth, Foxton – properly synchronized with train services
- provide direct links to Cambridge from all villages for morning and evening commutes

- introduce quicker, earlier and later access to Royston as nearest market town; and coordinated with North Hertfordshire bus services
- integrated single ticketing to protect low overall journey costs
- instill traveller confidence through reliability, good availability of timetables in variety of formats, with real time information and contact number for emergencies
- be served by shelters and seats at bus stops, & toilets at transport interchanges

The consultation closed on December 23. If you'd like to join the Cam Vale Bus User Group please let Susan know.

Free Health Checks, Melbourn Hub – Meridian Primary Care Network GP Surgeries

Anyone can drop into the Melbourn Hub on Monday mornings for a free health check. Get your blood pressure checked or just have a chat if something's worrying you. This fantastic new service is sponsored by the Meridian Primary Care Network, including surgeries in Melbourn, Harston, Royston, Comberton and Bourn. <http://melbournhub.co.uk/health-at-the-hub>

Question for my health visitor please about my baby or child

Parents of young children with a health visitor question can get in touch with the Cambridgeshire Healthy Child Programme any time, via phone or text:

- Call 0300 0295050
- Text 07520 649887

And much more practical information is available here:

<https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-0-19-healthy-child-programme>

Cost of Living - financial support

From Council tax support to heat, food and free holiday activities, there is loads of useful information on financial support from a variety of organizations collated by South Cambs District Council, here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/>

Go Fund Me – electric blankets and slow cookers

The Go Fund Me page has been launched with money raised being added to Council support for people just about managing. The funding the Council has pledged could see around 400 people supported with free electric blankets and slow cookers; more can be done if donations are received.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/scdccostofliving>

The Council is first writing to people who receive a 75-85% Council Tax discount as they have been identified as potentially in greatest need of support. This group may be expanded depending on the number of donations received. The first group of people eligible will have three weeks to claim the support offered by completing an online form. A phone number will be provided for people without internet access to call and go through the form with a member of Council staff.

If more budget becomes available after three weeks due to donations, the scheme will be expanded to more people on lower brackets of council tax discounts. The Go Fund Me page is part of a wide range of support worth about £400,000 being put in place by the Council to support residents.

Ukraine – new hosts for guests needed

Cambridge and South Cambs have between them about 500 hosts for Ukraine guests. With the war in Ukraine continuing, the six-month hosting arrangements have needed to be renewed, though not all hosts are in a position to do so. Anyone who might be able to provide a spare room for a guest from Ukraine is asked to get in touch with SCDC, or please contact any of us and we'll point you in the right direction.

Grants available: riparian owners and ditch maintenance

The County Council is offering a 'riparian grant' to help with maintenance of privately owned watercourses, that would benefit adjoining networks for overall community drainage benefit.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/community-flood-action-programme/watercourse-maintenance-grant>

Electric vehicle charging point grant:

The Electric Vehicle (EV) Charge Point Grant is available to fund installation of Electric Vehicle Charge Points for use by the public, and related works, in the car parks of community buildings and village halls within South Cambridgeshire. The deadline for 2022/2023 applications is 31 March 2023:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature/grants-funding-and-community-support/electric-vehicle-charge-point-grant/>

South Cambs Magazine on-line

You can read the quarterly South Cambs Magazine online: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/the-south-cambs-magazine/>

South Cambs CEO visit to Bassingbourn and Litlington

It was good to welcome SCDC CEO Liz Watts to Litlington and Bassingbourn in early December. We met parish council chairs, talked about planning issues, the long-term value of the mobile warden scheme, transport challenges in this rural area, health services on the county border, orientation to Royston and border issues, support for community buildings, police issues, and local schools. We also enjoyed some of the public footpath links through both villages.

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! *****