

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – April 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 District Councillor Bridget Smith (Gamlingay Ward, SCDC) is on 07729 836449 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 Cllr Susan van de Ven represents Litlington on South Cambs – 07905 325574 or susanvandeven5@gmail.com. You can also follow your councillors on Twitter: @Cllrbridget, @SebKindersley @aidanvdew @susanvandeven

NB The District Councillor for Hatley is Heather Williams (The Mordens ward). You can contact her on 07885 774 775 or e-mail her at cllr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk.

More Council Houses....

The next phase of 10 new council houses at Downing Gardens Gamlingay were handed over to their new owners at the end of March with further houses and flats due for release very soon. The new homes are built to high energy efficiency standards which makes them cheaper to run and have a very high quality fit out including very nice carpets and bike stores. If you have a local connection either by living or working here or by having close relatives in the village you can apply using the Council's Homelink service. If you are struggling to manage this, do make an appointment to speak to a housing officer at South Cambs District Council.

More Money to Decarbonise Council Houses

South Cambs has successfully bid for £1.7 million Government funding, to continue work to decarbonise Council homes. This will be added to the projects the Council has already started to improve the fabric of Council homes. It will also support other measures being put in place to help the Council achieve its own and the Government's Net Zero targets. The District Council owns and maintains around 5,600 Council homes in South Cambridgeshire. The new funding will go towards energy efficiency upgrades within these homes.

Energy saving measures such as exterior wall insulation, cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, new windows and doors, draft proofing measures, as well as heat pumps and solar panel installation can be provided with the funding. These measures could save tenants between £220 and £400 a year on energy bills.

Zero Carbon Communities Grants

A grant scheme has opened for 2023 to encourage exciting community projects that reduce carbon emissions and engage local people about climate change. Community groups are invited to bid for a share of £125,000 with the scheme closing on June 2nd. Previous projects have included cooking classes that reduce food waste, tree planting, a community e-bike rental scheme, solar panels for village halls and a men's mental health and wellbeing project that runs a mobile library for gardening equipment and tool hire.

Parish councils and non-profit groups or organisations that are based in the district can apply. Other groups, such as social enterprises and community interest companies can apply as part of a

partnership led by a parish council or not-for-profit group. Groups can apply to the grant scheme by visiting www.scambs.gov.uk/zerocarbongrant

For further information contact Kath Sansom in South Cambridgeshire District Council's communications team on kath.sansom@scambs.gov.uk

Millbridge Brook Meadows Gamlingay

Thank you to the Parish Council for arranging to have the blockage in the stream cleared out thus allowing much freer flow of water. Congratulations to those volunteers who have replanted a lot of fruit trees - they look really good.

South Cambs Magazine

Many people tell us that they really value the magazine the council sends out at regular intervals which is why - despite many competing financial demands on our budget - we continue with it. It is disappointing though when something goes wrong with its delivery and people do not get it. We use a mixture of private delivery service and Royal Mail and we know there have been problems with the latter. If you have not recently had a magazine by the time you read this, please do report it on the council's website or let us know.

Paying Council Bills

Most people pay their council bills online or by direct payments. However, we know some people are not able to do this. Council house rents can be paid on the phone - if for some reason this is not working for you please let us know. We closed the cash payment office at South Cambs Hall ages ago because payment of invoices in cash was declining. However, provision was made to offer customers the opportunity to pay by cash at the Cambridge City Council cash office which remains open. There is also the facility to have a payment card issued which enables customers to pay at banks and post offices by cash or cheque. Just let the council know if this would suit you.

New Money for Planning Service

Government has given Greater Cambridge Shared Planning £290,000 of funding to improve feedback processes for its emerging Local Plan. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) is a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils.

The funding seeks to build upon the earlier work in producing a "digital" Local Plan by speeding up the processing and the review of the thousands of comments made by communities and developers through the process. This will shorten the time between people making comments and Councillors and communities being able to see who has said what about the emerging plan.

East West Rail

As the Leader of South Cambs DC, Bridget recently wrote to the rail minister to invite him to come to the district to see for himself what the impact the new railway would have on some villages. A number of Parish Councils co-signed the letter and were disappointed when the minister declined the invitation because apparently he had already been to South Cambs. Since then, we have had the announcement in the budget that the government is progressing this scheme. Bridget has

therefore written again to ask him to reconsider his refusal to visit in the near future or alternatively for her to speak to him in London. We expect an announcement on the route in May.

Critical and difficult decisions

The recent County Council meeting on March 21st received a good deal of press coverage for the decision to create a public transport link connecting existing and planned settlements at Cambourne, West Cambourne and Bourn Airfield to Cambridge. These settlements are the best alternatives to development in the green belt, and this clustered development protects the vast majority of South Cambs villages from unsustainable growth. Public infrastructure including good transport links are necessary – and indeed this is a requirement of the local plan and without it the legal planning framework collapses.

The current Cambourne situation, with no decent public transport, is now urgent and critical for young people seeking access to post-16 education and training opportunities in the Cambridge area. The same is true for all those seeking access to jobs, including health and care staff where recruitment is hampered by lack of affordable housing with reliable public transport connections.

A key point of contention for the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge Busway is at Madingley and Coton where different options have been debated. The eight years of consideration included a detailed independent audit in 2021. Officers have given a clear steer that the proposed on-road route was not good enough to meet the needs of Cambourne and further planned growth; and risks disturbing Madingley Wood, an ancient and hugely biodiverse site. The preferred route involving the loss of trees at Coton Orchard, a private site without public access, is regrettable. The final route will be aligned to reduce to a minimum the number of lost trees, almost or potentially all of which will be commercial fruit trees around 30 years old, currently estimated at one-fifth of the total current area of the orchard. It is very likely that large replacement sites with a wilder mix of native species will be able to more than replace the lost biodiversity, along with other benefits such as public access to wilderness. The next stage will almost certainly be a public inquiry at which the integrity of the scheme and objections to it will be tested.

After careful consideration of representations, papers and arguments made in the debate, a majority of County Councillors voted in favour of the proposal. You can watch the debate at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwbAi8Q9e5Q>.

The independent audit and other documentation is published at <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/public-transport-schemes/cambourne-to-cambridge/cambourne-to-cambridge-independent-audit>

Taxis in South Cambs

Taxis registered in South Cambs will be required to have CCTV installed in the cabs. This is for the safety of the drivers and their passengers.

Cambridge to Cambourne Busway

The County Council has approved the application for C2C going to the Secretary of State for a Transport and Works Order. This is the next stage in delivering a fast, off-road public transport link between Cambourne and Cambridge which will provide a service every 10 minutes using electric buses. The medium term plan is that buses from Gamlingay and other villages will feed into this

service which should be a game changer for young people attending 6th form and college in Cambridge and also for those of us needing to work there.

Civility in Public Life

'There are growing concerns about the impact an increasing level of public intimidation and toxicity of debate is having on our country's democratic processes, particularly at a local level' – write the Local Government Association.

Councillors at South Cambs District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council have voted unanimously to sign up to the 'Debate Not Hate' public statement on civility in public life and we have shared the initiative with parish councils. <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/campaigns/debate-not-hate>

Safety Valve Funding

It is really good news that pressure on school places for children with additional needs will be eased after the county council secured millions in additional funding from the government. At the County Council we were facing widespread cuts in support for children with SEND due to a £58m budget gap. The extra money came through a process known as a 'safety valve' and is worth £49m to the council.

Under the agreement with the Department for Education, the authority will use the funds to balance its budget for children with additional needs by 2026/7. The government has also allocated a further £11.3m for capital funding to Cambridgeshire to support new SEND provision on mainstream school sites.

The funding will help tackle a gap in the budget for SEND provision which is expected to hit around £58m by the end of this month – caused by demand for services far outstripping government funding to Cambridgeshire for SEND services over the past six years. Requests for Education, Health and Care Plans in Cambridgeshire – the document which describes a young person's special needs and the support they will need to meet their educational goals – have more than doubled from 3,429 in 2016 to more than 7,000 currently.

Cambridgeshire has historically received less funding per child for education than other areas. This is while still responding to a rapidly growing population of children with special educational needs and disabilities who are presenting with greater complexities, some of which relates to young people suffering more with social, emotional and mental health arising from the Covid pandemic.

To meet these challenges, the council will use the new funding to create 463 new special school places. There will also be extra support for 105 pupils at mainstream schools by September 2026 through a programme of expanding current sites and building new schools. The council has also applied to the free school programme for two new special schools in Gamlingay and Fenland.

Some residents have commented that 'Special Schools' is an outdated and somewhat insulting term – and we tend to agree. However, the term has specific legal meaning and Government has not legislated for an alternative term as yet. So the plans for the old First School in Gamlingay continue to be for a rebuild as a Special School.

Royston Recycling Centre

There has been much press lately about the decision of Hertfordshire CC to restrict access to the Royston tip. Given that the alternatives in Cambs at Thriplow and Milton are miles further (with the consequent environmental impact) we have asked CCC to discuss options with Herts CC, who indicated there was scope for special arrangements. Cambs CC is in a minority of local authorities not to restrict access to non-county residents.

Easter Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme

Cambridgeshire County Council have received DfE funding until the end of 2024 to support children, in receipt of income-related free school meals, attend a holiday scheme for free during the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays.

Cost of Living Support

Please continue to keep an eye on the home page at www.scambs.gov.uk (SCDC) where all schemes are kept updates – this includes govt funding dispersed via the County Council.

A428 Dualling

The Judicial Review has now failed to get anywhere so construction of the new A428 and Black Cat junction can proceed.

Making Connections update

The 24,000 responses to the Greater Cambridge Partnership consultation on the Making Connections proposals, consisting of a set of measures combining to bring new ways of travelling locally in, out and within Cambridge, are in the process of being assessed. It has been in the news lately due to a proposal to interrupt the consultation with a yes/no referendum on one aspect of it.

The combination of measures would mean the foundation of a significantly improved bus network with a wider reach, greater frequency, reliability, longer daily scope of operation and cheaper fares, and workable and safe active travel connections – together providing good sustainable access options into and around Cambridge, and alleviating vehicle congestion. Step two would be a proposed road charge for driving into and within Cambridge, the revenue from which would provide the primary revenue stream to run the bus network. The road charge would be predicated upon a successful new bus network provision being established first of all.

A recent motion at Cambridgeshire County Council proposing a referendum on the road charging component of the Making Connections proposals was not supported, as the consultation process is still live and those 24,000 responses need to be assessed and considered. As argued in the council debate (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwbAi8Q9e5Q>) a referendum would disenfranchise people ineligible to vote, including young people and those travelling from out of county. It would fail to deal with a complex set of inter-related issues that require dialogue and cooperation to work through. The motion was lost.

Road Closures

Advance notice! Heath Road Gamlingay will be closed for one day on June 12th and Tetworth Hill will be closed for a week starting June 18th – both for repair.

Pot holes

We're extremely concerned about the state of the roads and know that our Local Highways Officers are currently overwhelmed with potholes, many more like craters. This is a matter of urgency with the council.

Sadly, the gradual deterioration of our road network has been unfolding over many years and strategic investment in maintenance did not happen in better times. Consequences of the political choice for 'managed decline' are with us now, making the job of getting on top of things that much harder. This has been exacerbated by drought and soil shrinkage, deep freeze and periods of persistent wet weather.

There are particular local hotspots which will be well known – thank you for highlighting and logging them and please don't hesitate to get in touch with your concerns.

EV charge station and solar park, Litlington

A planning application is expected shortly for an EV charging station and solar farm along A505 at Royston Rd Litlington. We have met the promoters and highlighted the tradition of community benefits paid to local Parishes by solar farms...

Care Funding

Cambridgeshire County Council is profoundly disappointed with the Government decision to not address pay and conditions for social care workers to help recruitment. Ministers have announced half the £500m promised to help address staff shortages would now be held back.

With an average 9.5% vacancy rate in the social care sector in large shire county areas such as Cambridgeshire - higher than the national average - tackling the challenge of workforce capacity is a key plank of the proposed reforms, and a reduction in funding coupled with a lack of focus on pay and conditions will ultimately make it almost impossible to drive forward improvements.

Public emergency alerts

The Government has now launched a new Public Emergency Alerts system which gives the Government and emergency services the capability to send an alert directly to mobile phones when there is a risk to life. There will be a national test of the new system on Sunday 23 April, which will consist of a loud, siren-like sound and vibration on mobile phones for up to 10 seconds.

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! *****