

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – October 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: cllr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk / 07885 774 775.

Making Connections

No sooner had we submitted last month's notes than the Making Connection project started to waver. Four long weeks later and to the satisfaction of some and the sadness of others the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has decided not to proceed to the next stage. Collectively it was decided that while the aims of Making Connections to make travelling in and around Cambridge simpler and faster by saving time and money and easing congestion offering better, fairer, and greener travel choices were important the lack of political consensus meant there was no choice. This means the Congestion Charge element of the proposals is dead.

There is no Plan B. Officers will now focus on other areas of the City Access programme looking at issues such as resident parking, road hierarchy and freight consolidation. This is in addition to the other infrastructure projects which include 150km of Greenways, innovative busway schemes from Waterbeach to Cambridge and Cambourne to Cambridge as well as the significant improvements to Milton Road and Newmarket Road.

The implications for Gamlingay Division parishes are firstly that the high quality bus services across Southern Cambridgeshire with the target of one bus an hour for all will not be delivered as the congestion charge was going to pay for it. Secondly, largescale developments such as at Bourn Airfield which need to demonstrate the future residents will have access to high quality public transport before any further planning consents are issued are looking problematic. This in turn puts the targets of the Local Plan in doubt the implications for which are that we could conceivably see an inability to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply – which means policies designed to restrict growth especially in villages fall away – and that's a bonanza for opportunistic development. If you want to see what that means take a look at Waterbeach or Melbourn which both suffered this very badly back in 2018.

The last implication is that it underlines that local government in this part of the county badly needs reform – parish, district, county council plus the Combined Authority, the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership and so on means too much is spent and not enough achieved.

Phlebotomy Services at Gamlingay

The communication to patients from the Surgery has caused much concern. The bottom line is that taking blood is not part of the core NHS GP contract. Many surgeries, indeed whole areas, send all their patients to the nearest

hospital or outpatient clinic to have bloods taken. Of course this is extremely difficult for those with no access to a car (see above) and so these changes are having a negative impact. Clearly, the most desirable answer would be a fully-funded service that makes not just good patient-service sense but is also financially viable for the practice. In reality, almost always, the cost of doing something in hospital is vastly more expensive than doing it in practices, so the decision to pull funding from a practice that results in a shift to hospital-delivered care is not only less convenient for patients but more costly in overall terms for the NHS – and that is before we start thinking about the carbon impact of all those additional journeys.

Bassingbourn VC School Transport

It was extremely unfortunate that the bus service to BVC was cut from Gamlingay at almost the last moment before the school term began. Even more annoying was that parents had made a choice to send their children out of catchment on the basis that a service was being operated. As with all commercial bus routes they are at risk of changing economic circumstances and the operator simply was not going to deliver a loss making service; leaving some families high and dry.

Electric Blankets

South Cambridgeshire District Council will shortly be offering 532 residents the opportunity to claim a free electric blanket (also known as a heated throw) as a cost-effective alternative to central heating. Residents selected to qualify will be those who are (as of 1 July 2023) claiming Council Tax Support and at least one of Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility element at the enhanced rate or Disability Living Allowance (DLA) mobility component at the higher rate.

Parish Profiles – Cambridgeshire Insight:

The County Council hosts this extraordinary website containing demographic detail about our communities from parish to parish. Data is drawn from the Census and helps to inform local authority decisions particularly in relation to the wider determinants of health. <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk>.

Action on Cambridgeshire Highways

As a result of our changing weather patterns one third of the county's roads are affected by peat soil or clay soil damage. This equates to 1660 kilometres of road - approximately 36% of the county's entire road network. We have launched a plan to tackle the deterioration to keep road users safe as they travel across the county and protect rural communities and local businesses. Underlying peat or clay soil causes damage to the road network when peat or clay subsides, shrinks and expands according to weather conditions and seasonal changes causing roads to deteriorate, undulation to occur and cracks and potholes to appear.

Funding of up to £5 million per year will be needed to manage the affected Cambridgeshire's road network effectively and mitigate the impact of road

deterioration on top of an initial investment of an estimated £300 million to carry out major repairs and reduce the need for further road closures and disruption. The vast majority of these roads are in the north of the county but locally Hatley Road Gamlingay is included as well as Lower Road Croydon, Wrestlingworth Road Tadlow, the A603 between Wimpole and Arrington, Wimpole Park Road in Orwell and Potton Road Guilden Morden.

Barrington-Foxton Cycleway

As part of the community contribution from the new development on Haslingfield Road, Barrington, the developer Redrow must provide a new cycleway from Barrington to Foxton station alongside the quarry railway. Redrow presented their detailed plans to Barrington residents in September. The cycleway will run on the west side of the railway line from Haslingfield Road to Glebe Road and then on the east side of the line for down to Foxton, with a new bridge over the river. This route avoids impacting existing houses as much as possible.

Preparatory work will begin this autumn and construction will take place during 2024. We will then have a direct and safe route that provides a link both to Foxton station and to the A10 cycle path.

Update on Cambridge South East Transport phase 2 and Foxton Travel Hub

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) is facing tough decisions in the face of inflation levels. With the cost of construction materials up by over 40 percent, the GCP has been re-evaluating its programme as the total programme costs rise beyond levels of its government grant and other income. The impact of inflation on the GCP's programme shows costs have increased by 20% – 30%. As a result Phase two of the Cambridge South East Transport project – a new dedicated busway, travel hub and active travel route connecting Cambridge with communities to the south-east of the city – will be 'paused'.

In addition the Foxton Travel Hub project – profoundly unpopular locally - will be paused. The GCP will develop both projects to a point where they are 'planning ready' whilst seeking alternative sources of funding to enable them to be delivered in the future.

SEND Information Hub

Support for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in Cambridgeshire is available through the SEND Information Hub which contains guidance and resources for children of all ages, featuring topics like early years, education, and preparing for adulthood. There are also specific sections on health, finding the right support, and social care - giving families unlimited access to information that can help them feel empowered and educated on what is available locally. send.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Gamlingay Pre-School

The County Council has granted consent for a temporary portacabin adjacent to GVP which is in the process of being installed. The consent includes an

informative asking the community to consider extending the 20mph zone around the area and the Parish Council has already started consulting on this with residents. Please engage with this if you have views for or against extending the 20mph zone! Meanwhile the search continues for a site in or adjacent to the village for a permanent location for the Pre-School. If you know of a site that may be suitable the please do get in touch.

New Bin Collection Days

The move to the new 4 day per week bin collection routes has gone well. Almost everyone clocked onto their new collection day with only a few roads missed across the District which were collected first thing the following day. The amount of calls into the call centre was under the estimated amount as was the number of reports of missed bins. The advantage of not collecting bins on Mondays is that we avoid all the confusion caused by Bank Holidays. The waste teams will be carry on their other duties on a Monday including commercial waste collections and litter bins and street cleaning.

Planning Service

Last year South Cambs spent £2 million (of your money) on agency staff, mainly in the planning service where there is a huge shortage of planners. This time last year the bill for this had already reached £249,000. This year thanks to the 4 Day Week trial attracting permanent staff to join us this bill is down to £24,000. Full details of our 4 Day Week trial are on our website along with an FAQ which is regularly updated.

Incentive Scheme for Landlords.

South Cambs has just launched an incentive scheme to encourage private landlords to rent their properties to our Ukrainian guests who want or need to move on from their hosts into private rental properties. There is a generous financial incentive for doing this and details are on the website.

How do you recycle your household plastics?

To be in with the chance of winning a £50 voucher, take the Pledge2Recycle survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QBCK2XL> and share your thoughts. The survey is being conducted by RECOUP, the UK's leading independent authority and trusted voice on plastics resource efficiency and recycling. Learn more about how you can better recycle your household waste with Pledge2Recycle at <https://pledge2recycle.co.uk/>

Sustainable Farming Incentive 2023

Applications are now open for the Sustainable Farming Incentive. The SFI pays farmers for taking actions that support food production, farm productivity and resilience, whilst protecting the environment. More information at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-application-dates-for-sustainable-farming-incentive-2023>

Help to insulate your home

If your home has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of D to G, and if you are in council tax band A-D (in England) you may qualify for cheaper (or even free) insulation. The government has launched a £1 billion scheme to help some families insulate their homes. Families in lower council tax bands with less energy-efficient homes will be offered upgrades such as roof, loft or cavity wall insulation. You can use an online checker for the scheme to find out if you are eligible. The tool will ask a series of questions – including how you heat your home, whether your home has solid or cavity walls, and if you are receiving any benefits. You can be a homeowner, landlord or tenant (either renting privately or from a housing association). If you're a tenant, speak to your landlord before you apply. You'll need their permission before any insulation can be installed. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-great-british-insulation-scheme>

A separate online checker has also been launched for the Home Upgrade Grant, which will help people in off-gas-grid homes with an Energy Performance Certificate rating of D to G. The grant provides energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating to households in England. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-home-upgrade-grant> If you use the online checkers you will then be referred to either your energy supplier, for support from the Energy Company Obligation programme and Great British Insulation Scheme, or your council for the Home Upgrade Grant.

Smart street lamps

Cambridgeshire is one of six areas to be granted funding to test smart street lamps that can house EV charging hubs and boost wireless coverage including 5G. The County Council has been awarded £220,000 to install 'smart poles' on which to host various smart city infrastructure.

Open Radio Access Network

Cambridgeshire County Council has also been awarded £6,523,645, plus £2,699,740 of commercial funding—a total funding amount of £9,223,385—to trial new mobile technology to improve mobile connectivity in busy locations where many people are trying to use mobile devices at the same time.

House Exchange

South Cambs is making it simpler and easier for council house tenants to arrange exchanges with other council house tenants. Full details are on the website but if you are experiencing difficulties please do come and talk to us.

Weeds and street sweeping

The County Council's Highways & Transport Committee is to take note of issues raised by communities with regard to the relationship between weeds and street sweeping. Residents have complained about debris from unswept streets (district council) being caught up in weeds from uncleared gutters and gullies (county council); and county council officers are now discussing this with district council officers about how better to align management of our streets,

kerbs, gullies and gutters. On a related note, most of the Division parishes will have their gullies cleaned out week commencing October 21st.

More 20MPH schemes get the green light

Twenty more 20MPH schemes across East Cambs, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire have been given the go-ahead in the latest round of funding from the County Council including Orwell. The County Council is keen to find additional funding to increase the number of applications it can support. With eighty-eight applications received, it is clear that road safety measures are very popular with residents and local communities. Gamlingay Parish Council is currently consulting on this as well.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The long-awaited revision of the Combined Authority's Local Transport & Connectivity Plan for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough was vetoed at the September meeting of the Combined Authority Board. The Leader of Peterborough City Council exercised his right of veto to scupper the plan—apparently to the complete surprise of his own Chief Executive, and without speaking in the meeting to explain why. The Plan had already been delayed from the July meeting of the Board, when Peterborough had threatened to veto it. After the September meeting, Peterborough's Leader suggested that his vote had something to do with Combined Authority plans to force congestion charging and low traffic neighbourhoods onto Peterborough. However, this would be impossible even if anyone wished to, as Peterborough City Council is the highways authority for the city and thus responsible for any such decisions.

Meanwhile, the Board decided to approve the extension of 51 bus service contracts to March 2025, and of the Ting 'demand responsive transport' contract in Huntingdonshire to March 2024. The Board also agreed to commission a review by an independent auditor of the bus franchising assessment—a step forward towards the aim of improving bus services across Cambridgeshire.

Lithium-ion Batteries

The Scrutiny Committee at the Fire Authority heard from officers about the dangers posed by Lithium-ion batteries which are used in scooters, mobility chairs, electric bikes and many other household items. Thermal runaway can cause them to explode and once they have it is vital to get out of reach of the 'smoke' and flames. Most events are caused by cheap replacement batteries and cables and the Fire Service recommends that any charging should be done during the day and preferably in a garage or similar – obviously not ideal. Please look out for publicity campaigns which will give much more detailed information - in the meantime treat any charging as potentially dangerous.

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! *****