

Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for January 2024.

This report contains factual information which we hope will be of use and of interest to the parish council and to the wider community of the parish.

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Joint statement from local leaders and the Combined Authority Mayor on Cambridge 2040 announcement

The Rt Hon Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, unveiled updated plans for the Government's 'Cambridge 2040' vision on 19 December 2023. The Government's vision for Cambridge includes proposals for "northwards" of 150,000 new homes around Cambridge as part of a major new expansion of the city.

The leaders of Cambridge City Council, Cllr Mike Davey, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cllr Bridget Smith, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, and the Combined Authority Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Dr Nik Johnson, said:

"Despite working hard to engage constructively with Government officials since the Secretary of State's initial Cambridge 2040 announcement in the summer, it's deeply disappointing that once again Government plans for Cambridge seem to be being negotiated through the press.

"We note in the latest announcement that the number of new homes put forward by Rt Hon Michael Gove MP has come down from 250,000 to 150,000, but this is still substantially more than the over 50,000 homes we have identified as needed in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (to 2040) – a number which will already be incredibly challenging to bring forward. We are ambitious for high quality sustainable, green growth but can't stress enough how vital it is that Government supports us to tackle the issues that will otherwise act as roadblocks to sustainable growth.

"We have written to the Secretary of State a number of times over the past month to stress the importance of committing to sustainable growth, and to reiterate the support that is needed to enable us to plan for the homes set out in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

"This includes prioritising sustainable public transport, community infrastructure such as schools and GPs, and water shortages in this region, which are putting our chalk streams under extreme pressure – an issue which the Greater Cambridge Planning Service warned in January 2023 could delay existing plans for housebuilding if not addressed by Government. We are still waiting for responses to these questions which would detail how Government proposes to support us in delivering a proposed 50,000 or so homes responsibly, let alone 150,000.

"Clarity is also needed as to who is involved in the 'Cambridge Delivery Group', what it will do, and how it will be governed. Devolution works best when local politicians

are empowered to lead and deliver sustainable development and we will continue to work hard to represent our residents and ensure that Cambridge and its surrounding villages grow in a sustainable and carefully planned way.”

Emergency Go Fund Me page will help residents in the cost-of-living crisis

People are invited to donate to a new emergency Go Fund Me campaign which will help finance the response to the cost-of-living crisis in South Cambridgeshire.

Meanwhile the Council is supporting around 400 people with free electric blankets and slow cookers. In the first stage of the scheme, the Council has written to people who receive a 75-85% Council Tax discount, the band below those receiving 100%, as they have 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 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 almost £400,000 being put in place by the Council to support residents this winter.

Donation is possible by visiting: <http://www.gofundme.com/SCDCcostofliving>

Civil parking enforcement is now in place in South Cambs

The New Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers for South Cambridgeshire given to Cambridgeshire County Council by Parliament came into place on 19 December 2023.

Until the end of January a Warning Notice will be issued to the owners of vehicles that contravene parking regulations – this looks like a parking ticket but there is no fine attached. Then Penalty Charge Notices will be issued from 1 February which will mean a fine of between £50 and £70, depending on the severity of the offence.

Corporate Peer Challenge report published

A Local Government Association review has described South Cambridgeshire District Council as being in a positive financial position – with a comprehensive and innovative response to the cost-of-living crisis.

The District Council voluntarily recently took part in a Corporate Peer Challenge, which is run by the Local Government Association (LGA) and designed to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to councils.

The District Council invited the team of Peers, made-up of councillors and officers from other councils, to visit South Cambridgeshire District Council in late October / early November. They spoke with staff, councillors, and local partners, and their report has now been published.

With cost-of-living pressures continuing to impact on the country, the peer team found that, “The Council’s cost of living response has been comprehensive, innovative and is well funded with good mechanisms in place to listen to residents’ concerns, and the joining up with key partners including the Integrated Care System has produced positive outcomes for communities.”

The report adds that the District Council performs above average for household recycling rates. It highlights respectful member and officer relationships and says the Audit and Governance Committee was consistently described as being effective. It also praises recent work to examine how the Council can improve how it interacts with younger people.

As with all Corporate Peer Challenges by the LGA, the report contains recommendations to help the Council improve. These include the need to better convey a vision for South Cambridgeshire and resetting and defining relationships at local and regional levels with key partners.

Peers recommended the Council accelerates the closure of its outstanding accounts. Since their visit, the 2020/21 accounts have been signed-off by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, and work is underway to complete the next set of accounts as soon as possible. However recent action by Government to tackle the growing problem nationwide of councils being unable to sign-off accounts due to an acute shortage of local government auditors has led to uncertainty across the country as to whether accounts for 2022/23 for many councils will be signed off. This is due to be discussed at a special meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance committee this month.

Climate committee recommends stricter air quality standards

South Cambridgeshire District Council’s Climate and Environment Advisory Committee have given their backing to the development of a new Air Quality Strategy, with stringent targets in-line with World Health Organisation aspirations.

They’ve recommended that the Council works with Cambridge City Council to develop a joint strategy covering Greater Cambridge. Cambridge City Council agreed a similar joint approach at their Environment and Community Scrutiny Committee back in October.

Research by the Committee on Medical Effects of Air Pollution concludes that even low concentrations of pollutants are likely to be associated with adverse effects on health.

Wishing you a happy new year

Carla & John