

LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT FEBRUARY 2023

LONGSTANTON, NORTHSTOWE, OAKINGTON & WESTWICK

CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN

COST OF LIVING

Good news on Funding for Housing

SCDC has been awarded £4.5 million as part of the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund. The funding, which will run over this financial year and into 2023-24 is to help the Council to acquire 30 additional homes. These will initially be used to accommodate refugees from Ukraine and Afghanistan but, when they are no longer needed for this purpose, the homes will be available through the housing waiting list (as council houses). 28 of the homes will be for Ukrainian refugees, and the council will receive 40% of the cost plus £20k per property (total £139200 per property). The other 2 properties will be larger properties, 4 bedrooms or over, and the council will receive 50% of the cost plus £20k per property (total £282822 per property). Given the tight timescale involved, it is likely that the council will be looking to acquire existing properties either on the open market or from developers, rather than developing new properties for this purpose.

Families to receive new cost-of-living payment this Spring

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has announced in Parliament that over eight million families in the UK will continue to receive direct financial support from the government. The first of five cost-of-living payments, worth £301, will be paid into bank accounts this spring. Over 6.5 million people on disability benefits will also receive a £150 payment this summer. DWP has also released a full breakdown showing recipients of cost-of-living and disability payments by council and parliamentary constituency.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-8-million-families-in-the-uk-to-receive-new-cost-of-living-payment-this-spring>

UKRAINE

Text for parish magazines, websites etc: Homes for Ukraine:

We are still in desperate need of more hosts for Ukrainian refugees, the Council's Communications team has put together the following paragraph and request that it is used in local magazines, social media sites etc.

'Homes for Ukraine: Hosts still needed for guests already in South Cambridgeshire

Hosts are still desperately needed across South Cambridgeshire to support families who have already arrived from Ukraine, with hosts eligible to receive up to £500 a month as a thank you payment. Around 770 people from Ukraine have already arrived in South Cambridgeshire and with the war continuing - and it not being safe for many families to return - there is an ongoing demand to provide them with a safe place to stay. Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, hosts sign up to provide a home to guests for a minimum of six months. However, around 20% of current hosts are not able to continue past that initial six-month point. It means that guests who have been staying with them would benefit from alternative accommodation locally, so they can continue to build on the relationships and community connections they have already been able to make. Hosts receive comprehensive support from the District Council, along with a £350 monthly Government 'Thank you' payment. The District Council also offers an additional opt-in monthly payment to hosts of £150. This takes the total host payment to £500 per month. Anyone who can offer a spare room and warm welcome is being asked to text ROOM to 88802 so the Council can support them through the process and match hosts to guests who have already started to settle in the local area.'

CRIMINAL DAMAGE - GRAFFITI

Guidance for councils and business owners on tackling graffiti and flyposting – reminder

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has recently published advisory guidance for all land managers responsible for managing graffiti and flyposting. The new guidance has been developed primarily for councils, Business Improvement Districts and business owners, but will also be relevant to transport network providers, utility providers, and other land managers that are responsible for the management of graffiti and

flyposting on their land. The advisory standards currently contained within the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse have been incorporated into the new guidance. The document provides recommendations for good practice in graffiti and fly-posting management. Case studies, examples of good practice, and practical considerations are also highlighted

Please contact litter@defra.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Guidance:

<https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectId=20773>

#DOTHERIGHTTHING

Key Amnesty 2023 (#DoTheRightThing)

There are a number of ways that people fraudulently obtain council housing services, which reduces the resources available to those who really need them. The fraudulent activity includes providing false information on application forms for council housing, failing to use the property as their only or principal home, and/or illegally subletting them and committing Right To Buy fraud. **Throughout February**, people who are misusing Council properties are being offered a one-off opportunity to #DoTheRightThing and return their keys without facing criminal proceedings prior to a month-long crackdown where charges will be brought. The #DoTheRightThing campaign runs across South Cambridgeshire District from February 1 to 28 during which people are asked to hand keys in to South Cambridgeshire Hall in an envelope containing the property address – no questions asked.

Evidence shows key amnesty campaigns have worked well in other parts of the country by bringing the issue to the public's attention. While we do not know the figures of fraud in the District (by its very nature, it's a hidden crime) but to even get one house back for a family in need will be considered a success.

VOTER ID

From May this year, voters will be required to show photo ID in polling stations before being allowed to vote. Although there are no scheduled elections in South Cambridgeshire after May this year, we'd like to encourage voters to think about this now and (if they do not have the required ID) to apply for their free Voter ID now. They can apply for their Voter Authority Certificate online. For further information about voter ID requirements and other elements of the Elections Act 2022, please visit the Electoral Commission Website <https://tinyurl.com/3mz33vh7>. There will also be a short article on this subject in the upcoming Spring 2023 edition of South Cambs Magazine.

BANK HOLIDAYS AND THE CORONATION

The Coronation of His Majesty The King and Her Majesty The Queen Consort

The Coronation of King Charles III and the Queen Consort will take place on the morning of 6 May. On 7 May, a Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle will showcase the country's diverse cultural heritage in music, theatre and dance. One of the highlights will be "Lighting up the Nation", in which iconic locations across the UK will be lit up with projections, lasers, drone displays and illuminations. Throughout the UK, Coronation Big Lunches will bring communities together on 7 May with street parties also taking place across the weekend.

The weekend of celebrations will end with the Big Help Out on 8 May, which will highlight the impact of volunteering. This will encourage people to get involved with activities run by local community groups, organisations and charities and volunteer-involving organisations wanting to join in can sign up here: <https://thebighelpout.org.uk/>

HEALTH

The NHS 'Feel Brighter' Campaign

'Feel Brighter' is a new NHS campaign that aims to reach out to older people aged 65 and over, who may be struggling with their mental health but don't know where to turn for advice, support and to find out what services are available locally. The new campaign aims to encourage older people who have symptoms such as anxiety, loneliness, or low mood to reach out and access free NHS Talking Therapies and other support to help them feel brighter again. NHS Talking Therapies are effective treatments that involve speaking with an experienced mental health professional to understand feelings and learn ways to manage them. Sessions are totally confidential and can be one-to-one, in a group, online, or over the phone.

To find out more, simply visit the Feel Brighter webpage at www.cpics.org.uk/feel-brighter for more information about NHS Talking Therapies, other support available, and how to refer yourself. Alternatively you can call this number to make an initial referral: Tel 0300 300 0055. Phone lines are available 9am-4pm, Monday to Friday (closed on Bank Holidays).

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 Published

The government has published a five-year delivery plan to restore nature and improve the environmental quality of the air, our waters and land. The delivery plan builds on the vision set out five years ago in the 25 Year Environment Plan, and sets out the government's approach to halting and then reversing the decline in nature. The environmental principles policy statement was also published today. It means that, from 1 November, environmental protection and enhancement will be embedded into the design and development of new policy across government. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs also published the Outcome Indicator Framework, which describes environmental change that relates to the 10 goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ambitious-roadmap-for-a-cleaner-greener-country>

Plan:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

Framework:

<https://oifdata.defra.gov.uk/>

Speech:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/environment-improvement-plan-launched>

Alternative Fuel Payment Scheme Launched

On 6 February, households across Great Britain who don't use mains gas for heating will start receiving £200 towards their energy bills as the Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) scheme launches. The government has confirmed that the vast majority, including many homes in rural areas, will get the £200 AFP automatically through their electricity supplier as a credit on their bill throughout February. A small minority of customers, such as those living in park homes or on static houseboats with no direct energy supplier, will need to apply to receive the payment through an online portal that will launch later this month.

Meanwhile from 8 February, energy suppliers will also be able to start making payments to businesses and both public and voluntary sector organisations that use alternative fuels to heat their buildings. A credit of £150 will be provided to eligible customers across the UK through the Non-Domestic Alternative Fuel Payment scheme. Energy suppliers will deliver this support up to 10 March, with most customers expected to receive the payment in February.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/households-businesses-and-organisations-off-the-gas-grid-to-receive-energy-bill-support-over-the-coming-weeks>

Funding to Improve Cycling Routes

On 6 February, the Department for Transport has announced £200 million of government funding to help councils make improvements that enable more people to choose active travel. Active Travel England is today inviting councils in England to apply for the funding. Schemes could include:

- creating more paths in rural areas
- developing safer routes for children to walk to school
- improved safety at junctions for people walking and cycling

Funding will also be used to support people in wheelchairs and mobility scooters by making street designs more inclusive. Projects will be designed in consultation with residents and businesses to ensure schemes are safe and work for local communities. The successful projects will be announced later this year. Guidance has been created to help councils develop active travel schemes that are well-designed and completed to a high standard.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/200-million-to-improve-walking-and-cycling-routes-and-boost-local-economies>

Improvements made to the Tree Health Pilot

The government's tree health pilot (THP) is being updated to improve the support available to farmers and land managers dealing with tree pest and disease issues. The pilot, running between 2021 and 2024, provides land managers with grants, guidance and advice to reduce the impacts of tree pests and diseases and build the resilience of England's trees, woodlands and forests ahead of the roll-out of a future nationwide Tree Health Scheme. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has worked with the Forestry Commission to evaluate user feedback and make several key changes to the scheme. These include simplifying the payments process, introducing higher payment rates, implementing a new advice package, and improving guidance.

The announcement follows the publication of the government's Environmental Improvement Plan, which committed to the publication of a revised Tree Health Resilience Strategy. The THP 2023 scheme is testing different ways of slowing the spread of pests and diseases affecting trees in England. The guidance published today is for new applicants in 2023.

Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improvements-made-to-the-tree-health-pilot-following-a-successful-first-year>

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tree-health-pilot-scheme>

MY WARD ACTIVITY

My work became less assimilation of information in January, and 2 months into the role, this month has been more about activity.

This has included: supporting residents in the Ward with several housing cases; involvement in LEGG discussions with SCDC; supporting the SCDC presence at Oakington & Westwick Tree Planting; volunteering at Northstowe Market, Warm Hub, and Community Garden launch; and attending the South Cambs Community Engagement Meeting.

FYI Parish and Town Councils in the ward: At the **South Cambs Community Engagement Meeting**

I questioned how the police can better support the reduction of dangerous driving and harassment that has been experienced in the ward, including by pedestrians who have experienced dangerous driving by some motorbike riders. Their advice is to please let them know when trouble is happening through the link southcambscops@cambs.police.uk so that they have a register of issues. They want to know from Parish and Town Councils about any specific times that are worse than others for dangerous driving problems and they will arrange 'pass throughs' at these times of the week to show a presence. For any situation which needs immediate attention please ask communities to call 999 for assistance.

COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY GOVERNMENT FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

If you have a problem or concern do not worry too much about who can solve it just ask the question and we will endeavour to signpost to the right person. The organisational structure of Cambridgeshire is complex, but it is important to identify where responsibility lies.

County Council

Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.

Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.

District Council

Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.

Parish/ Town Council

Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.

Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)

'The local delivery body for a City Deal with central Government worth up to £500 million over 15 years, to vital improvements in infrastructure (decarbonising transport), supporting and accelerating the creation of 44,000 new jobs, 33,500 new homes and 420 additional apprenticeships.'

Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.

The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor

'A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.'

What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.

Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough

To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is made up of Cambridgeshire County Councillors and Peterborough City Councillors.

CONTACT DETAILS

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or any other matters.

Cllr Natalie Warren-Green for Longstanton Ward including Longstanton, Northstowe, and Oakington & Westwick

Email: cllr.warrengreen@scambbs.gov.uk

For those on social media we have a highly active Facebook group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/> - Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe