

LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT JULY 2023

OAKINGTON & WESTWICK PARISH COUNCIL & LONGSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL (10TH JULY 2023)

CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN

Four day week trial for SCDC officers

- Further to previous updates, Cabinet recently approved the extension of a trial for a four-day week at SCDC. It will be extended by 12 month and will include staff who work in the shared waste service.
- Please note, however, that, this is a fast-moving situation and whatever I write in this report will potentially be out of date by the time you read it.
- As you may have seen I the media, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety, Lee Rowley has written to the council requesting that the trial is discontinued
- Suffice to say, the council does not feel that Mr Rowley is correct that the trial fails the 'value for money' test as he claims. During the initial 3-month trial the annual wage bill dropped by around £300,000. Evidence independently verified by the University of Cambridge shows that workplace productivity has been maintained and, in some cases, even improved. An independent "mystery shopper" exercise on the council's telephone service was also carried out and the results were very positive, showing that SCDC's level of service is significantly higher than its peers.
- The council has been clear that if performance drops or customer complaints increase the trial will stop but the evidence so far is that it is working as intended. 4-day week contracts are being increasingly adopted successfully in the private sector.
- As previously noted, as focused on recently in the press, the CEO is carrying out PhD studies on this subject. Just to reiterate, these studies are at her own expense and in her own time and there is no conflict of interest.

Proposed Waste Collection Round Changes

- The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service is currently working on a review of its collection rounds. The rounds are normally reviewed every few years to make sure that they are still as efficient as they can be.
- The Shared Waste Service suffers from recruitment problems (especially for HCV drivers) just as the rest of the council does for desk-based staff. For this reason, the service is also seeing how a four-day week might work for this service with a trial planned similar to that already in operation for desk-based staff. Adopting the 4-day week for the waste service will not mean that the council has to buy extra vehicles; the council has a rolling replacement programme and the purchase of new vehicles is progressing as normal. What the council will do, however, is to retain one of the end-of-service vehicles for the period of the trial. If the trial is a success and if extra vehicles are required, the cost should be offset by the reduction of agency staff, which is a major cost in the Waste Service.
- At the time of writing, details have not been published on the changes to the collection calendar but I will let the PC know of the plans as soon as I can. When the new rounds are introduced, the council will inform residents with a series of adverts in the South Cambs magazine and on social media.

STZ proposals – comments on the consultation results

Reiterating last month's report, the results of the STZ consultation have been published and can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/mra44p8x>

- As a reminder, the aim of the proposals is to improve quality of life by reducing traffic congestion and pollution. The scheme also seeks to address the serious inequalities apparent in the Greater Cambridge area and to increase the benefits, both to people and the environment, which come from enabling residents to use a modern public transport system and active travel solutions in preference to private motor vehicles.
- The rapid economic growth in Greater Cambridge needs the infrastructure and housing to support it. As an example, the government is supporting the expansion of the life sciences industry offering huge sums of money to attract investment. It has also determined that the region should have a new railway. Doing nothing is not an

option. This was the purpose of the government's City Deal funding which underpins the STZ proposals. In the consultation, respondents overwhelmingly supported better bus services but remained worried, especially during a cost-of-living crisis, about the burden of a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) charge. Even though the proposals give 3 or 4 years to improve public transport provision before any charging occurs, the public remain sceptical.

- The planned withdrawal of rural bus services by Stagecoach in recent months shows market failure; private bus companies will put their business needs ahead of unprofitable but vital community transport provision. Franchising is highly likely to go hand-in-hand with the public transport improvements and this will offer control over routes, fares, frequency and hours of operation and could be in place surprisingly quickly - within the next 18 months.
- People who cannot drive and/or afford a car, such as some young people and the less well-off are very supportive of improved bus services. Young people feel that their education and job choices are badly restricted if they do not own a car, and they welcome alternatives.
- As mentioned previously, there was clear concern about charging to access the Addenbrookes site, right from the first publication of the map of the STZ, and changes to it were always likely. We expect changes to be made such that trips will not incur a Zone charge. Tradespeople welcomed the prospect of easier city access that reduced congestion would bring but thought that a premium charge on commercial vehicles is unfair.
- Revised proposals are still being worked-up but it seems likely that there will be a reduction of the hours in which the charge will be imposed. The exclusion of the Addenbrookes Campus from the charging zone is also being considered.
- It is clear that residents throughout Cambridgeshire support Active Travel. One of the least contentious areas of feedback is the work of the Greenways Project and other active travel schemes. A large number of people said that they want to be able to cycle or walk easily and safely to more places, something that is currently restricted to the villages closest to Cambridge.
- It remains the case that the final decision on the scheme will be taken by Cambridgeshire County Council later in the year.

Mobile Food Hub

- You may have seen the press release on 22 June about the Mobile Food Hub: <https://www.scamb.gov.uk/mobile-food-hub-delivering-food-to-south-cambridgeshire/>
- SCDC is providing funding to help Hope CIC to set up a mobile food hub in different locations in the district. They will provide fresh fruit and veg and supermarket items with a short shelf life at a low price or free of charge.

Continued support for residents during the cost-of-living crisis

- The Communities Team at SCDC has created a new leaflet advising residents of support the available during the cost-of-living crisis. The council is trying to encourage more people to apply for Council Tax support since many people who are eligible for this scheme are unaware that it exists. Printed and electronic leaflets can be obtained by emailing chris.riches@scamb.gov.uk.

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@scambs.gov.uk

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

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

District Councillor's Report July 10th 2023 - Cllr Tom Bygott

Four day working week

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) hit the national headlines recently with stories on the BBC, ITV, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Daily Mail and other media outlets regarding its controversial trial of a four day working week on full pay for its office staff. South Cambridgeshire is the first council in the UK to experiment with introducing four-day working week. There is a 4-Day Week campaign group, and a handful of private companies have experimented with it; a recent trial included 61 companies, but this is an infinitesimally small fraction of the estimated (at the start of 2022) 5.5 million private sector businesses in the UK and even of the approximately 43,600 business with 50 or more employees.

Local Government Minister Lee Rowley warned SCDC in a recent letter that giving staff an extra day off each week is unlikely to provide value for money to taxpayers. He said: "Whilst some private sector organisations may choose to experiment with their own capital and capacity regarding 'four-day working weeks', local government should not do the same." He said such an approach could breach the council's legal duties under the Local Government Act. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will "shortly be issuing clear guidance" on the matter, he added.

Despite receiving this warning, the leadership of the council are continuing with their experiment and its extension to bin collection crews. The trial will start later in the summer and will mean that collection days for many villages are changed as Monday is the new 'day off' for all collection staff. The Council has advertised for extra collection crews, as employee numbers need to be expanded to do five days' work in four. The direct cost to council taxpayers of having to employ more staff and buy more bin lorries to collect waste in four days rather than five would be over £100,000 in the first year, rising to over £200,000 in the second year. The council claims to be able recover these increased costs through lower levels of staff absence and reduced use of agency staff. As I have said previously, I am sceptical of the arguments put forward by the council administration and do not support the trial.

The council has not been operating a regular office working environment since Covid, having kept the overwhelming majority of office staff working from home every day. Many private sector businesses have increased home working since then too, but many also have one or two days in the week when staff go in. Face to face contact is important for productivity and employee morale, especially for newer or younger staff who need to learn their roles from more experienced colleagues. Councillors don't have access to a list of home telephone numbers for staff, and this means that matters that could be resolved with a quick telephone call must now become long drawn-out email correspondences.

Disruption to Guided Busway services

Guided Busway Route B, which travels from Oakington to Cambridge via Cambridge North Railway Station is currently operating a diversion as Milton Road is the site of works to move a gas main that will restrict traffic to one lane. The works between Union Lane through to Downham's Lane are expected to continue until the end of August, but the bus diversion is expected to last until July 21st if the works can be carried out on time.

The diversion involves city-bound buses continuing as normal to Cambridge North Station, where they turn around and return up the busway to Orchard Park. They then follow the Route A onto Histon Road but then turn left onto Gilbert Road before heading back onto Milton Road. This adds a considerable extra distance and time onto the journey. For example, the distance from the Busway/Station Road junction in Impington to the Histon Road/Kings Hedges Road junction is eight times the distance by bus than the shortest road distance between them.

The gas main is being moved as part of the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Milton Road scheme. This aims to fit car, bus and bicycle space onto a narrow road that was not laid out to have dedicated space for all of these uses, and this has resulted in all the trees along the road being clear-felled in an effort to make extra space.

Cambridgeshire quality of life survey

Cambridgeshire County Council has launched a survey to understand residents' views on the quality of their lives. The annual survey aims to track the responses over time to see how changes to council decisions and policies – and the work of other public sector bodies in the county - affect people's views, and to give Members vital insight when they make business planning decisions.

In addition to an online survey, they will be pro-actively calling 5,500 residents. The 15-minute telephone survey – run by an independent market research company Thinks Insight and their partner Team Search - aims to speak to 1,100 people aged 18+ living in each of the five Cambridgeshire district areas – broadly representing each area's population. In addition, they will talk to people from specific groups who are less often heard from, including people who may have been homeless or are from migrant or Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities. The Council is also planning a specific piece of work with younger people via youth engagement teams.

The online survey is available until Friday 4th August, and can be filled out at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey. They have not provided a way for residents to request a paper copy.

Digital switchover: replacement of copper telephone lines

The Local Government Association (LGA) has recently launched a toolkit for partners to use to raise awareness of the digital switchover for their residents and communities. It can be accessed at: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover/digital-switchover-partner-toolkit.

The telecommunications industry is replacing all old copper telephone lines in the UK, and it hopes to upgrade to a fully digital internet-based service by 2025. Councils have a critical role to play in the digital switchover to implement the solutions required to support residents and prevent impact on their day-to-day lives. Devices such as personal alarms and health monitoring systems, as well as plug-in telephones could be affected. The toolkit contains resources to use on social media, plus draft copy for websites and bulletins. The LGA has also recently added to the toolkit a poster with space for a partner logo and space for a few lines of local contact information to help councils with communications locally. This first wave of communications aims to educate those around 'telecare' users. The next stage is to have a printable newsletter template for partners to distribute directly to residents who may be digitally excluded, or for use in libraries and community hubs. Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) will be talking about the digital switchover and the LGA will highlight their toolkit at DLUHC's Local Comms meeting next week. Councils should visit the LGA's digital switchover hub linked above if they are interested in the toolkit. If you any questions, please contact: socialcaredigital@local.gov.uk

Cllr Tom Bygott
cllr.bygott@scambs.gov.uk
07765 475 513