

## **LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT APRIL 2025**

**LONGSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL ( 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025)**

**OAKINGTON & WESTWICK PARISH COUNCIL (14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025)**

**NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL (29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025)**

**CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN**

### **Pre-election period begins**

We are now in the pre-election period ahead of the County Council and Combined Authority Mayor elections in May. This does not affect the council's 'business-as-usual' activities, but council officers are constrained by what they can say and publish until after the elections. This includes that District Councillors will not be cited in quotes for the media during this period.

### **New SCDC website launches**

SCDC's new website is now operating, which has a new, more user-friendly look and feel and is optimised for both desktop and mobile devices so that it's easier for residents to find critical information and services. It which allows residents to get personalised, local information at a glance. By entering their postcode, residents can get information on bin collection dates for their street, local street cleansing schedules, nearby planning applications, District Councillor details and local events of interest. [Try it on the new homepage.](#)

### **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

The LGR remains a fast-moving project for the government, and it now seems almost inevitable that SCDC will cease to exist in a couple of years (as will most of the current local authorities).

An Extraordinary meeting of South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) agreed to send a letter to the Local Government minister Jim McMahon clarifying that we are working productively with the other councils in Cambridgeshire to design new Unitary Councils. This will mean that the County Council is broken up and its responsibilities will go to either 2 or 3 new councils which will be amalgamations of the current district councils. We have until the autumn to submit the detail of the boundaries of these new authorities.

Meanwhile, Leaders of S Cambs, City and County and Mayor Johnson have had a meeting with Lord Patrick Valance to hear about his plans for the Oxford Cambridge Corridor. He has been appointed by the chancellor and said that his aim is to get some stuff done this year. Council leaders pushed him for early solutions to the problems of water scarcity and wastewater disposal.

SCDC has just published an FAQ-style webpage for residents in an attempt to answer common questions and you can [view the page on the new website](#). SCDC will keep this page updated as the weeks and months go by.

### **Four-day week consultation**

The consultation on the four-day week has now closed and the submissions have been sent for independent analyses. Once the data have been collated a report will be presented to full Council for debate and for a vote on whether or not the four-day week should be made permanent.

## **Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report 2025 (5 year land supply)**

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning team has published a new report with a revised housing trajectory and our latest housing land supply calculations. This shows that in the five years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2030, a total of 13,383 homes are anticipated to be built in Greater Cambridge, giving a housing land supply of 5.5 years. This means that planning applications will again be assessed against all the councils' local policies – which include a clear plan for where homes should be built - as well as those set nationally – and our villages will once again enjoy the full protection against unplanned and inappropriate development. The government's revised (and significantly higher) housebuilding requirements meant that our 5-year figure briefly dipped below 5 years, so this is good news indeed.

### **Council Tax Fraud**

Fraud officers have clawed back £360,000 in false claims for council tax discounts, with the money set to be invested back into public services across South Cambridgeshire. The money has been returned to District Council budgets after staff uncovered hundreds of false claims by comparing data records. Called the Cambridgeshire County Council Fraud Initiative, the project continues to identify single person discount fraud and error, since launching in July 2023. It works by comparing data held by the local authority with other information such as the electoral register or credit reference data. Where there is a debt identified, it is recovered through the normal Council Tax billing process, with the income used to fund public services. Data gathered as part of the initiative indicates that around two in 10 claims reviewed by the authority, were being claimed incorrectly.

### **Warmer Council Homes**

More than £8 million in Government funding has been awarded to SCDC to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes. The idea is to upgrade thousands of social homes across the country which are currently below the standard of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C. Improvements to South Cambridgeshire's Council homes could include insulation, ventilation, heating controls, double glazing, solar panels, and heat pumps - cutting bills and tackling fuel poverty.

SCDC will now work to allocate funding to properties with priority given to those most in need of energy efficiency improvements. Council tenants will be contacted direct if their home is able to benefit – with the aim for the Council to have as many of its 5,500 properties above an EPC rating of C in the next four years.

The funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is part of the national Warm Homes Plan. A total of £8,280,376 is being provided for South Cambridgeshire under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund scheme. South Cambridgeshire District Council will contribute £10 million from its Housing Revenue Account – consisting of Council house rents – to the improvements too.

### **Empty Properties**

During 2023/24 – 28 South Cambridgeshire properties that were sat un-used and vacant were bought back into use by the District Council. A similar number of turnarounds is expected by the end of the current financial year. Anyone who is looking to turn an old, neglected property into a home may be able to save thousands of pounds in VAT on renovation costs - just by contacting South Cambridgeshire District Council's Empty Homes Officer.

Home maintenance and improvements are usually charged at the standard rate of 20% VAT. However, the Government offers a 5% VAT rate on renovations for properties that have been unoccupied for more than two years – but were lived in beforehand. Anyone who has recently purchased, or is about to buy, an empty property which meets these criteria simply needs to contact the Council. The Empty Homes Officer can then provide paperwork needed to confirm the house

was unoccupied - triggering a substantial saving. To see if you qualify, email [env.health@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@scambs.gov.uk) and provide as much information as possible on the property you have recently purchased or are looking to purchase.

### Council Tax on empty homes

As part of other efforts to bring local empty homes back into use - Council Tax will be doubled on long-term vacant and second homes in the District. The aim is to encourage people to sell or rent their properties to tackle the national housing shortfall - which is particularly acute in South Cambridgeshire. Council estimates suggest there are around 2,640 empty homes in the district, and a further 360 second properties.

### Our Member of Parliament

[Ian.Sollom.MP@parliament.uk](mailto:Ian.Sollom.MP@parliament.uk) Ian is already active across the constituency, held a surgery in January in Northstowe, and visited Willingham Medical Practice with me and Cllr Firouz Thompson in February to discuss concerns and potential solutions to health service availability for Northstowe. His office staff answer emails as soon as practically possible. He welcomes correspondence from residents requiring his assistance.

## COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND 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.

<p><b>County Council</b></p> <p>Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.</p> <p>Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.</p>
<p><b>District Council</b></p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p><b>Parish/ Town Council</b></p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p><b>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</b></p> <p>'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.'</p> <p>Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.</p>
<p><b>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</b></p> <p>'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.'</p> <p>What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.</p>
<p><b>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</b></p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>

### **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](mailto: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