

## LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT SEPTEMBER 2024

LONGSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL (2<sup>ND</sup> SEPT 2024)

OAKINGTON & WESTWICK PARISH COUNCIL (9<sup>TH</sup> SEPT 2024)

NORTHSTOWE TOWN COUNCIL (24<sup>TH</sup> SEPT 2024)

CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN

### Contact information for MP Ian Sollom

I am pleased to confirm here the contact email address for Liberal Democrat Ian Sollom who became our new MP for St Neots and Mid Cambs in July: [ian.sollom.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:ian.sollom.mp@parliament.uk) Ian is already very active across the constituency and his office staff will be in place within the next few weeks. He welcomes correspondence from residents requiring his assistance.

### National Planning Policy Framework

There has been much speculation on changes to planning policy, directed by central government, following the General Election. A government consultation has now been launched which is open for response until 24 September.

Please look here for full context and information, and for how to respond:

[Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system)

You'll notice that, although the formal implementation of the new government's plans remains in its early stages, a number of things are clearly relevant for Greater Cambridge including:

- Mandatory minimum housing targets
- Requirements of the 5 Year Housing Land Supply are more rigorous and reviewed annually
- Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Widening Brownfield Land definition to include hardstanding and glasshouses
- Grey Belt land is defined as land in the Green Belt that is not performing against any Green Belt purpose
- Golden Rules for Green Belt release: 50% affordable housing, infrastructure and green spaces
- Most likely to impact on northern Cambridge villages
- Where a local authority does not have a local plan then Green Belt can be released where there is a proven need for increased housing development
- Increased density of housing in urban areas
- The building of lab space and high tech factory space will be a required planning consideration for local plans
- The proposed Infrastructure Levy scheme will not be introduced

### Five Year Land Supply

SCDC has published the most recent Greater Cambridge housing trajectory with housing land supply calculations. This is important as without it a lot of protective planning policies fall away as happened in the years to 2018. In any event, the trajectory - which shows anticipated delivery of new homes across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire up to 2041 - demonstrates that jointly for Greater Cambridge there are 6.5 years of housing land supply for the 2024-2029 period.

## **Cambridge 2050**

There has been understandable speculation and concern in relation to the previous government's Cambridge 2050 proposals for up to 150,000 new homes in the Greater Cambridge region, directed by central government. Whilst the new Labour government has not formally stated a position in relation to this, it is clear that the economic growth which the Greater Cambridge region is expected to continue to deliver means that the new government is not abandoning the principles of the Cambridge 2050 proposals. Local government leaders and MPs are in ongoing and intense dialogue with the new government to understand what the plans are and what changes, if any, they plan to make to the plans of the previous Conservative government.

## **New Towns Taskforce announced**

The Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, has (31 July) asked Sir Michael Lyons to be the Chair of an independent New Towns Taskforce, supported by housing economist Dame Kate Barker as Deputy Chair. The group will present a final shortlist of recommendations on appropriate locations for new towns to ministers within 12 months. The programme of new towns will create communities of at least 10,000 new homes each and will be governed by a 'New Towns Code' – a set of rules that developers will have to meet to make sure new towns are well-connected, well-designed, sustainable and attractive places where people want to live.

## **War Memorials Grant Scheme**

The War Memorials Trust is providing grants for the repair and conservation of free-standing war memorials in England intended to help those who are responsible for the upkeep of war memorials. The grants support the care and preservation of war memorials to a high standard, and to prevent the decay of this important part of our built heritage. Grants will normally be for between 25% and a maximum of 75% of eligible costs. The maximum grant is £5,000 for non-freestanding war memorials while freestanding, non-beneficiary war memorials may be considered up to a maximum grant of £20,000. Application close on October 31st 2024. <http://www.warmemorials.org/grants/>

## **A-Road litter picking**

Although Highways is covered by County Council, just to mention briefly here that SCDC is responsible for litter picking on local A-roads and working with County, has been very responsive to representations on the need for additional sessions.

## **Community Cooking Programmes**

This is a repeat from my July report. SCDC, in partnership with Let's Cook Project, are delivering FREE sessions, aiming to support residents of South Cambridgeshire to improve their confidence and knowledge in healthy eating and cooking. We are looking to deliver 4 cohorts across the district, and we offer 2 different programs for adults and families. All equipment and ingredients will be provided. For more info please contact Emma Jarvis [emma.jarvis@letscookproject.org](mailto:emma.jarvis@letscookproject.org)

## **Cost-of-living information**

As the autumn/winter months set in, continue to visit <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/> for information on: where to turn for advice; benefits, money and debt advice; help with energy and water bills; help for parents and families; help with food and health costs; help with phone bills; help with making your home warmer; Age UK handy person service and; support if you are in distress.

## Civil Parking Enforcement

A total of 1757 town patrols covering 6687 street visits in South Cambridgeshire have been completed by the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) since 1st February 2024 through to the end of June. Patrols have predominantly focussed on areas where parking is in the greatest demand, such as commuting and shopping areas. As a reminder, requests for parking enforcement can be made by emailing [parkingcontrol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:parkingcontrol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or online at [South Cambridgeshire Civil Parking Enforcement - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

## South Cambs Business Support: Youth Engagement Programme

An SCDC Youth Enterprise Support Programme supports young people who want to start their own business, to get started. The programme will work with young individuals aged 16-25 to develop essential skills, knowledge and will include opportunities to gain real market experience. Candidates will also be eligible to apply for £1,000 grants to transform their business ideas into local market ventures.

Young people who are interested in the Youth Enterprise Support Programme can register to start their journey from conception to commerce at <https://nxgconnect.co.uk/youth-enterprise-programme/> If you have any queries please contact Business Support Key Projects Team Leader: [Katherine.Southwood@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Katherine.Southwood@scambs.gov.uk)

## SCDC Four-Day Week Trial

This trial remains of interest locally, and nationally, in an environment where the new Government are discussing options for 4-Day week working across industries.

At SCDC, with the General Election over, consideration of this trial was paused but has now gone to the council's Staffing and Employment Committee. Here is a synopsis:

An independent report by two universities into South Cambridgeshire District Council's performance during its four-day week trial has been published. An independently run health and wellbeing survey has also been published. Of 24 key performance indicators monitored by the Council, analysis by the Universities of Cambridge and Salford found 22 improved or remained the same.

Under a four-day week, officers are expected to carry out 100 per cent of their work, in around 80% of their contracted hours, for 100 per cent of their pay. The Council's opening hours have been maintained so it has been open for business just as it was before the trial – with longer opening hours on Wednesdays.

Researchers evaluated the Council's key areas of performance over several years – including during the full length of the four-day week trial from the beginning of 2023 to the end of March 2024. Eleven measures were performing better during the trial, compared to beforehand. This covers areas such as call answering times, timeliness of planning decisions, how long it takes to process benefits claims and speed of emergency repairs to Council homes. The areas found to have improved are:

- Percentage of calls to the Council's Contact Centre that were answered.
- The average number of days to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support changes.
- The percentage of emergency repairs to Council homes completed within 24 hours.
- The average number of weeks taken to determine householder planning applications.
- Major planning application decisions made in time.
- The percentage of major planning application decisions that get overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.
- Smaller planning application decisions made in time.

- The percentage of smaller planning application decisions that get overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.
- Staff turnover, which has dropped by almost 40 per cent.
- The percentage of complaints responded to within timescales.
- Invoices paid by the Council within 30 days.

A further 11 key performance indicators showed no significant differences during the trial – meaning those services continued to be delivered to the quality they were previously. The frequency of bin collections has also remained the same.

The two areas that were exceptions in terms of performance during the trial period were housing rent collected and average days to re-let housing stock. Housing rent collected either hit or was just below the Council's target in the 15 months of the trial. However, overall collection rates were below the long-term average, indicating that rent collection has not recovered to pre-Covid levels. The assumption is that this is likely due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on tenants' household finances.

Meanwhile, the target for the average number of days taken to re-let Council homes is very ambitious at 17 days. The top 25 per cent performing Councils in the country average 37 days to relet Council houses. In 2022/23 the average turnaround time for South Cambridgeshire District Council was 28 days; in 2023/24 it was 30 days. Returned Council homes now also often require extensive works which take longer to complete.

Professor Brendan Burchell from the Department of Sociology at Cambridge University, said "These results are supportive of moves to reduce the length of the working week but are not a surprise. In the past two years other researchers have studied many private sector employers in the UK and elsewhere that also reported the company's performance was maintained after a 20 per cent reduction in hours of work; employees and managers can find better ways of doing things to work more efficiently, given the right guidance and motivation."

There is also a financial assessment of the trial, which outlines a known full year cost saving of £371,500. This is mainly due to permanently filling 10 posts that were previously identified as 'hard to fill'. The financial saving has been made by not needing more expensive agency alternatives. Meanwhile, recruitment data shows there has been a 53 per cent increase in the average number of applications for jobs advertised externally and more than 130 new staff have joined the Council. Of new starters, 76 per cent were influenced by the four-day week trial when deciding whether to join. The findings of the latest independently run health and wellbeing survey by Robertson Cooper show higher employee commitment, with more staff reporting they intend to stay longer working for the Council, a key factor in reducing turnover and high vacancy rates. Mental and physical health and motivation have also risen.

The Council introduced the four-day week trial in a bid to improve services by filling hard-to-fill posts permanently, rather than relying on more expensive agency staff, which can also be disruptive. For example, when bin lorry drivers leave, it can disrupt collections when new drivers are learning bin routes or agency drivers cover them as replacements are trained. 11 lorry drivers left the Council in 2022, but only five did in 2023 after bin crews joined the trial.

Council leader Bridget Smith has written to Jim McMahon MP, the responsible minister to ask him to clarify that the new government will not lever financial penalties against councils who adopt a 4 Day Working week model. Once clarification is received the Council will have all the information required to move forward to make a final decision on whether this is the right model of work for South Cambs. The previous Minister responsible for trying to stop local authorities from trying out new ways of working lost his seat in the General Election.

## **Fire Services:**

### **Batteries might kill you**

People are being urged to Take Charge and Be Safe with their electrical items following two fires involving batteries recently with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service highlighting the risks after firefighters were called to incidents involving electric vehicle batteries. With one, an e-bike battery started to smoke as it was plugged in to charge. In another, an e-scooter battery caught fire after being damaged the day before. Lithium-ion batteries can pose a considerable risk if damaged or disposed of incorrectly. Water does not work on the fire; and thermal runaway means the fire is extremely hot. More information is available on the Fire service website.

### **On-call firefighter - have you considered doing this?**

On-call firefighters are not based at a fire station. They carry a pager and respond to emergency incidents as and when they happen. They receive an annual wage to reflect the time they commit to being available plus additional payments for attending incidents and drill nights (one evening a week for two hours).

As well as being an on-call firefighter, many also have other jobs and are able to provide evening, daytime or weekend cover. When they are on-call they may be at home, working for themselves or for a nearby company, or out in their local community (staying within a five-minute travel time of the fire station). The role forms a vital part of today's fire and rescue service, providing emergency cover to more than 90 per cent of the UK. In Cambridgeshire, they make up more than half of the workforce and are generally located in rural communities, small towns and villages.

How do I become an on-call firefighter? We are generally looking for people aged 18 and over, with a good level of general fitness, that can respond within five minutes to emergencies. Please follow this link for Cambridgeshire On-call fire-fighters:

[On-call firefighter \(cambsfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk)

## **Police issues:**

### **Pegasus - scheme to help people communicate with police**

The Police have launched a new scheme to help people communicate with them; it is particularly intended for anyone with an illness or disability who may wish to have easier access system in place, but anyone can apply.

For more information on the scheme or to register, visit [Pegasus card scheme | Cambridgeshire Constabulary \(cambs.police.uk\)](#)

### **Have you considered being a Special Constable?**

Repeating this one from my July report: Cambs Police have just launched a recruitment drive for Special constables - Specials have all the powers of a police officer and work alongside their regular colleagues. It only requires a minimum commitment of four hours a week and is a great opportunity to give something back to your community, while receiving professional training, skills and experience that can be used in everyday life and career progression.

Over the past 12 months, Specials have racked up more than 23,000 hours on the job, launched an impressive 400 investigations and stopped 1300 vehicles. If you, or residents, would like to find out more about becoming a Special, and maybe even apply, please visit the Police website pages: [Apply to be a Special Constable | Cambridgeshire Constabulary \(cambs.police.uk\)](#)

## **Police Engagement**

As mentioned in my July report, Cambridgeshire Police is undertaking community engagement events with the most recent on Wednesday 28 August at 7pm. Cllr Firouz Thompson attended this and has included some information in her report for September meetings.

## 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>
<p><b>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</b></p> <p>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.</p>

## 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@scambsgov.uk](mailto:cllr.warrengreen@scambsgov.uk)

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

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