

## District Councillors Longstanton Ward Annual Report 2022 (covering Longstanton, Northstowe, Oakington & Westwick)

Cllrs Sarah Cheung Johnson and Alex Malyon

### Election Results- District Council Elections

We are extremely pleased and honoured to have been recently re-elected as District Councillors for Longstanton, Oakington and Westwick and Northstowe. The full election results were as follows:

Conservative 425

Lib Dem 1326

Lib Dem 1183

Labour 252

Conservative 340

Turnout 35.85%

There were elections across all the seats of South Cambridgeshire District Council, as we now elect the whole council every four years. The Liberal Democrat group, of which we are a part, increased in size from 30 to 37 councillors, out of 45 in total. The remaining 8 councillors are Conservatives. National issues always come into play in local elections, but I think that the increased majority for the ruling group can also be taken as a sign of approval of the way that we are running the council overall.

It has been a privilege to serve the communities of our ward for the last four years and we are delighted to have another four years to continue with our work as councillors. Our priorities for the next four years include fighting for action to address the issues caused by dewatering in Longstanton, working with Oakington to try and secure flood mitigation for the village and pushing for faster delivery of community facilities in Northstowe that will be of benefit for the whole local community. We will of course continue to work very closely with our County Councillor Firouz Thompson on these and other local issues.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Northstowe Town Council for their first year as a council. We would also want to thank Longstanton and Oakington Parish Councils and Northstowe Town Council for all their assistance and time spent working with us for our communities.

We would also like to credit our new County Cllr, Firouz Thompson who has shown a huge enthusiasm and determination to get things done during her first in office. We credit much of what we have achieved to us working together as a local a team to deliver for our residents.

The last year has been a very busy one and we are not able to cover all the work that we do as councillors in this report, but we would just like to highlight some of what has happened locally. We have also provided an update on what we have achieved across the district as a council administration.

## Longstanton

- Dewatering in the village- this has been an issue of ongoing concern and something we have been pushing for action on throughout our time as district councillors. The HR Wallingford report which was finally completed and published identified that reductions in water levels in local ponds and wells, including the Kingfisher Pond, was a result of dewatering during the first phases of the Northstowe development. The council have continued to work with Longstanton Parish Council, Northstowe Town Council, and the Environment agency to further investigate and determine what action should be taken to address this.
- Home Farm recreation extension land – in conjunction with the Parish Council we discussed with the Greater Cambridge Planning service the inclusion of land off Home Farm Road in the next Local Plan, to provide a potential solution to the stalemate reached with the developer on the completion of the final phase of Home Farm and the transfer of the recreation land to the Parish Council to allow the development of a new Village Institute.
- Home Farm road adoptions – whilst not within the control of either District or County Councils, we have been working with various parties to keep updated on the progress of the formal road adoptions in Home Farm by the County, as well as ensure we know who to ask to report faulty streetlights. Some sections have now been formally adopted by the Council, so residents can report these streetlights directly.

- Hatton's Road Pond- these ponds are currently owned by the Northstowe developer L&Q and there is no formal right of way for villagers to access these. We know though that the Parish Council has expressed an interest in taking on these ponds as a resource for the village and we are facilitating a meeting to try and look at how this could proceed. The District Council has confirmed that they do not wish to take on these ponds, but we will work to support the Parish Council in efforts for them to secure a priority right of way and on securing funding for this from grants available.

## Oakington and Westwick

- Approval of Northstowe Phase 3b- we would particularly like to thank Oakington Parish Council for their considered and detailed feedback to this planning application and we were happy to support their objections. We were disappointed we were not able to get changes in all areas, but we were able to secure conditions on building heights, reducing these from 3 to 2 stories along the Oakington edge. We also secured specific, enforceable conditions on construction management to try and minimise disruption to residents from future development.
- Objection to the inclusion of a site for twenty homes in Oakington in the next Local Plan- We wrote to every household in the village regarding our objections to the inclusion of the site on Green Belt land between the village and the busway, in the proposed sites in the new Local Plan. We strongly objected to this site being included during the consultation.
- Cottenham Grove- We were able to secure a planning condition requiring the routing of construction traffic from this site via the B1049 to the A14, rather than via Oakington and Westwick. Despite submitting our objections at the reserved matters stage, we were not able to secure a similar planning condition for the Tilia Homes site, on the other side of Rampton Road. Unfortunately, a condition requiring a traffic management plan had not been placed at the Outline planning stage. Outline planning for this site was secured before we were elected as councillors and Oakington Parish Council were not consultees on this application. We have however written to the site agent and secured an informal agreement on routing traffic from this via the B1049.

- Support of recreation ground planning- we have fully supported the plans for development of amenities for the community on the Recreation ground, including unfortunately having to chase the planning team for responses.

## Northstowe

- Approval of Northstowe Phase 3a and 3b – we submitted objections to these plans, which were finally approved by the planning committee this year. We are pleased that we were able to secure planning conditions, including robust and enforceable conditions on construction management and a requirement to monitor groundwater levels throughout the development.
- Approval of Sports Pavilion – we reviewed plans for this throughout the project and were pleased to be able to secure amendments to these plans, including changing the planned mixed gender toilets into segregated male and female toilets and the addition of a full changing spaces toilet for severely disabled people to use – the only one available in quite a wide area. We also secured measures to make the building more sustainable, with air source heat pump, LED lighting, conduits for future EV charging, solar panels on the roof and bird and bat boxes. The council is now in the final stages of appointing a contractor for the build.
- Community facilities – we have been frustrated with the pace of delivery on these projects and internally have been pushing for these to be delivered more quickly. We are pleased that, following our repeated requests, a Northstowe Delivery Group will now be set up with a new dedicated Senior Responsible Office at South Cambs to oversee projects. As District Councillors we will sit on this group to represent the views of residents. To update on the delivery of the community facilities:
  - Community Building- The plans submitted by the developer were for an extremely basic building that would not have met the needs of the community. Since SCDC purchased the land for the community building and enterprise zone, which will be at the heart of Phase 1, we have been working with the community, Town Council, and local businesses on a masterplan for this area which will include a new community building.

- Interim Community Facilities- The delay in delivery of the permanent building means that interim facilities are needed to bridge the gap that will exist when the Community Wing is handed back to Pathfinder school. The District Council agreed to the acquisition of a well-located property to provide a temporary community building. We have been unable to make a public announcement about the details of the interim facilities while the negotiations around this are finalised but are working with council officers to ensure all current users of the Wing will be accommodated and hope that there will be more details available very soon.
  - The Civic Hub- Northstowe health centre, including GP services, will be housed in the Civic Hub – part of Phase 2. During the pandemic, the local NHS was understandably struggling to engage fully in the planning process for this building, but progress is now being made on developing a blueprint for this building.
  - A Shop for Northstowe- We have been continuing to lobby for a temporary solution to the lack of a shop at Northstowe, until permanent commercial premises are developed. While we are really encouraged by the efforts of Sustainable Northstowe, Co-Op and the community in providing a community larder, getting a shop for the town remains one of our top priorities.
- Impact piling breach of planning condition- We managed to get a temporary stop notice issued to halt work caused by impact piling. Whilst David Wilson Homes were told to stop piling as they did not have approval, our enforcement officers believe they were told by their lawyers that without a stop notice served in writing they could continue. Council’s legal team have advised that since they stopped immediately the notice was issued, pursuing non-compliance was unlikely to be successful and the council could therefore not justify using public funds to pursue this through the Courts. This was disappointing to us as well as the enforcement officers at the council. The developer was required to use a less disruptive continuous auger piling method to continue this piling work.
  - Northstowe water parks- The opening of the waterparks has been a huge asset for the community, and it has been a delight to see them being widely used by both our residents as well as increasing numbers of wildlife. We look forward to the Phase 2 waterpark opening – with facilities for water sports and open water swimming – later this year. We were delighted to

support the competition to name the new lakes and look forward to seeing what names are chosen!

- Northstowe Phase 2- we were pleased to welcome the first residents in Northstowe Phase 2. Unfortunately, we recently received the news that the consortium delivering the Inholm development in the first parcel of Northstowe Phase 2 (the area closest to Rampton Drift), Urban Splash, has gone into administration. At the time of writing neither we as councillors nor SCDC have any further details on what will happen next with this part of the Northstowe development. We have been contacted by concerned residents and will be holding a meeting with those already living in Urban Splash homes. We will ensure the wider community is updated as well as asking for this to be on the agenda at the next Northstowe Forum.
- Welcoming new community development officers – We welcomed our two new community development officers Mihaela Stan and Kathryn Beck as well as saying goodbye to Jon London, who has served the community for many years. We look forward to also working with Homes England as they increase their community development team to deliver more for the community.
- Missed bin collections – this is an ongoing issue for Northstowe, and we are proactively working with the waste services team to try and address this. We are working to ensure all new streets are logged on their on-board mapping system and have pushed to get regular crews assigned to the rounds who grow their knowledge of Northstowe's streets. We have continued to chase missed collections for residents.
- Missing post- We have been continuing to pursue Royal Mail over the issues with missing post. We are deeply sorry for all the residents who have missing post - we have now received over fifty complaints which we have passed on to Royal Mail. We were finally told that this had been referred to their Security Investigation Team. The investigation is ongoing, and we are hoping for a further update on the outcome. We also made a complaint to the Postal Service Ombudsman regarding Royal Mail's handling of the complaints from us and residents, which we think has been unacceptable. Disappointingly this complaint was dismissed by the ombudsman at the request of Royal Mail.

## Ward-wide issues

- Management of the B1050 roundabout works – together with Cllr Thompson, we were on call during the period these roadworks were being carried out to provide a channel of communication between residents and the contractors, often involving emergency messages late at night or over the weekend as fences blew down or issues were reported with the temporary lights!
- Green bins – following the announcement of these being withdrawn due to staff shortages we fed back the frustration of residents and were able to secure extra replacement weekend collections. The council has continued to provide catch-up collections where bins are missed.
- Setting up a group to welcome Ukrainian refugees to our community- At the time of writing, 435 visas for Ukrainians have been issued for South Cambridgeshire as part of the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This is the highest number for any District Council area, and the seventh highest figure for any area in England, which really demonstrates the generosity and openness of our communities in South Cambs. A huge thank you to all those locally who have opened their homes to Ukrainians guests. We have set up a local group to connect hosts in our community.
- GP services- We've long raised concerns about the difficulty residents have in getting GP appointments. We have regularly asked for updates on this and for this to be raised with the local NHS. They have told us there is still capacity for new patients to register locally, though we know this will be frustrating for residents struggling to get GP appointments, to hear. We have asked for contingency planning in case local GPs reach capacity before the new health centre at Northstowe opens. We know though that this is not just a problem related to Northstowe and people across South Cambs are reporting the same issues. We will continue to lobby our MP for better local GP provision and to ask him to press the government to tackle the national shortage of GPs.

## District-wide update

Over the last year the District Council has continued to build upon our ambitious 5-year business plan for 2019 to 2024 in the four key priority areas we identified.

- Growing local businesses and economies – We will support businesses of all sizes, to help create new jobs and opportunities near to where people live.
- Housing that is affordable for everyone to live in – We will build vibrant communities in locations where people have good access to facilities and transport links, so they can genuinely afford to lead a happy and healthy life.
- Being green to our core – We will create a cleaner, greener, and zero-carbon future for our communities.
- A modern and caring Council – We will provide our customers with high-quality services, strive to reduce costs, build on what we are good at to generate our own income and make decisions in a transparent, open, and inclusive way.

## Green To Our Core

- We have created and adopted the Doubling Nature strategy
- Created and adopted the Zero Carbon Strategies.
- Adopted the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document
- Greening South Cambridgeshire Hall - an energy-efficient retrofit of the Council office building including ground source heat pumps and solar panels.
- Upgrading 1,800 streetlights with low energy bulbs
- Introducing Tree planting where the “Three Free Trees” scheme in 2020 saw 54 parishes in the district plant a total of 162 trees and the “Six Free Trees” scheme in 2021 saw a further 227 trees planted.
- Creating Zero Carbon Communities Grant in 2019, and allocating £314,415 so far to 51 different community groups to support carbon reduction projects.
- Proposing Carbon Reduction Planning Strategies introduced in the emerging Greater



Cambridge Local Plan, to include all new homes to be net zero, locate new homes close to transport corridors to reduce carbon footprint, and other such policies,

- Using £1.5 million to make SCDC Council houses energy efficient.
- We have bought 3 Electric Bin lorries and more will be bought as the existing lorries come up for replacement at the end of their life.

We are going to

- Install solar-powered EV charging at our Waterbeach depot
- Install EV charging at South Cambs Hall and in sheltered housing schemes.
- The council adopted an air quality strategy to ensure that existing communities are protected.

## Housing and Planning

### Affordable Housing – Council houses

The proposal in 2019/20 was to double the number of new council houses being built by 2024.

- Baseline in 2019 was 36 homes,
- Built 64 in 2020/21 and 89 council houses in 2021/22 totalling 189 Council houses in our Villages, exceeding our target. We have plans for more council housing, up to 350 by 2025.
- Purchased land in Cambourne to build over two hundred energy efficient homes

### Housing Delivery

- The adopted Local Plan 2018 set a housing requirement of 33,500 homes to be built between 2011 and 2031 for Greater Cambridge - for South Cambs (19500) and Cambridge City (14000).
- Target delivery rate of 1,675 dwellings a year
- For 2020-21 we have met and exceeded that target, with 1752 net additional houses built of which 1,335 are in South Cambridgeshire, and 417 in Cambridge.
- 362 of these homes were 'Affordable Homes' of which 311 are in South Cambridgeshire, and 51 in Cambridge
- Increasing the 5 Year Housing Land Supply to 6.5 years for 2022 to 2027, exceeding government target.

## Emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan

We are working on a joint new local plan with Cambridge City that will determine how our district is developed over the period 2020-2041. We have conducted:

- First Conversation – introducing local plan concepts and challenges (7 key themes)
- Held many local engagement events, reaching thousands of people than before in history of plan making in the district. 8,500 responses to questions, 5000 visitors to website, 6,000 people engaged at public events, 30,000 views of online videos.
- Held the Big Debate event at Corn Exchange and had over 300 attending <https://youtu.be/N3QXGma8MZM>
- Produced First Proposals for the emerging plan identifying jobs/housing needs, proposed new sites to build on, new policies including enhancing biodiversity, building net zero homes and much more.
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## Other Planning Issues

- We created and adopted 9 Village Design Guides
- We are supporting communities to create Neighbourhood plans and have now adopted 5 giving the communities a say in how their area grows in future

## Growing local businesses and economies

The economy of South Cambs is dependent on small businesses, so

- We created a new Business Support team to support both big and small businesses
- High Streets team has visited over 2000 businesses
- Over 2000 businesses receive our Open for Business monthly newsletter

- We created the On Your Doorstep campaign to help local shops recover after the pandemic
- Granted £1.4 mil to 102 businesses and start-ups to help them grow
- We have helped 4 start-up businesses find premises
- We have set up local markets
- The Council has bought Northstowe Enterprise Zone
- We have bought a site in Cambourne to build specialist offices for start-up companies
- We have also set up a Visit South Cambs website at <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/> to support companies that provide services to the leisure market
- We ran 9 webinars for businesses during the pandemic including on mental health

## A Modern and Caring Council

- We have moved 10 council services online with a further 12 to follow
- We have achieved levels 1 and 2 of the disability standards
- The council adopted a new equality scheme in 2020
- As the council no longer receives revenues grants from government, we have made investments and earned £5mil per year from our investments
- Alongside this we have saved £200,000 per year
- We have given £43.9 million in government Covid grants
- We provided £78,000 to support work with young people.
- We gave 70 grants to covid groups in the district
- We have given £58,000 in Community Chest grants per year
- Set up 7 new mobile warden schemes to support older people in their homes
- We set up a Lifeline service for vulnerable people
- We set up a home repairs service that older people and others could use to get small jobs done in their properties.
- To build new communities and help existing ones deal with new developments, we set up 19 Liaison forums and 9 community forums
- We supported the set up covid groups in all 106 villages and towns within the first 3 weeks of the covid lockdown.
- We have helped 14 at risk parish councils to create flood management plans

- We have helped 3 Syrian refugee families a year to find a home
- We have supported 8 Afghanistan families find a home
- SCDC has given Emmaus Cambridge, a one-off grant of £30,000 which will allow it to employ an additional support worker to continue supporting single homeless people.
- To help with health and wellbeing, we have run 7 Wild Minds schemes to support young people with mental health issues
- SCDC has also mobilised to provide support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme, including arranging payments for guests and hosts, DBS checks and in-person visits to confirm properties are suitable, and guests are settling in well. Our business team has been working with the local Job Centre Plus to coordinate offers of employment for Ukrainians looking for work. There are further details of the support that is available for both hosts and guests on the council website <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/support-for-ukraine/>

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about these, or any other matters.

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