

LONGSTANTON WARD DISTRICT COUNCELLOR REPORT SEPTEMBER 2023

LONGSTANTON PARISH COUNCIL (2ND OCTOBER 2023)

OAKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL (9TH OCTOBER 2023)

CLLR NATALIE WARREN-GREEN

I have decided to repeat the information about Bin Collections from last month as several people have emailed and messaged me about these and things ought to be normalised now, but just for reassurance:

New Bin Collection Dates from Mid-September:

Bin collections are going to change for approximately 80% of households in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire from week/commencing 18th September.

Longstanton Ward residents ought not to be disrupted, but do please feel free to contact me with concerns.

Residents throughout South Cambridgeshire can check their bin collection dates at:

<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/updates/2023/08/22/changes-to-bin-collections-from-monday-18-september>

October Report:

Road Naming Policy:

Concerns raised by Parish Councils across Longstanton Ward about potential new names for the Southern Access Road to Northstowe, the question about Road Naming policy at SCDC has been raised at several PC meetings recently. The street naming and numbering link from the following page www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/ now diverts to the 3C Shared Services Building Control page, which the street naming and numbering policy can be located.

I have included a link for direct access to the street naming and numbering policy below:

www.3csharedservices.org/media/2293/street-naming-policy.pdf

Section 6.3 focuses on conventions.

Homes England have decided to run a competition for Road naming and all Parish Councils in the ward will be kept informed about this.

General council information to share this month:

Help for residents through the cost-of-living crisis

SCDC's latest initiative to help certain residents through the cost-of-living crisis is the offer of a free electric blanket / electric throw, which cost a fraction to run than central heating. Qualifying residents are those who (as of 1 July 2023) claim Council Tax Support plus Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility element enhanced rate or the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) mobility component at the higher rate.

These groups of people are being targeted because it is known that people with mobility issues are more susceptible to cold weather pressures and the cost-of-living crisis is especially impacts them. Data from Citizens Advice shows that in 2023 they made 637 referrals to foodbanks for people with disabilities or long-term health conditions compared to 359 referrals for those without these problems. Qualifying residents will receive a letter in the coming weeks explaining how to claim their free blanket. Only those with a letter qualify.

Homes for Ukraine Landlords' incentive scheme

South Cambridgeshire has seen one of the highest number of Homes for Ukraine arrivals for a lower tier authority with over 850 Ukrainian guests coming to the district since the scheme began in April 2022.

The first phase of the project has been a tremendous success and is now considered 'business as usual' for officers working on it. In the last few months, the focus has been helping guests to move on to independent accommodation. Getting into the private rental sector is expensive and has proved challenging for guests. In mitigation, SCDC is launching of a Landlords' Incentive scheme in an effort to provide more affordable & sustainable housing options for our Ukrainian guests.

The scheme will offer up-front payments to landlords, depending on circumstances such as property size and whether they offer a tenancy at the local housing allowance rate or at market rent. Larger incentive payments will be available to landlords who offer a tenancy at the local housing rate to encourage more affordable and sustainable options for Homes for Ukraine guests. The money for this scheme will come from the government's Homes for Ukraine fund.

SCDC's Carbon Literacy Certification

SCDC has been certified as a Carbon Literate Organisation by the national charity, The Carbon Literacy Trust, achieving a bronze certificate as part of its continuing efforts to tackle the climate emergency in South Cambridgeshire. It has been achieved by a cohort of staff at a variety of levels taking part in bespoke Carbon Literacy training, including the most senior, decision-making members of staff. So far, 35 staff have been trained with 17 formally certified as Carbon Literate by the Trust. This training helps staff to act on climate change within their day-to-day roles and to consider potential projects which could reduce emissions both within the Council and in the wider district.

The Council has adopted South Cambridgeshire's first Zero Carbon Strategy in 2020 which sets out the need to halve net carbon emissions and a 'Doubling Nature' strategy which seeks to increase wildlife-rich habitats, tree canopy, and access to green spaces in South Cambridgeshire. In addition to these policies, in the past five years, the Council has handed out more than £500,000 in Zero Carbon Communities grants to community groups who work to tackle climate change in their village or town. Find out more about what the Council is doing to tackle the climate emergency locally at www.scambs.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature.

4-day week

Sadly, negative stories continue in the media claiming that SCDC's CEO Liz Watts 'tampered' with a document produced by the Bennett Institute reporting on the first three months of the 4-day week trial. These reports are malicious and untrue and represent the worst of tabloid journalism. The report that the CEO asked to be amended was one that followed focus groups conducted by the Bennett Institute researcher with members and officers and the changes were merely to improve the clarity of the focus group notes and to remove names of members who had not given consent for their names to appear in the report. This WAS NOT the report - also created by the Bennett Institute - that analysed the key performance indicators during the initial three-month trial period of the 4-day week trial on which Cabinet based their decision to extend the trial for 12 months.

It is disappointing that the council's CEO has been attacked by some members of the council, sometimes widely on Social Media, especially since they are basing their attacks on flawed information. Council officers, even the most senior ones, cannot defend themselves publicly, which makes the attacks even more egregious, and why I feel the need to report this in my PC report.

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.

<p>County Council</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>District Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p>Parish/ Town Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</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>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</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>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</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@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 Oct 9th 2023 - Cllr Tom Bygott

District Council four day working week

It has been revealed that an 'independent' report on the 4-day working week trial at South Cambs District Council had been edited by council officers ahead of its release. The true report shows a very different picture to the governing group's previous optimism.

The Bennett Institute's independent report on the 4-day week has been repeatedly cited as evidence that the 4-day week trial for 450 desk-based staff in South Cambs is working. But it has now become public knowledge that this 'independent' report was tampered with before its release – artificially improving the results of the 4-day week.

Quotes from managing officers at the council that were removed from the report suggest the 4-day week has in fact been highly damaging. One manager said they “did all the unfinished work on my day off so that my team could have time off. It had a very negative impact on my wellbeing.”

Most managers felt that there was “envy” between workers. The report states: “Those who have Mondays off complained that they find it harder to start the week on Tuesday than those who have Fridays off”. The report continues: “On the other hand, those who have Fridays off feel that they are under pressure to get things done quickly before they are closed. And then when they come on Monday, there are not many people, and they have to postpone the meetings until Tuesday.”

All this negativity makes a grim reading for the council's governing group – whose leadership means the council is unable to properly serve residents and elected councillors. A quote from one councillor – also removed from the report – said: “I have emailed some people at least three times and received no response.” This is perhaps because, according to one manager, “we don't always have to deliver perfect work and that's okay.”

This is highly concerning for councillors and residents alike. Not only has the 4-day week inflicted damage on council services – the leadership's decisions have been an act of self-harm to the reputation of the council.

This story has been reported several times in the national media, including The Times www.thetimes.co.uk/article/four-day-week-report-edited-by-council-leader-to-make-it-more-positive-5lmqb8813 and the BBC www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-66923646.

Congestion charging continues to be raised

At the most recent meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, "road charging" was yet again raised for a debate and vote as part of the Local Transport Plan. This was despite leading politicians saying the proposed £5 per day Cambridge congestion charge would be taken off the table at the beginning of September.

The Plan was not approved by the Combined Authority as Peterborough Authority essentially had a veto. But road charging is still a contentious political issue in Cambridgeshire. The South Cambs representative at the Combined Authority meeting was clear that all options including road charging needed to be on the table and that there did need to be restrictions on cars. I have consistently spoken out and voted against all forms of road charging and will continue to campaign against it. I do not believe putting extra financial pressure on working people is appropriate, especially in the current climate.

Longstanton District Heritage Society Archives

It has come to light that there are problems with a Heritage Annexe project that the developer of part of Northstowe, Homes England, has been working on with Cambridgeshire County Council. It was envisaged that the Heritage Annexe would be used for the storage and display of items in the Longstanton District Heritage Society (LDHS) archives. At the launch of the Heritage Society many local residents, descendants of people who used to live in the village and former RAF Oakington WWII veterans joined the Society and many contributed to the LDHS Archives. The archive includes a digital collection, films, interviews and a physical collection, all of which has been collected over a period of nearly 20 years.

Despite Homes England making significant financial contributions to the Heritage Annexe project and providing rights to use a plot of land adjacent to Northstowe House, it has become apparent that the Heritage Annexe project might not be delivered.

I have done some research into the nature of a legal obligation that Homes England has (contained in a document called the Northstowe Phase 2 Section 106 Agreement) in relation to the LDHS Archives. It states: "In bringing forward the Development the Owners shall accommodate the Longstanton District Heritage Society Display Facilities and shall provide or procure the necessary rights of access to the Longstanton District Heritage Society Display Facilities to enable the management and maintenance thereof". It also makes clear that the storage and display facilities must be provided "within the Development", i.e. in Northstowe.

Whilst it may be regrettable that money has been wasted on a Heritage Annexe project that might not go ahead, it is clear that the developer's legal obligation is not discharged until display and storage facilities for the LDHS Archives have been provided within Northstowe. I will be calling for these facilities to be provided to a standard that matches the historical importance of the archives, and properly safeguards and celebrates the shared heritage of Longstanton, Northstowe, Oakington and Westwick.

Fly tipping

South Cambridgeshire District Council receives around 1,600 reports per year regarding fly tipping. The Council is urging residents to do the right thing and properly get rid of their rubbish in the following ways:

- Giving it away for free on Facebook marketplace, Gumtree or taking to a local charity shop.
- If possible, reuse, repair or recycle items before getting rid of them.
- Be sure to choose a reputable registered waste carrier disposal service.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council can arrange for collection of bulky items for many common household goods. It collects a maximum of nine items per collection. Up to three items can be booked for the minimum charge of £32.50. Additional items are then £5.50 each.
- Take additional rubbish to one of Cambridgeshire's Household Recycling Centres.

Anyone who sees fly tipping should report it via:

www.scambs.gov.uk/recycling-and-bins/report-or-request/report-environmental-issues/

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