

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT

JULY 2022

CLLR SARAH CHEUNG JOHNSON, CLLR ALEX MALYON – DISTRICT COUNCILLORS REPORT

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR NORTHSTOWE

We have previously mentioned the inadequate Section 106 for Phase 1, which was agreed by the previous administration at SCDC and Gallaghers (now L&Q). The original funding allocated for the community buildings at Northstowe is not sufficient to cover the costs of building these and the council is now proposing to make up some of the shortfall to deliver these. The full details are below:

More than £12.8 million in funding, to secure high-quality community facilities for Northstowe residents, is being proposed by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

A report published by the Council on Wednesday 15 June 2022 outlined a plan for the Council to help fund the growing new town's Sports Pavilion and Community Centre on phase one, and Civic Hub and additional Sports Pavilion on phase two.

The phase one Sports Pavilion, near the sports pitches, would provide changing facilities for teams and officials and a multi-use club room and catering facilities. The Community Centre would be within the Local Centre and will be a multi-use facility for Northstowe residents.

The Civic Hub on phase two is intended to be the landmark building within the Town Centre. This will be a five or six storey building, with space for community activity and development, a library service, a GP surgery, and other similar services. The Sports Pavilion on phase two is likely to be like the phase one Pavilion, but details are still being confirmed.

If Councillors agree to the proposals, the money to pay for the investment into Northstowe will come from capital receipts.

When developers build new homes that will have a significant impact on an area or community, they are asked to contribute funding to local services like community buildings through what is known as a Section 106 agreement. Funding arrangements intended to cover the cost of constructing Northstowe's community buildings in phases one and two were outlined in Section 106 agreements that were signed several years ago. However, in the years that have passed, it has become clear that the funding allocated for the community buildings will not cover the full costs of building them.

One of the main reasons for this is because the costs associated with construction have risen significantly recently because of several national and global factors. These include issues such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation, the fuel crisis, and its repercussions on global material production and, more recently, Russian sanctions.

As a result, and to ensure that truly high-quality community facilities are delivered for current and future residents of Northstowe, South Cambridgeshire District Council is proposing to step-in and cover the shortfall in funds to bring the new buildings forward as quickly as possible.

The proposed funding, which will be discussed by Councillors in the weeks ahead, includes:

£1.53 million towards the phase one Sports Pavilion

£6.5 million towards the phase one Community Centre

£2.82 million towards the phase two Civic Hub

£2 million towards the phase two Sports Pavilion

The Council's Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered the plans on Thursday 23 June before they are discussed at Cabinet on Monday 11 July. All District Councillors will then be able to vote on the proposals at the next Full Council meeting on Thursday 21 July.

During the year ahead, the report also outlines how officers will continue to investigate the most appropriate development routes for Enterprise Zone land at Northstowe which is earmarked for commercial development and business use.

NORTHSTOWE INTERIM COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Interim Community Facilities for Northstowe have been announced by the Council and will be on the site of the current Taylor Wimpey sales office (by the Oblong-about on Pathfinder Way).

We are really pleased the Council have been able to secure these premises so close to the future local centre of Northstowe. A planning application for the change of use for these buildings has been submitted (22/03034/FUL) and can be seen here

<https://applications.greatercambridgeplanning.org/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=REHW3RDXXKTMoo&activeTab=summary>

Further details of the proposal are in this statement from SCDC:

Two homes and a sales office at Northstowe are being purchased by South Cambridgeshire District Council – which plans to modify them for use by community groups.

The Council has reached an agreement with housebuilder Taylor Wimpey for the purchase of its two show homes and Sales Information Centre on Pathfinder Way in phase one of the new town. Taylor Wimpey will continue to welcome people to their Centre until their move to new premises within their Varsity Grange development at Northstowe which they expect to be during October this year (2022).

A planning application for a temporary change of use of the buildings being purchased will be submitted to the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service by the Council in the next fortnight. This will be being reviewed and once published residents will be able to put forward their views on the temporary plans for the buildings. It is envisaged that the planning application to amend the use of the buildings will be discussed at a future meeting of South Cambridgeshire District Council's Planning Committee.

It is anticipated that the purchase will complete in October this year (2022). The legal agreement to facilitate the purchase is now being finalised.

The buildings will be a medium-term replacement for the temporary community facilities which are currently in place at the Northstowe Community Wing at the town's Pathfinder Primary School. These facilities will close on 17 June as the growing school requires the space.

Subject to change of use being approved, the Council will begin works to adapt the homes for community use as soon as possible after they are handed over. This would mean they become ready in early 2023.

The District Council has been working with Northstowe's community groups that currently hold events and classes in the Wing to put plans in place which will see them temporarily operate from other rooms and spaces at the Pathfinder Primary School and Northstowe Secondary College until the interim accommodation becomes available. The groups will be making their users aware of the new arrangements.

The permanent, long-term community buildings in the early phases of the town – sports pavilion, community centre and Civic Hub – will still come forward and will be unaffected by these proposals. Once appropriate permanent community space is available the Council will return the interim community space to housing and develop the adjacent piece of land that has planning permission for flats.

Information about the community space available to book once the Wing closes in June can be found by:

Pathfinder Primary School – email office@pathfinderschool.org.uk for more information

Northstowe Secondary College – view spaces and book. The college offers a 15% discount on booking their facilities if community groups making the booking are in Northstowe or Longstanton. Any queries can be sent to lettings@northstowesc.org

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Bill Handley, said: "We are grateful to Northstowe's many excellent community groups for bearing with us as we have worked on these arrangements. We have kept groups informed along the way, and we are confident that their needs can be met and that they can continue to operate with minimal disruption. As you'd expect, we will continue to support the community groups through this transition. I am grateful to Taylor Wimpey for working with us to make this arrangement possible; it gives Northstowe residents reassurance that there will be dedicated spaces in a central location from which local groups can operate whilst plans for the permanent community building continue to progress. Our planning application outlines exactly how we plan to change the use of these buildings from a Sales Information Centre to community facilities. I'd urge residents to have their say on our proposals when they are published on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website."

The District Councillors for Northstowe are Cllr Sarah Cheung Johnson and Cllr Alex Malyon. Cllr Cheung Johnson added: "We are so pleased to have secured this interim facility space for Northstowe and the wider community and know many have been worried about what would happen after the Wing goes back to the school. Alex and I have pushed for a facility that would not only accommodate existing groups but allow others to begin using this space and are grateful we now have this. We want to thank residents and community groups for their patience as this process has taken longer than we all wanted but hope we can all look forward to being able to use this space."

Caroline Carter, Sales, and Marketing Director for Taylor Wimpey East Anglia, said: "Supporting the communities in which we build is a key priority for us, so we are pleased to be able to offer our show homes and sales office at the Varsity Grange development to South Cambridgeshire District Council for this fantastic community use."

"It's important to get the feedback of residents on this proposed change of use, and we are already in talks with our customers at the development. We look forward to seeing what the future holds for these spaces."

HCV TRAFFIC COTTENHAM DEVELOPMENT

We have written to the planning officer regarding application S/2876/16/CONDJ | Submission of details required by condition 9 (Construction Traffic Management Plan) of planning permission S/2876/16/OL | Land North East Of Rampton Road Cottenham Cambridgeshire. We have made the following comments on this application:

We are concerned regarding the routing of construction traffic from this site. We have previously had correspondence with Michael Sexton, who was previously the planning officer for this application. He was unsure whether Condition 9 included a specific requirement for a traffic routing plan. I can however now see from the comments submitted for this discharge of condition by Highways that they are requesting this.

As local members, with strong support from the Parish Council and local Oakington Traffic Action Group, we would strongly support this being put in place and would ask that traffic is not permitted to be routed via the unclassified route through Oakington and Westwick but is routed via the B1049 to the A14. We have had correspondence with the site agent James Griffiths and his response to this request was favourable- he agreed that the B1049 route was the more sensible option.

The traffic management plan that has been put in place for the Redrow development (opposite to the Tilia homes site) includes a condition that all traffic is routed via the B1049 to the A14. I attach a copy of the TMP map. In this case Highways also agreed that the route via the Oakington, particularly along Water Lane was not a suitable for HCVs as it is very narrow in part, particularly the section passing the school, and has no provision for a segregated cycle path along any part of the route. We would hope that this has set a precedent for the routing of HCVs from other sites in Cottenham.

STATEMENT ON WATER ISSUES

Statement on Concerns about Dewatering in Longstanton and Northstowe

Like many residents in Longstanton we were very saddened to read the newspaper story about how the reduction in groundwater levels has impacted local farmer Clive Hayden. We had met with him and other residents soon after we were elected in 2018 to discuss the concerns about this issue. We continue to work with the developers and planning authority to investigate and resolve these groundwater issues, which have affected Mr Hayden and many others in the village.

We are aware of the local campaign, led by the Fews Lane Consortium and the Crowdfunder that has been organised to fund this campaign. Unfortunately, the many unsubstantiated allegations made against us personally by some of those leading this campaign, including claims of corruption, or that we are covering up these issues, have made it impossible for us to be involved directly with this campaign. It is very upsetting for us and our families to have these attacks and allegations made against us on social media on a regular basis. We live in Longstanton, with our families, and want to do our best for the village as councillors. We do understand the frustration at how this issue is being addressed and the time it has taken to find answers. We have always shared those frustrations. We remain sincere though, in our desire to resolve these issues and to work constructively with residents to do that.

As officially elected District Councillors we are expected to work with the council, planning officers and others, via the proper routes to get to the bottom of what has happened and get action taken. This is what we have done and what we will continue to do.

Concerns were first raised by residents and the Parish Council in 2015, before we were elected, regarding reducing water levels in the Kingfisher Pond and other ponds and wells. Concerns were continuously raised throughout that period until at the end of 2017 it was reported that the Kingfisher Pond had completely dried out, to the previous administration. When we were elected as District councillors in 2018, we immediately sought to engage with residents and Longstanton Parish Council on this issue, arranging meetings with residents, the Parish Council, the developers L&Q and SCDC officers. Subsequently we fought for and secured funding from South Cambridgeshire District Council for a fully independent report into the falling water levels.

The consultants who prepared this independent report, HR Wallingford, were chosen by the Parish Council. We committed to full transparency of the final report. Each phase of the report has been sent directly to the Parish Council and other contributors. Residents can also obtain copies on request from the Parish Council. This report confirmed that the drop in water levels was due to the dewatering that had taken place to allow construction on Phase 1 of Northstowe. At that time, the removal of water did not require consent from the Council or the Environment Agency. We are pleased the position has subsequently changed, and consent would now be needed from the Environment Agency, to protect groundwater resources.

Work is now ongoing to understand why water levels are not recovering after these works on Phase 1. One possibility which has been identified through investigations led by Northstowe Town Council suggests that there may be some "leakage" from the groundwater aquifer under phase 1 via the surface water drains and this is currently being investigated. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Northstowe spent time walking the site with us and explaining what they think may have happened.

A CCTV survey of the drains is planned but the area is currently inaccessible due to road construction, so this has been slightly delayed. We are continuing to push for this to take place as soon as possible.

We are also aware of some information that was shared, via the crowdfunding campaign, about groundwater abstraction on Phase 2. The developer Homes England - who themselves are a Government agency, not a private developer - confirmed that no abstraction took place in this area.

The area of temporary flooding identified as evidence of the water being abstracted was subject to archaeology investigation, which essentially reduced the ground level by 600mm across a large area, which is predominantly clay. This has remained at this lowered level, creating a low that has inhibited runoff and allowed surface water to pond. It is slowly drying out over the summer. This area will eventually become a sports hub and the ground level will be raised back to normal again.

We are aware that many in the community are also concerned about the impact of further development at Northstowe. Construction work on Northstowe Phase 3, which the Council gave planning permission for earlier this year, has not started yet. This is currently not linked to experiences of reduced groundwater for residents of Longstanton. When this decision was made by the planning committee to give planning permission for Phase 3 of Northstowe, the Environment Agency was consulted who, along with planning officers, carefully considered the issues of reduced groundwater levels. The Environment Agency raised no objection to the plans, but conditions were placed on the developers requiring ongoing monitoring of the groundwater. This planning decision is now the subject of a Judicial Review.

If you have any further comments on questions on these or any other issue, then please email us directly.

SCDC STATEMENT ON WATER ISSUES

Cllr Dr Tumi Hawkins, South Cambridgeshire District Council Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, said: "We recognise the local concern about groundwater. On behalf of Longstanton Parish Council, we commissioned an independent report on this matter and are continuing to work with key organisations to understand the causes and next steps. During the phase one works, the developers did remove water from the site as part of their initial construction works. At that time, the removal of water did not require consent from the Council or the Environment Agency. The position has subsequently changed, and consent would now be needed from the Environment Agency, to protect groundwater resources."

Further guidance provided:

Construction work on Northstowe phase three, which the Council gave planning permission for earlier this year, has not started yet. So, linking that decision to experiences of reduced groundwater for residents of Longstanton is wrong. For the phase three decision, we consulted with the Environment Agency who, along with our officers, carefully considered the issue. The Environment Agency raised no objection to the phase three proposals, and we have imposed appropriate conditions covering monitoring of the groundwater conditions when works do start on this phase in a few years.

HOMES ENGLAND STATEMENT ON WATER ISSUES

A spokesperson for Homes England said, "Homes England is aware of concerns about ground water levels; however, these are primarily related to the first phase of Northstowe (which Homes England is not involved in). Homes England is responsible for Phases 2, 3A and 3B, which have all been subject to an extensive Environmental Impact Assessment.

In terms of ongoing development at Northstowe – Phase 2 is currently underway, with Homes England acting as master developer, and we can confirm there is no abstraction of ground water taking place. Any well points sunk relate to bore holes, which have been created for monitoring purposes only.

Plans for Phase 3A were approved earlier this year, and we can confirm that no work has commenced on this phase of development. Impact on ground water was fully considered as part of the Phase 3A planning application in a Ground Water Management Note produced by technical consultants, and it was concluded that the development is not anticipated to change ground water levels in the surrounding area. However, Homes England is committed to monitoring groundwater levels going forward as a precautionary measure."

Statement relating to local farm in Longstanton:

A spokesperson for Homes England said: "The small holding in question is part of the Northstowe residential allocation in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. It lies within Phase 2 of Northstowe and has outline planning permission for housing. Nevertheless, the town has been planned in such a way that the small holding could remain if that is what the landowner wishes."

NEXT NORTHSTOWE FORUM

The next Northstowe Forum is being held on 26th July. We would encourage residents to attend these forums as the issues discussed are often of interest to residents of the surrounding villages as well as Northstowe. More information, including notes from previous meetings can be found via <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/community-forums/northstowe-community-forum/>

DISTRICT WIDE NEWS

COUNCIL TAX COLLECTIONS

People across South Cambridgeshire have been thanked for their ongoing support for vital public services like social care and police after the District Council was named second in the country for Council Tax collection across England.

Residents and businesses are being praised for playing their part in supporting public services through prompt council tax payment, as the country emerges from the COVID pandemic and residents now face a rising cost of living.

Cllr John Williams, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, said: "Despite the many challenges we are living through, our residents and businesses must be thanked for supporting vital frontline services for everyone in the community. Being able to collect such a high proportion of the Council Tax and Business Rates due means local services benefit, which ultimately benefits everyone in the community.

"It is difficult times for everyone, and we have of course, worked sensitively with those who needed help paying their bills – such as arranging payment plans to spread those payments. We are always here to help residents who are concerned about their ability to pay in any way we can, and I would encourage those residents or businesses with understandable continuing worries to contact us as soon as possible."

South Cambridgeshire District Council is the second from top performing council out of more than 320 tax-collecting authorities in England.

Government collection rates for Council Tax in England show that for the financial year 2021-2022, South Cambridgeshire District Council:

Collected 99.2% of the total amount of Council Tax due from residents. This amounts to £126,976,000. Almost £127 million. * National collection rate average 95.9%

Collected 99% of Business Rates due from local businesses. This amounts to £84,973,000. Almost £85 million. * National collection rate average 95.5%

The total collected by South Cambridgeshire District Council, is almost £212 million.

The District Council collects Council Tax from residents and businesses before passing on most of it to several frontline local services including Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cambridgeshire County Council and Parish / Town Councils. Only around 9% of the public's Council Tax bill goes towards the District Council's services.

Income from Non-Domestic rates is shared between Central Government, County Councils, District Councils and Fire Authorities, with the District Councils retaining 40%.

By the end of March 2022, authorities across England had collected £33.9 billion of council tax and achieved an average in-year collection rate of 95.9%, an increase of 0.2 percentage points compared to the previous year.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE'S SECOND ELECTRIC BIN LORRY

The second fully electric bin lorry to collect waste from residents in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire has arrived, as local councils continue their fleet decarbonisation drive.

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils, has just taken delivery of a fully electric Faun Zoeller E-Rotopress.

Through their shared waste service, the councils are working to replace their bin lorries with electric or alternative fuel vehicles as existing diesel trucks come to the end of their working lives.

GRANTS PROJECTS DELIVERING CHANGE

Several innovative South Cambridgeshire youth projects which received council funding are encouraging young people into outdoor activities as a way of improving their mental and physical wellbeing and health.

A sensory garden at Cambourne Village College (pictured above) and an outdoor natural play space and woodland trail for the Shelford and Stapleford Youth Initiative (SSYI) Copse 2 project both received funds in 2020 from the Children's Area Partnership Grants, a combined initiative by South Cambridgeshire District, Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils, designed to improve mental and physical health and access to education for young people.

At Great Shelford Recreation Ground, an unused eyesore area of copse was transformed into an outdoor natural play space and woodland trail with willow structures, benches, planting, and landscaping. The £7,681 grant enabled the project to be further developed with permanent play dens, paths, plants, and equipment – all ideas which came from the young people themselves.

Two years on and this second phase is now complete and in full use by the wider community. It involved 25 young people in the plans, choosing plants, a bench and pathway locations, and installing Mag-Posts (magnifying glasses attached to posts for viewing small objects in detail, such as feathers, leaves, bones, and small insects).

The young volunteers designed and made wood-burned signs and were involved in practical sessions learning and using new skills such as digging, sawing, making concrete and more. Moreover, it provided an opportunity for them to get out and spend time in nature, particularly during the pandemic lockdowns, and help their local community whilst experiencing challenges such as confidence building and risk taking, as well as constructive engagement with people of all ages.

FLY TIPPING FINE IN WILLINGHAM

A man from Haddenham has been fined after waste from their household was found fly-tipped in Willingham.

The fly-tip, reported to South Cambridgeshire District Council by a passer-by back in March this year, was discovered on Meadow Road in the village. Household waste and construction materials had been dumped.

A Council Enforcement Officer visited the site and discovered that, amongst the waste, there was a printed address that linked the rubbish to the property in Haddenham.

It transpired that the household had paid someone cash to remove the waste – but without checking whether they were a Registered Waste Carrier. The person who removed the waste then dumped it in Willingham.

A Fixed Penalty Notice of £300 was issued to the resident. This was for failing to prevent someone committing a fly-tip and not ensuring all necessary checks had been carried out on the person who took the waste away.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, Cllr Brian Milnes, said: "It is imperative that anyone who is hired to remove waste is a Registered Waste Carrier. It's easy to check this on [the Environment Agency website](#). There should also be paperwork that clearly describes what the waste is, and where it is being disposed of safely. This case highlights that it is very much the responsibility of the household who has waste to get rid of to ensure that they know where it is going to end-up. Searching local social media groups for people who will remove waste for cash, no questions asked, isn't good enough."

One of the District Councillors for Willingham, Cllr Dan Lentell, commented: "So much of the fly tipping that happens around Willingham is done for profit - a quick buck at everyone else's expense. I'm very pleased to see the Council taking a pro-active approach. I would urge all the admins of local social media groups to help prevent this kind of fly-tipping by checking that no one is advertising rubbish removal services on their pages which aren't fully licenced and legal."

If you witness someone fly-tipping, call the police on 999 and report it as an environmental crime in progress. [Report fly-tipping that you come across to the Council.](#)

You can [check whether a waste carrier is registered](#) with the Environment Agency online. This is a free service that is available for anyone to access.

LOCAL PLAN FIRST PROPOSALS

More than 9,000 comments received as part of last year's consultation into the First Proposals for the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan have been published.

The Plan being prepared jointly by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, will eventually set out how Greater Cambridge will develop over the next twenty years.

During the First Proposals consultation, the Councils set out an ambitious vision for minimising carbon emissions alongside improving the quality of life for residents across the area, with all new homes to be carbon neutral. The proposals included 19 new sites for homes and business space, with the majority of extra development proposed for Northeast Cambridge, Cambridge Airport site and at Cambourne. It sets out a range of new policies to meet the environmental challenges facing the area – including tackling carbon emissions and increasing biodiversity.

The First Proposals explicitly said that they are dependent on evidence coming forwards to confirm that there will be adequate water supply to support the delivery of new homes. If the water industry and central government do not act, the number of new homes proposed may need to be delayed or reduced.

Now, the responses to the First Proposals have been published as part of the process to update Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councillors on the next steps for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. All the responses submitted during the consultation can be viewed on the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website.

The proposed next steps for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan have also been published in an update to the plan-making timetable, in the Greater Cambridge Local Development Scheme, to be considered by councillors in meetings in June and July. The changes to the plan-making timetable proposed reflect both the opportunities and the complexity of issues being addressed by the plans, and the relationship with work being undertaken by other organisations, including work by the water industry to continue to address the future of the region's water supply.

An additional stage is proposed to bring a report to councillors in January 2023 to confirm the Preferred Options for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan strategy and sites – this will include consideration of the comments on those issues received to the 2021 First Proposals consultation. The full draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan will then be prepared and is expected to be considered by councillors in summer 2023 and go out to public consultation in Autumn 2023. This is later than initially anticipated reflecting those wider factors.

For the next stage in the process, which would be consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan, and consultation on the Proposed Submission North East Cambridge Area Action Plan agreed by the Councils in January 2022, the plans must wait for the outcome of the separate process for the relocation of the Wastewater Treatment Works, which is being carried out by Anglian Water. This would unlock the area for redevelopment into a low carbon community. Also, the timeline for the national East West Rail project will be kept under review. One of the sites in the First Proposals, a broad location at Cambourne, was identified because it could take advantage of a future stop on a new East West Rail route.

CONTACT DETAILS

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

Alex Malyon and Sarah Cheung Johnson

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