

Councillor Cones Report to Parish Council July 2018

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is scheduled to go live across the whole district from the 17th October 2018. Universal Credit is a combination of the following six benefits rolled in to one. It replaces housing benefit, working tax credit, child tax credit, income support, income base job seekers allowance and income related employment and support allowance. Universal Credit will only affect working age people. Pensioners will not be affected and should still claim housing benefit.

The roll out of Universal Credit will have an impact on many residents within the Fulbourn and Fen Ditton ward. The administration of SCDC have a responsibility to protect vulnerable residents and make this transition period as smooth as possible. SCDC has factored for additional staff to facilitate Universal Credit and at the last Scrutiny meeting I questioned the Deputy Leader of the Council as to whether these staff are yet in post and the type of staff that would be recruited i.e. skill mix. The Deputy Leader will be looking into this issue and providing me with further details. I will work with both officers and the administration at SCDC to make the roll out of Universal Credit as smooth as possible.

Affordable homes in Northstowe

I was really pleased to see residents have moved into the first of more than 2000 new affordable homes in Northstowe. The houses are 2 and 3 bedroomed with a mix of rented and shared ownership properties available. Private rents are very high within the villages that make up SCDC with rents often being well over £1000 per month so rents that are around £750 per month, although still expensive, can make all the difference for professionals and young families that want to live and work within our district. More affordable rents make a huge difference to my colleagues at Addenbrookes Hospital, many of whom are having to rent long distances away from the City or are having to live in house shares with 4-5 people paying £500 per month for a room within a house.

The new town will also be welcoming new home owners to its shared ownership homes. These properties allow purchasers to buy part of the overall property and rent the remainder. Qualifying purchasers require a smaller deposit and the combined rent / mortgage will be significantly less than if they have purchased the property outright. Again, my own experience through colleagues at Addenbrookes Hospital has been that shared ownership can provide a lifeline to people on average wages such as nurses and allied health professionals who are already renting so find it difficult to save for a large deposit and that would not be eligible for a mortgage on the total value of homes within our high cost of living area. During my time as a Councillor I have always supported the Conservatives Local Plan which delivers our first new town within our district, Northstowe.

Northstowe will not only provide thousands of standard and affordable homes in our district but has been built with the infrastructure it needs from the start including cycleways, green spaces, shops, schools, community spaces etc. Developments of this scale within our district ultimately mean that we are not burdening existing villages with huge housing developments that their existing infrastructure would struggle to cope with.

Be well project

Cambridgeshire residents are being encouraged to eat healthily and lead a more active lifestyle to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. Being overweight increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, a common condition that can lead to heart disease, stroke and kidney problems as well as vision loss and blindness.

Health experts in the County are encouraging people aged 40-74 years, if invited, to book in at their local GP clinic for a free NHS Health Check. These are funded by Cambridgeshire County Council's Public Health Grant and tell you not only whether you're at higher risk of getting type 2 diabetes or if you already have the condition, but can also spot early signs of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and some types of dementia.

The short 20-30 minute check on blood pressure, weight, cholesterol, and the lifestyle factors that affect your risk of developing these conditions, also gives you advice on how to prevent them.

For more information, please visit: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/be-well/

Advice and support for local businesses

Free drop-in sessions and practical workshops centred around starting a company, or growing an existing one, are being offered to residents and businesses in South Cambridgeshire. These are being provided during regular times at the District Council's Cambourne offices by experts at NWES, the UK's largest not-for-profit enterprise agency, and are aimed at South Cambridgeshire residents who are thinking of starting a business, and owners and managers of existing local firms. They will focus on either start-up companies or growing a business. One-to-one advice sessions last for around 30 minutes, and participants might also be able to sign-up for a further programme of support.

Additionally, a free workshop called 'first steps to start-up' is being made available. This will offer detailed insights into starting a business and is tailored towards those considering ideas for new ventures. This will cover elements such as calculating start-up costs, registering with HMRC and the legal side of naming a firm. They'll also run through how to plan and present financial forecasts.

Separate free workshops aimed at existing business owners or managers are also being offered. These sessions will include practical and tutored sessions to help delegates spot, manage and maximise opportunities for their companies to grow. Topics will include learning styles, disruption and innovation, how to build strong teams and effective communication.

To register, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/content/latest-news-workshops-events-support-awards-funding-and-grants-0

Trial of community street sweeping and litter picking

A trial is to be run by the District Council and local communities into how our villages can become cleaner and how littering can be reduced. Equipment such as a ride-in street sweeper is being made available for use by volunteers in parishes, along with extra support for coordinated litter picks.

Around 20 villages from across the district said they were interested in receiving more help with additional street cleaning and seven have been chosen for the trial. Volunteers have been trained to operate the ride-in sweeper, which can be borrowed for use on paths covered in tarmac, including cycleways. A leaf and litter vacuum will also be made available which can be used in car parks, around shops and on playing fields. Both pieces of equipment will be able to be booked out by communities taking part in the trial and used by volunteers who have gone through training and Council organised checks.

The second new project being developed will see the authority supplying tools like litter-pickers, gloves and bags to communities who want to run their own 'big clean' events and environmental action days. Staff from the Shared Waste Service will be paired with volunteers to encourage communities to separate out items that can be recycled and give out food caddies and recycling advice. The Council will collect and dispose of waste collected by volunteers.

Local Highways Initiative bids

The bid deadline for LHI applications to the County Council is Tuesday 31st July 2018. This is the annual opportunity for Parish Councils to bid for local highways improvements for which the County Council will fund most and the Parish Council a minimum of 10%. The ideas do not have to be fully backed because once the scheme is submitted, the bidding Parish Council will be contacted by a County Council project officer to develop a Feasibility Study. This was introduced a few years back because it was unrealistic to ask villages to become fully fledged road engineers finding their own technical solutions overnight. The Feasibility Study will still be presented to the LHI Member Advisory Panel by the Parish so you will need good presentational skills to get the message across, and evidence to support the bid, and demonstrating local support is always useful.

