

Report of District Councillors Claire Daunton and John Williams to Great Wilbraham Parish Council, 19th July 2018

1. South Cambs District Council

- (i) Following the results of the local elections in May the new administration has brought in a number of changes. As reported to the last meeting of the parish council, the Chairman of the Council is the Independent member for Girton, Dr Douglas de Lacey.
- (ii) This appointment has been followed by that of a member of the opposition, Cllr Granville Chamberlain, to be Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, a key committee of the Council. In addition to a departure in the appointment of chairman, the committee will also be acting on the basis of pre-scrutiny rather than post-scrutiny. This should make for more effective and transparent working. Councillors Cone and Daunton are members of this committee. Councillor Williams, as portfolio holder for Finance, would normally attend. Councillor Daunton is the 'scrutiny monitor' for Housing and will be looking closely at all aspects of Housing policy, including changes to the benefits system bringing in Universal Credit, the homelessness strategy, affordable housing for rent and other aspects of Housing policy and delivery, as and when they come up for scrutiny.
- (iii) There are several new committees or working groups we hope will have a positive impact on the District. These include: a Climate and Environment Committee which will be looking at ways we can work together to limit damage to the climate and improve the environment, including the use of emissions targets for heavy goods vehicles; a Brexit Working Group which is investigating ways we can help businesses in and around South Cambridgeshire to cope with any actual or anticipated consequences of Brexit; a new Grants Committee which is reviewing all aspects of the Council's community grant-giving powers and capacity to ensure that the limited money available is spent to best effect for a wide range of community purposes. **Councillor Williams attends the Grants Committee in his role as portfolio holder. On account of this role he is not able to comment on individual applications. Councillor Daunton is a member of the committee.**
- (iv) Through its Civic Affairs Committee the Council has also agreed to review its constitution to make it more fit for purpose in the 21st century (it was last revised 20 years ago) and to acknowledge new ways of working and the increasing need for transparency. This committee has also agreed to a new procedure (on one-year trial basis initially) aimed at **making it easier for members of the public to ask questions at Council meetings. Councillor Daunton is a member of this committee.**

2. Combined Authority

- 3. There are now several layers of government in our geographical area, not always interconnecting well, and this layering is affecting delivery of services, particularly in the realm of transport planning, a realm of concern for us all. As well as the County Council (education, social care and health and highways) and the District Council (planning,

housing, community services and waste management), there is the Greater Cambridge Partnership (formerly City Deal) attempting to deliver transport improvements in South Cambridgeshire and now the Mayor and Combined Authority taking over aspects of transport, housing and skills, throughout the whole of the County including Peterborough. Negotiating these overlaps is proving very challenging since the overlapping ambitions and responsibilities of constituent parts do not always coincide easily.

Having recently taken over the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which was responsible for the Economic Development Strategy – and a very important in the context of South Cambridgeshire, District and City, where business and enterprise are flourishing – it now appears that the Mayor is working towards taking over other aspects of local government in the region, with significant consequences for the District.

There are currently differences of approach between the Mayor and the Greater Cambridge Partnership over the GCP's plans for the development of new park and ride sites to ease congestion on roads into the city, and also its plans for a busway to Cambourne along the A428.

There are hints that further developments along these lines might include the Cambridgeshire County Council's being subsumed into the Combined Authority and this happening just at the time that CCC's commitment to building a new headquarters at Alconbury might be coming on stream.

Village Design Statements

SCDC is assisting villages to put together Village Design Statements to help them plan for the shape of their communities into the future. At a recent (26th June) meeting held in Cambourne a large number of communities were represented, including Great Wilbraham. Of those taking part in the meeting 6-8 villages will be selected as pilots and will receive additional help. But for those not selected there will also be advice available.

Police and Crime

Councillor Daunton is a member of the Police and Crime Commission Panel for Cambridge and Peterborough. She is also a member of the District's Crime and Disorder Reduction committee. Strategic decisions concerning policing across the District and at each local level – affecting our daily lives – are taken by the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Panel acts as the scrutinising body for the commissioner. At a recent meeting concerns over the level of drug-dealing across the County and cities, and the further crime that results from this, were highlighted as an area for further investigation. We recognize that levels of drug-taking and drug-dealing across both cities and within our villages are on the rise. The local PCSO has recently been patrolling the village, and the local Sergeant is due to visit shortly. A further report will be made at the meeting.

Housing

The delivery of the Local Plan makes it easier to resist unwanted developments. There is full acceptance of the need for more houses, but these should be homes in places where people want to live with services provided that enhance the community. The Local Inspector has still not released her final report and this is holding up the delivery of additional homes.

- (i) Residents are now moving in to the first 2,000 affordable homes in Northstowe provided through the Bedford-based Housing Association bpha, working in

conjunction with South Cambs. Members might be interested to view the short film made by ITN Productions and the Chartered Institute of Housing on the housing crisis in which bpha features <https://www.bpha.org.uk/bpha-in-new-film-on-uk-housing-crisis/>

- (ii) Discussions are being held on the promotion of self-build and modular build, with evidence and experience from other parts of the country.
- (iii) Councillor Daunton continues to serve on the 'Communal Spaces Working Group' for sheltered housing which is currently consulting on the changing nature of communal spaces within sheltered housing facilities. The changing use of communal spaces is subject to significant consultation with residents.

Transport

(i) Buses. The poor quality of bus services across this Ward, is much discussed. The lack of decent bus services, not only in the rural hinterland around Cambridge City, but also across the city itself, remains a major issue. Those in this Ward without cars, and on reduced income, regularly spend £20 on return taxi fares to take them to Sainsbury's or the Beehive centre. But there is a head of steam both nationally and locally for concerted action on improving bus services; and the issue is on many more agenda than hitherto. Below is a link to the recent report of the Campaign for Better Transport, dealing with the national crisis
<https://bettertransport.org.uk/buses-in-crisis-2018>

Here the Cambridge Area Bus Users group put down a question to the Mayor at the Combined Authority meeting of 27th June and received the following reply

'The provision and performance of existing bus services are disappointing and it is clear that there has been a decline in many areas over recent years. The simple fact is that patronage is falling and costs to bus operators are increasing. Together this has created an environment in which commercial bus services are being withdrawn and can only continue through public sector subsidy.

In the short term the Combined Authority is reviewing subsidy provision with Cambridgeshire County Council. However, interventions will be limited in the short term until the Combined Authority's Strategy Bus Review is completed later in 2018 and the findings are considered.

A key component of this bus review is to review the new powers which are available to the Combined Authority through devolution, including the ability to franchise services. However, the Combined Authority does not wish to pre-empt the findings from this study.

Finally, in relation to engagement with the public as part of this study, there are no plans to formally consult at this stage. However, the study team will be engaging with a number of key stakeholders including the upper tier authorities, the district councils, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, bus operators and the Cambridge Bus User Group. This engagement has not yet commenced but will take place over the coming months. In addition, Transport Focus has been appointed as an independent advisor to the project. '

In the meantime, it has to be stated that some small improvements can come from adjustments to timetables and some re-routing, if these can be agreed with Andy Campbell, Managing Director of Stagecoach. There might also be the possibility, perhaps, of extending the scope of 3CT transport which at present can only be used for medical-related journeys..

At a recent presentation from the transport consultant employed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership it was agreed that good public bus services were vital to dealing with congestion in the city and that these could go hand in hand with any other mode of public transport, be it the Rapid Mass Transit system favoured by the Mayor for development over the next 5-10 years, more Park and Ride sites more immediately, or other schemes. All are viable in their own way and all could work well together, But for (ii) **Cycling** The Cambridge Greenways project continues to be rolled out. Additional funding has been made available to hasten the completion of some of the greenway projects already in the pipeline. the here and now, better bus services are needed, and soon.

Parking

Fewer buses mean more cars and less space to park them. Parking problems arise in many villages, and in an increasing number of cases have a significant negative impact. SCDC officers advise that two reports are being prepared at the moment which look at different parking models that could be adopted across the District in an effort to help alleviate the problems and disruption that parking can cause. Discussions are being held in another Ward this week with the police, SCDC officers and Ward councillors. A report will be made and we will update the Parish Council as soon as possible.

Waste Management

On a recent visit to the SCDC Waste Management facility, a number of councillors were made aware of the strides that SCDC has made in managing waste and improving recycling of plastics, glass and paper. Waste Management is now a shared service across Greater Cambridge and there will be further improvements to the service from August with the introduction of a new shared IT arrangements and the introduction of easier on-line reporting and information. This is an important area of work for the District as a whole and for each individual household.

CD and JW
27.06.2018