

## **Report of District Councillors Claire Daunton and John Williams to Great Wilbraham Parish Council in January 2020**

This report contains factual information which we hope will be of use and of interest to the Council and to the parish community more widely. Queries can be sent to us at [Cllr.Daunton@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.Daunton@scambs.gov.uk); [John.Williams@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:John.Williams@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

**\*\* NB. Issues and Options Consultation: an important opportunity to make your voice heard in discussions and decisions concerning the early stages of preparation of the next Local Plan. The Consultation runs from 13th January to 24th February. Details of roadshows and assistance with the consultation are in this document, including a note of a Big Debate on 18th February. Tickets will be available.**

**<https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/local-plan-review-issues-and-options-consultation>**

**In addition, all parish councils and local groups will be contacted individually. There will be road shows, public meetings and other opportunities to participate in this process which is crucial for the development of our area over the coming decades. The consultation document covers issues such as : homes, jobs, biodiversity and green spaces, wellbeing and social inclusion, infrastructure, great places. There are many ways of responding and being involved, and this can take as much or as little time as you can spare. Responses can be as a group – parish council or other – or as individuals, or both. We will be pleased to expand on any of this information at the meeting.\*\***

### **General Update on the Greater Cambridge Planning Service**

At its meeting of 17th December 2019 the SCDC Scrutiny Committee received an update report from the Greater Cambridge Planning Service (GCPS). We present some elements of that report which we hope will be of use and of interest, given the role parish councils play in local planning processes. The report set out the many changes that have taken place since the 2016 decision to merge the South Cambs and City planning services. The GCPS performs the full range of statutory roles defined in legislation ; and, in addition, it delivers non-statutory services, advice and strategic capacity to both Councils. These additional services include : provision of pre-application advice on planning and related matters to residents and businesses ; investigation and enforcement of planning regulations ; preparation of non-statutory planning documents ; providing advice and insight to inform

the Councils on national and sub-national and regional consultations on infrastructure, economic development, and related projects.

There are now two service-centred teams together with a central supporting team and a senior management team. Alongside the implementation of major organisational changes – which has been significant, time-consuming and challenging – the service-management team has also begun putting in place a comprehensive implementation programmes for work on : Strategic (major) sites delivery ; service improvement programme ; workforce development ; business systems (including ICT) ; strategy and economy ; commercialisation/business development ; built and natural enviroment.

SCDC is experiencing huge growth pressures associated with its successful economy ; and the programme for major strategic sites has also required significant additional management commitment at a time when implementing the new organisational structure was taking place.

Though there are still some significant gaps due to a national recruitment crisis, the service has recently been successful in securing some more senior staff. During the past 12 months GCPS has undertaken 7 rounds of recruitment in an attempt to fill vacant posts. Lessons learned from an officer- and councillor-led review of recruitment and retention practices, and from benchmarking against other Councils, has resulted in a number of changes to the recruitment process, which have begun to bear fruit, even in a very difficult market. There is also growing emphasis on succession planning and on ‘growing our ownb’ professional staff. The appoinment of a Workforce Development Manager has helped this process.

Given the difficulties in dealing with the early, process-driven part of dealing with applications, specialist planning consultants have been brought in, on a time limited contract, to ease the burden of the first-stage registration work on planning applications. Since then a dedicated programme of improving delivery and customer experience has been put in place. Here are some statistics :

1. Performance on householder applications has remained constant in recent years (83% within time) but it is good to report that the percentage of applications that

have the time extended to deliver that performance has reduced from 25% in 2016 to 16% in 2019.

2. 84% of planning applications submitted by businesses in 2019 have been approved with 68% determined within agreed timescales compared with 66% in 2016.
3. The delays experienced earlier in the year surrounding application validation have now been addressed.
4. There is a dedicated programme in place for improving pre-application advice service since demand for this service remains strong and has in the past been an ear of weakness.

### Call for Sites and Football Stadium

Information concerning the outcome of the call for sites should be available in the near future. There was a recent press report, featuring both Marshalls and Cambridge United Football Club, concerning the possible building of a new stadium for the club. It is important to note that the proposed scheme depends on the outcome of the call for sites ; and that the site is in the Green Belt. There report also mentioned re-location of the Newmarket Road Park and Ride. We will be watching closely all discussions concerning this scheme and any associated traffic plans since they will have significant consequences for all corners of our Ward.

### **Economic Action Plan and Business Support Service**

The Greater Cambridge Economic Action Plan (GCEAP) has been created jointly between SCDC, the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) and Cambridge City Council, reflecting the close relationship between the area's economy and administrative boundaries. The purpose of the plan is :To set out targeted objectives and actions that will support the Greater Cambridge economy and local businesses ; and through those objectives and actions to support the delivery of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) in Greater Cambridge.

The plan seeks to address the Council's ambition to support businesses of all sizes, including rural enterprise and farming, to help create new jobs and opportunities where people live.

The plan aims to : support small and medium enterprises ; to promote inward investment and the development of enterprise zones ; to support sustainable village economies ; to

develop and extend 'business friendly' practice across the Council to the benefit of local businesses. An increase in staffing to support this plan has been agreed and it is hoped that our local communities and businesses will soon see the effect of this initiative.

## **Housing**

The Scrutiny Committee considers housing matters on a regular basis. At the December meeting it received an update on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme. Members of the committee noted that, although many schemes were completed on time and within budget, there was an underspend of £2.72 million, with an out-turn expenditure of £15.625 million instead of the original funding allocation of £18.367 million. A detailed post-implementation review of key capital projects has been undertaken by relevant officers. This has included a close examination of : the new build programme ; capitalised repairs ; re-provision of existing homes ; other HRA capital projects.

New-build programme : the programme includes nine schemes. The nature of these schemes means that there is potential for delay and cost overrun. Three schemes showed a marginal cost overrun ; four schemes are behind schedule, though two of these are about to complete. In the case of Pembroke Way, Teversham, a number of factors contributed to this : difficulty with connections to utilities ; contractor availability ; contractor permissions and agreements.

Capitalised repairs : there are a number of repair and renewal programmes within the HRA including kitchens, bathrooms, re-wiring, window replacement, heating and re-roofing. There was an underspend of £1.1m, in part because of contractor issues (one contractor went into liquidation and finding a replacement in the very busy Cambridge market proved difficult). Budgets have been completely reassessed and there should be enough capacity in future budgets to manage expenditure and to make sure the programmes continue.

Reprovision of Existing Homes : the scheme was for the replacement of bed-sit accommodation in Gamlingay and this scheme has been completed.

Other HRA Capital: budgets for shared-ownership properties and self-build schemes were set too high. Budgets have now been set at a more realistic level. Our New Build team have taken on three new shared ownership homes in Caldecote. People can buy a share of one to help them get onto the housing ladder. We will use income from these properties to invest in other housing tenures, like our Council homes

[www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/apply-for-housing/](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/apply-for-housing/)

## **Transport**

Network Rail has announced that it will begin consultations on the location of and timetable for Cambridge South Station. Public consultation begins on 20 January and will close on 2 March. The station is intended to serve the Biomedical Campus as well as the growing communities to the south of Cambridge City and beyond. If approved, it is expected that the station will be in use by 2024/25. It will also provide much-needed additional connections to the south of the City and to this part of the District. We have however been warned that car parking at this new station will be very limited, and so will be pressing for appropriate public transport from various areas, and not just from the city.

Buses. The time to respond to the Combined Authority's Bus Review consultation is running out. SCDC is represented on the Bus Review Task Force by our colleague, Councillor Anna Bradnam who is County Councillor for the northern section of our Ward. Councillor Bradnam is Chair of the Cambridge Area Bus Users (CABU) group. Locally, with Cllr Bradnam, we will be meeting Stagecoach in the very near future to discuss possible improvements to local services, encouraging some creative thinking and the possibility of making some small changes that might effect significant improvements. We await the outcome of discussions.

Transport Planning. We took part in the discussions at the last Joint Development Control Committee (JDCC) on proposals for a new transport hub in Trumpington. Although not directly connected with this Ward, the principles put forward by the transport planners are relevant. We found them to be wanting, not least because although the word 'hub' was used, and to most people would denote place where different modes of transport would interchange. In this instance it meant little more than another park and ride site adjacent to the existing site. There were no plans for the most obvious link between this 'hub', by bus or indeed by cycle, to the proposed new Cambridge South station, or indeed to other parts of the city not yet adequately covered by public transport. At the same meeting of the JDCC there were further discussions concerning amended access to the primary school at Marleigh. Developers have made a number of changes to the access routes. The full

application is yet to come to JDCC for determination. In relation to Marleigh we will be attending another meeting, in the near future, concerning the proposed roundabout or alternative on Airport Way.

Eastern Access Transport. At a recent meeting of Fen Ditton Parish Council colleagues from the GCP's Eastern Access Transport group attended to make a presentation. We heard from them about the various options under consideration for improving access to the City from Newmarket Road and areas further east to areas around the city – Addenbrooke's, Science Park, North East Cambridge etc and to the city itself – by means of transport other than cars. The consultation is at a very early stage. Horningsea Parish Council might wish to consider inviting these colleagues to a future meeting. Councillor Williams is a member of the GPC Assembly, and we could facilitate a visit if the parish council wishes.

### **Zero Carbon UPDATE**

SCDC has begun to introduce 100% electric vans for our Street Cleansing team. The two zero emissions vans will also be used by members of our Waste Service. The vehicles are greener than the diesel ones they're replacing.

We are pleased to report that the results of the first round of grant allocations for zero carbon schemes in our villages will be made public very soon, once relevant paperwork has been completed. The committee met just before Christmas. There will be another round of zero carbon grant awards in 2020, and we will keep you informed of the timetable once this has been agreed.

We have launched the 'Three Free Trees' initiative. SCDC is giving each parish council a £60 voucher to buy trees with the encouragement to plant more to match. Where this has already happened, and the scheme made public, members of the public have already come forward to denote more trees. Cambridgeshire is the 'least-treed' county in the country and we are beginning to tackle the need to increase tree coverage

### **Street Sweeping and Cleansing**

Following requests from residents, streets and footpaths in Great and Little Wilbraham were swept on New Year's Eve. This was done outside the usual zone timetable. Information about zones and timetables is due to be available on the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste (GCSW) website by the end of this month. If you have any problems in the meantime, please let us know. A visit from the GCSW team also provided an opportunity to discuss litter bins ; but this is clearly something for the parish council to consider and we will support, as appropriate.