

**Report of District Councillors Claire Daunton and John Williams to
Great Wilbraham Parish Council, March 2020**

This report contains factual information which we hope will be of interest and of use to the parish council and to the wider village community. For queries please contact us at

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Coronavirus : SCDC has a developing strategic plan for maintaining services to as high a level as possible if coronavirus infection becomes widespread. The Council is receiving regular advice and updates from Public Health England, and is following protocols.

Local Plan

The Big Debate on the Local Plan was held at the Corn Exchange in Cambridge on the evening of 18th February, from 6.30pm. It was a sell-out event with over 200 people taking part. We were very pleased to be there, throughout the evening, to hear the range of speakers from city and district (including those of school age) and questions from the city and the district. All who took part, officers, councillors and members of the public, are to be congratulated. A number of themes emerged : the importance of green spaces, the need to conserve water and electricity, the need to balance quality of life with expansion, the need to pay attention to biodiversity, the need to create urban and rural spaces that work for all elements of society, the need to build houses that are cheap to run, the need to redress the balance of wealthy and not-so-wealthy (Cambridge and surrounding areas are the most unequal places in England in terms of wealth distribution and, progressively, in terms of health outcomes) ; the need for reduction in car use and move to more sustainable transport. It was good to hear the scope of the debate and the quality of engagement. Living in an area of economic growth means significant opportunities but also significant challenges, and change which we know will come.

None of these points is new ; each has been made before in different places, not least in the 'issues and options' document from which the Big Debate arose. It was, however, helpful to have them raised and debated in this forum and to know which of them engaged members of the public most across areas of the city and the district. There will be continued

engagement arising from the Big Debate during the process of drawing up the Local Plan and the outcome of the Debate will be published on the Planning website along with the findings of the responses made by parish councils and individuals to the issues and options questionnaire. We will keep you all informed.

Housing Needs

Alongside the preparations for the Local Plan, SCDC is engaged on the assessment of housing needs. Whilst we all know that there is a need for housing to manage economic growth in the area, we still need up to date qualitative and quantitative evidence of the types of housing for different sections of the population. The study will look at the different types of housing people require, such as the need for affordable housing, housing for older people, families with children, people with disabilities and people who currently rent.

Developments in the Area

Developments at Marleigh, Land North of Cherry Hinton, Ida Darwin Hospital and others will be considered at the **next Community East Forum, to be held at Bewick Bridge Primary School on Tuesday 24th March, from 6.30pm**. Speakers will include planners and developers. Work is progressing to different timescales on each of these sites.

There is no further word at present on the relocation of Marshall's airport beyond the rejection of Duxford as unsuitable. It is however likely that representatives of Marshall's will be attending to take questions concerning the other sites under discussion.

We hope that there will also be an update on the **North East Fringe development** – the area around Cambridge North station. This is a very large site scheduled for development of housing, offices and light industrial units, with an emphasis on public transport, walking and cycling, green spaces and the creation of a new 'green' community.

Crucial to this development in the north east is the move of the **water treatment plant**. We recently had meetings with representatives of Anglia Water concerning possible sites for the move, the implications of the move and the process of consultation and planning. The consultation phase will last for 2-3 years and there will be many opportunities to engage with Anglia Water. We have asked Anglian Water to make sure to contact all relevant parish councils in due course.

Business Plan, 2020-2025

The Business Plan for the next five-year period was adopted at Full Council on 20th February. The main tenets of the plan remain as before : helping business to grow ; building homes That are affordable to live in ; being green to our core ; putting our customers at the centre of everything we do.

Under the first point we have already worked closely with **small businesses** in the District but are increasing the number of staff in the Business Team. These will be helping start-ups and home-based businesses to find workspace. At present we are looking at how sections of South Cambs offices might be used as small business workspace and also seeking out other similar spaces to help small businesses. We will also be holding business-support workshops for this group. Further, we will complete and promote a new Enterprise Zone strategy.

Under the second point, **Housing**, we will increase the number of Council homes to be built each year, doubling this from 50 to 100 from 2021. We will produce a report on Housing derived from findings from the latest consultation on the Local Plan. For significant new developments (in this area, Marleigh and Land North of Cherry Hinton and possibly the airport) we will continue to provide community liaison forum meetings and further increase support for emerging communities. We will carry out an audit of the energy efficiency of existing housing and approve a further programme of insulation. We will also support the delivery of more affordable housing from developers and through funding currently held by the Combined Authority. We will renew our focus on the health and well being of communities, along with support for those in temporary accommodation and those in receipt of Universal Credit.

Under the third point, **Being Green**, we will complete a zero-carbon strategy for the District to inform an action plan ; we will agree an action plan to reduce the Council's emissions for all our buildings and operations. We will hold a local Climate Summit.

We will complete a retrofit of South Cambs offices to showcase a green building and to save a significant amount of money on energy costs. In addition to the current electric waste vans, we will put together a business case for further investment in alternative fuel bin lorries. We will increase funds available to communities for zero carbon grants. We will complete the upgrading of street lights to LED and achieve a 60% reduction in energy costs for parish councils. We will carry out air monitoring. We will provide toolkits for parishes on energy efficiency, recycling and other areas promoting zero carbon good practice, including food waste and fly-tipping.

Under the fourth point, Putting our **Customers** at the Centre of our work, we will be reviewing all service areas ; we will complete and analyse further annual staff surveys ; work to fill 70% of jobs on first-round recruitment ; work to increase the number of job applications from those with disabilities from 2019-2020 levels ; continue to improve the customer service at the call centre ; move to paper-free meetings as far as possible ; set up at least three new full mobile warden schemes this year with further increase on this in future.

Finance

At a meeting of Full Council on 20th February it was agreed to increase Council tax at the rate for a Band D house of an additional £150.31 per annum. This increase was understood to be necessary to meet the District Council's obligations. Already increases have been agreed for the police and other authorities.

The same meeting gave approval – as required on an annual basis – to the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Capital Programme, the General Fund Budget, the Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budget. These are all important decisions and were taken with full papers in front of councillors and after considerable discussion. For details, please see the Council papers that are available on the South Cambs website. ***See also the press release below.***

Taxi Licensing

Full Council approved changes to the regulations for hackney carriage (taxis that can be hailed in the street) and private hire cars. These changes are already in place in

the City. The main elements of the new policy are : the vehicle is required to carry plates for all the companies worked for and to have phone numbers clearly displayed ; vehicles must have CCTV installed, with the recorder securely placed in the boot of the car and the recording only available to authorised persons granting the license ; there are also regulations governing the age and upkeep of vehicles and a time-frame for the moving towards low- or non-emission vehicles. Drivers who are plate-exempt (Limousine or chauffeur service) must comply with the CCTV requirements and must work only as plate-exempt, not as both private hire and plate exempt. These are significant changes and they have been put in place for the safety and security of passengers and drivers and to bring down emissions. The implementation period for these changes has been extended to take into account representations received.

Grants Committee : Community Chest Fund

In addition to the special allocation of funding to promote events to mark the 75th anniversary of VE Day (applications to be received by 15th March), applications to the Community Chest fund are encouraged from community groups across the District. Please let groups in your parish know. Grants of up to £1000 are made for a wide range of projects, for community events, sporting activities, art and music activities, help for groups bringing people together from different parts of the community, and more. Further, this year additional funding is being made available for the current Mobile Warden Scheme, prior to the introduction of a new scheme to encourage all parishes to set up schemes in their area, or to join existing schemes in neighbouring villages.

Grants Committee : Zero Carbon Grant

We took part in the zero carbon workshop at South Cambs on Saturday 7th March. We were pleased to see representation from four of the villages in our Ward and to hear the presentation from the Chair of Great Wilbraham PC on its award of funding for tree-planting. The workshop was very well attended – full house – and provided an excellent opportunity for networking and for airing concerns as well as for giving pointers to issues for in-depth discussions. SCDC officers and councillors are considering when and where to arrange follow-up sessions on particular themes.

The zero carbon grants scheme should open for 2020 applications during the summer, coronavirus-disruption permittings.

Police Matters

The Police Panel met on 6th February to consider the precept and other matters. The panel was informed that under the settlement with the government announced two days earlier there would be sufficient funding for an additional 62 officers on top of the 50 recruited last year. However, there were several caveats : 1. The funding was only given for one year in the first instance ; further funding would need to wait until the Budget settlement ; 2. The announcement did not include funding for uniforms and lockers or other kit ; 3. Not all 63 officers would be fully deployed in Cambridgeshire, some would be allocated to national work carried out with local connections.

A discussion then followed on the request to increase the precept. An increase was agreed at £9.99 per annum on a Band D house. It was understood that this was the minimum needed to maintain the current level of service. Whilst there was almost unanimous agreement on this, several members expressed concern at the cost of the Police and Crime Commissioner's own office (ca. £1.2 m) of 14 staff some of whose work overlapped significantly with that of the office of the Chief Constable. Members were reassured that cost savings related to work-sharing had taken place and more were being considered.

The panel touched on the latest consultations on the Cambridge City police station and on the consultation concerning police resources across South Cambs. It was felt that the communications around these consultations could have been better.

For the next panel meeting in late March evidence will be gathered on the effectiveness of community-wide safety topics and on neighbourhood working.

Elections for Police and Crime Commissioner would take place on 7th May 2020.

Further, at a recent meeting of the South Cambs Community Safety Partnership we learnt that one of the key safety topics for the District in the coming year would be

the development of a toolkit for parish councils engaged with traveller encampments. The police have been trialling a toolkit working with one or two parishes and with the traveller community. We will have more information on this in due course after a forthcoming meeting. Parking outside schools was another issue raised. The police ask that this is dealt with by local action.

Great Wilbraham Issues

1. Development in Bottisham. We have been alerted to the possible development of a retirement village in Bottisham and the potential impact this might have on Bottisham surgery, a place of importance to residents of the Wilbrahams. We are engaging in talks and meetings, as appropriate since this is in the neighbouring East Cambs District, and will follow the matter closely. We will report back as the planning application is taken forward.

2. Church Close. Following concerns of a resident over broken fencing, reported to the parish clerk and thence to us, Councillor Cone and I visited Church Close to inspect the damage. Councillor Cone sent photos to SCDC officers for action.

There are, however, a number of longer-term issues there related to parking also brought up ; and these have been taken up with SCDC housing . The condition of the fencing is related to the larger matter. Fencing, bollards and pathways in Church Close are now under inspection and a plan of action is being drawn up.

Press Release concerning the SCDC budget and business plan

£5 million has been pledged in South Cambridgeshire to tackle the "global climate emergency".

The money will go towards a raft of improvements linked to the District Council's 'green to the core' priorities. This includes improving the Council's offices to cut carbon emissions and energy bills, providing communities with grants for projects that cut carbon emissions in their areas, making Council houses more energy efficient and helping people cut the amount of food they waste.

The investment was agreed by Councillors yesterday (Thursday 20 February) as the budget and Business Plan for South Cambridgeshire District Council was set.

The new multi-million pound investment follows the Council spending around £1.5 million on improving Council homes last year and provided around £100,000 to 19 initiatives under the Council's Zero Carbon Communities grants scheme.

In 2018 the Council declared a climate emergency and pledged to reach net zero carbon by 2050.

To help move toward that goal the Council plans to invest in 2020-21:

- a further £100,000 on Zero Carbon Community grants for community initiatives to cut carbon emissions and tackle climate change*
- £1.9 million 'greening' its offices to cut energy bills and show others how they could go green*
- a further £1.3 million on improving energy efficiency of Council homes*
- £1.3 million replacing 1,800 District Council owned streetlights with LEDs to reduce energy consumption by 60%*
- Around £400,000 on an electric bin lorry to see whether it is viable to shift from a diesel to an all-electric fleet*

Councillors also agreed the Council's Business Plan today which will see a campaign carried out to help people waste less food and cut the amount of food waste put in the black bin.

An air quality strategy to ensure the Council continues to monitor and improve it in the area will also be completed and an action plan agreed.

At the meeting, Councillors also heard that the Council is ahead of schedule on plans to generate at least a quarter of the money it spends on services from their own investments by March 2024.

In 2020-21 the Council expects to generate over £3.5 million from investments which will be spent on local services and help offset cuts to their funding by central Government.

In January 2019 leading Councillors said that by the end of March 2024 investments would return an income of just over £5 million a year – and announced when they published their budget papers last month that they are aiming to reach this target ahead of schedule.

The Council's budget also proposes investing an extra £200,000 in expanding the mobile warden scheme in the district. Local Mobile Warden groups support older people to live independently by carrying out practical tasks such as making light meals, shopping, making appointments, filling in forms and collecting prescriptions.

In 2019/20 the Council supported 20 villages through 14 mobile warden schemes, benefitting more than 300 residents and the proposed investment aims to extend the service in villages where it is not currently available.

A further £200,000 is also planned to be invested in increasing support for local businesses so that villages remain vibrant and new jobs are created close to where people live.

Around half of the Council's annual budget of just under £20 million comes from local Council Tax, and a £5 per year increase for the average band D home was confirmed for 2020/21. This will see the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council rise to £150.31 per year. This maintains the Council's position in the lowest 25% of District Councils in the country.

The Council's income from investments is from Ermine Street Housing – its property company – a return on a loan to deliver the new Ice Rink on the edge of Cambridge, and business premises recently purchased on Cambridge Science Park and the Colmworth Trade Park in St Neots.

Money for the rest of the Council's £20 million budget to deliver services comes from grants the Government pays councils to help offset the costs of providing services in a growing area, known as New Homes Bonus, and the retention of some of the business rates it collects that were previously passed on to central Government.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, Cllr John Williams, said: "The global climate crisis is one of the biggest challenges we face. That is why we have declared a climate emergency and are already taking bold action. We were named as one of the top performing Councils for tackling climate change in a report late last year and are investing heavily so we can all enjoy a cleaner, greener future. We know more can always be done and we must all play our part.

"There is no doubt that we must take a different approach to our finances to be able to do this. That is why we have pledged to generate 25% of the money we spend on services from our own investments. We are on a sound footing for our budget next year, but the challenge ahead is vast as we expect money to be reallocated from District Councils to authorities such as the County Council who have to deal with budget pressures of adult social care. Without small rises in Council Tax now we will store up a big problem in the future and that is why the £5 per year, or around 10 pence per week increase for the average band D home has been confirmed."