

District councillors' Report for Great Shelford Annual Parish Meeting,

17th April 2019

Local Plan

The current Local Plan (which identifies where development is to go in future years) was finally adopted in October after being in inspection for over 4 years. The government inspector requires us to now embark on a new joint local plan with Cambridge City and this is now getting underway. The first piece of work is to ask landowners to come forward and tell us about any land they are prepared to offer up for future development.

These potential sites will be assessed for housing and economic development, to meet the needs identified for the District, for inclusion in our next local plan. Anyone can put forward sites, but it is usually landowners, developers, land promoters, businesses, local interest groups, parish councils, local property agents, neighbourhood forums (preparing neighbourhood plans).

Business Plan

South Cambs approved its business plan in February. It sets the direction for the council with a focus on business support and protecting the environment. Equally important is the intention to secure new housing to meet the needs of all residents by making new homes as affordable as possible. This could involve renewable energy, building homes close to where people work and ensuring that you can get where you need to get without a car. These are big ambitions but only by aiming high will we really make a positive difference to the cost of living and to the environment. Copies of the summary document on the Business Plan are available on request.

'Mysouthcambs'

South Cambs District Council has launched a new way of accessing information, processing claims and applications, and generally engaging with the council: 'mysouthcambs' is a customer portal on the home page on the Council's website - www.scambs.gov.uk

Registration only takes a few minutes to create a personal account with the Council which tracks all your online transactions with Council services. All existing forms are on the portal, as well as revenue and benefits functions, making it much easier for residents to complete forms. The planning service is due to be added to this in summer 2019.

Empty Homes

South Cambs is planning to increase the council tax on houses that have been left empty for a number of years. The Council offers help to landlords and owners of empty homes to help them get them back into use, but now has the option to significantly increase council tax where homes remain empty without good reason.

Currently the owners of homes that are left empty and substantially unfurnished for more than two years must pay an extra 50% on top of the regular bill. Following the full Council meeting, the 50% premium will be replaced by the following arrangements. Homes that are empty for two years or more will be charged double their regular Council Tax (i.e. an additional premium of 100%) with effect from 1 April 2019.

Right now across South Cambridgeshire, there are 100 properties that have been empty for between two years and five years, and 80 that have been empty for even longer.

East West Rail Consultation

The consultation process for the planned East West Rail line closed on 11th March. Information about the options being considered can be found on eastwestrail.co.uk. There will be more opportunities to comment as proposals evolve. Five route options are currently being consulted on and all include a proposed station either around Cambourne or at Bassingbourn Barracks, with potential for significant additional housing and employment areas around whichever station is selected. The preferred route is due to be announced later in the year.

The Council's response supports the principle of the Bedford to Cambridge section of the new railway line which has the potential to be "transformational for the regional economy" and boost local industries such as life sciences, IT and digital. Councillors had already stated that the environment must be fully considered by the promoters of the line.

However, we are disappointed with Central Government's decision to offer for consultation only routes that join existing lines to the south of Cambridge. There is no obvious objective reason for excluding routes to the north at this stage, and we are concerned about the impact of a new line on our villages, in conjunction with the GCP's strategy 1 plans, which would see a Rapid Mass Transit route cutting through green belt in Great Shelford.

We would urge residents to express their views through their local councillors and/or the next consultation opportunity from East West Rail.

Parking enforcement

Concerns have been growing over the effectiveness of parking control in Great Shelford and a few other large villages in the District. Parking control is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. However, there are various alternative models, such as Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) or PCSOs.

A discussion paper has been prepared by South Cambs District Council, which considers the feasibility of the current and alternative parking models. The paper will be discussed by cabinet in April, as well as what actions the District Council can take to help find a solution to the problem.

Contact your district councillors:

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact Nick Sample cllr.sample@scambs.gov.uk or Peter Fane cllr.fane@scambs.gov.uk