

Annual report for Great Shelford Parish Council:

South Cambridgeshire District Council – May 2020

Introduction

Following the Covid-19 national lockdown on March 23rd, local council meetings were suspended until new powers enabled South Cambs District Council, along with parish councils, to start meeting remotely in late April. In the meanwhile, all but essential staff continue to work remotely from home.

The focus of District Council work switched to dealing with the virus, with the cabinet led by Cllr Bridget Smith. SCDC Chief Executive Liz Watts, appointed in July, was granted additional executive powers. Cllr Bill Handley took the lead on virus-related issues, supplemented by Cllr Peter McDonald as business champion who leads on grants and business support. Other councillors are kept informed in a weekly zoom meeting.

This **annual report seeks to focus on other issues**. A separate report will be made to the parish council and others on the coronavirus work once the current lockdown is ended. The annual meeting of the District Council will take place on May 21st. Cllr Douglas de Lacey (independent, Girton) has agreed to continue as Chairman of the Council for a third year.

Planning

Highlights from 2019-20 include:

- In May, the planning committee granted outline consent for up to 6,500 homes on a new town north of **Waterbeach** to be developed by Urban&Civic. This is the western half of the new town as set out in the Local Plan, approved in September 2018.

Later in the year, the developers agreed to £141 million worth of new services, facilities and transport upgrades under Section 106. This includes at least 30% affordable housing, three primary schools, a secondary school and special educational needs school, a health centre, open spaces with outdoor pitches and three sports pavilions.

In addition, developers agreed a contribution towards a new leisure centre, three community centres and a community hub with library, a Community Development Support Worker and at least £16 million for local transport upgrades under S.106.

- In September, the Council launched the “issues and options” consultation on the proposed **new joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge**. In the event, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service had to postpone the consultation until the New Year due to the General Election in December.

The new joint Local Plan to 2040 and beyond will set out how the two councils (South Cambs and Cambridge City) envisage dealing with climate change, increasing biodiversity and green spaces, delivering homes and quality places to live, providing for jobs and employment together with the necessary infrastructure – transport links, schools, health and utilities.

- In February, revised plans by **Huawei** for a research and development centre on the former Spicers site in Sawston were put out to consultation. Huawei aims to create the equivalent of 350 new full-time jobs. The new plans include around 50,000 square metres of research and development space and approximately 9,500 square metres of office space. The proposal is to carry out research and development in the field of

photonics (lasers, fibre-optics and electro-optical devices for data communications) at the new facility. New footpaths, cycleways and roads are also planned as part of the development.

- In October, the planning committee approved outline planning consent for a further 150,000 sqm of space for employment, conferencing and supporting facilities at the **Wellcome Trust's Genome Campus** in Hinxton. There will be up to 1,500 homes for campus-based staff, 30% of which will be affordable. It is estimated that around 4,300 new jobs will be created by the expansion of the campus.

The proposal also includes land for a new school, a nursery and community facilities and provides public open spaces and allotments. There will also be shops and food and drink outlets, new cycling and walking paths, road crossing points and alterations to local roads including a new roundabout on the A1301.

- In April, the **Greater Cambridge planning service won three national RTPI awards**, in conjunction with the developers of the Marmalade Lane co-housing project in Cambridge City. The awards were for excellence in planning for health and wellbeing, and for planning for small schemes. In addition, the development won the Silver Jubilee Award, the judges saying that the development demonstrated the value of community-led housing and a collaborative approach to planning.

Climate change and biodiversity

In February, the Council agreed to spend just under £2 million on **energy efficiency improvements at South Cambridgeshire Hall** in Cambourne. It is estimated these improvements should save almost £100,000 within the first year of the scheme's operation.

Improvements will include a ground source heat pump to generate renewable heat and reduce the amount of gas used on the site by at least 80%, the installation of solar car ports and 20 electric vehicle charging points, LED lighting and a new building energy management system to better regulate heating, cooling and air conditioning systems and cut energy use. Funding will come from the Council's 'Renewables Reserve', derived from Business Rates on renewable energy sites in the district.

Waste collection

On National Clean Air Day (June 20th) the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service, a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, announced its intention to convert some of the fleet of bin lorries to electric power. The South Cambs DC budget, approved in February, included around £400,000 on an electric bin lorry to see whether it is viable to shift from diesel to an all-electric fleet in the long term.

The collection of green bins was suspended in March due to staff shortages (and the need to reduce the number of collectors in each lorry). This service has now been restored, but there is a risk some green bins will not be collected on the first round.

Housing

More than 90 **new Council houses** are currently being built across six sites in South Cambridgeshire – with around 170 more in the pipeline. This is in line with the priorities set in the new business plan in 2019 to bring forward “housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in”.

The plan includes doubling the number of energy-efficient Council homes built each year, and in September the Council approved 80 ‘designer apartments’ to be let at affordable rents in **Northstowe**, built using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), in which homes produced in factories are assembled on-site.

Later in the year, the Council reached agreement on 63 affordable new homes (44 of them for affordable rent) to be built as part of a development in **Sawston**. This brings the total number of Council homes in South Cambridgeshire to just over 5,500 properties.

Council budget

Around half of the Council’s annual budget of just under £20 million comes from local **Council Tax**. Over 2020/21 the average band D home charge will increase by £5 to just over £150 per year.

The Council also collected 99.5% of the business rates due, of which SCDC retains £6.81 million or 5% towards its own expenditure.

Income from council tax and business rates is much reduced by coronavirus rebates to unemployed and to businesses. However, SCDC, which collects the council tax, must pay on the full amount to the County Council and other precepting authorities (£123 million per year, or 80% of the total collected). £6 million is paid to parish councils. All but two parish councils in the District have agreed to one quarter of the parish precept being delayed by up to three months to help the District Council mitigate pressure on cashflow. The District Council has since secured a £1.6 million share of the latest round of government assistance to Councils, roughly equivalent to the 25% of total parish council precepts.

The Council plans to generate at least a quarter of the money spent on services from **income from investments** by March 2024. The 2020/21 budget forecasts generating over £3.5 million from investments to invest back into local services and also offset cuts by Central Government. These forecasts will be reviewed as the impact of Covid-19 develops.

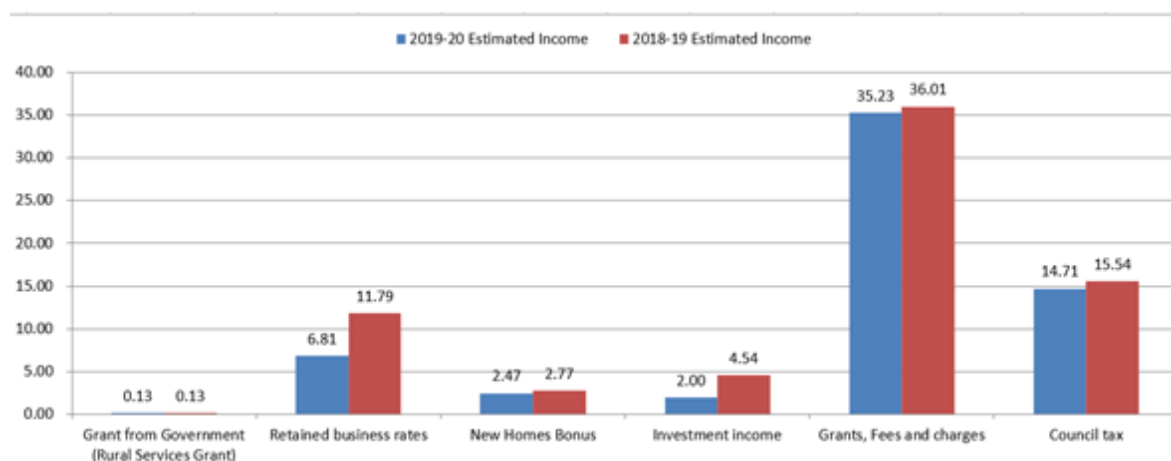


Figure 1 Estimated sources of income

The **Council budget** approved in February includes a pledge of £5 million to tackle the “global climate emergency”. This will help to pay for improvements linked to the District Council’s ‘green to the core’ priorities, including the improvements to the Council’s offices to cut carbon emissions and energy bills, and making Council houses more energy efficient.

Allowances for councillors

In September, the Council agreed to a 2% increase in basic member allowance (raising them by £98 per year to £5010) for the 45 councillors. This followed the recommendations of an independent panel. Councillors agreed to tie the rate of increase to that of Council officers' salaries.

Grants

The new **Zero Carbon Communities Grant** was introduced in May 2019 to help local groups reduce carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels, with grants of up to £15,000 each for projects such as energy-saving improvements to community buildings, solar panels, community wind turbines, electric vehicle charging points, community tree planting, cycle paths and stands. A total of just over £90,000 was made available for the scheme for 2019/20, funded from business rates from renewable energy sites in South Cambridgeshire. The total pot will rise to £100,000 in 2020/21. Beneficiaries, announced in September, included Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke.

Further grants were announced in February at £15,000 each for Cambridge Carbon Footprint's "Net Zero Now" project, and Cambridge Sustainable Food. Both will run training courses and awareness events, including a 'Food for Our Future' campaign to raise awareness of the links between carbon emissions and meat and dairy consumption, encouraging local people to take up practical solutions.

Later in the year, the **Community Chest Fund** was increased to £50,000, available to support parish councils and local groups in their efforts to promote active and healthy lifestyles and enhance the natural environment. Groups can bid for up to £1,000 from the fund towards these projects. During 2019/20, 42 groups have been awarded just over £33,000 to date.

In December, the Council agreed that a fund of just over £20,000 would be made available to new and existing **mobile warden schemes**. There are currently schemes covering twenty villages in South Cambs.

Business support

"Growing local businesses and economies" is one of the four priority areas in the Council's new Business Plan.

In January, the Council agreed plans for a new team of four officers to be set up to increase support for small and medium-sized businesses in South Cambridgeshire. The team will offer practical advice and targeted support to existing and growing businesses, including those looking to move into South Cambridgeshire. They will seek to improve the survival rate of new enterprises and secure new investment, help to develop the three Enterprise Zones in South Cambridgeshire and deliver a programme of activities to support local village economies with new and environmentally friendly tourism initiatives, such as cycling and walking routes to encourage visitors to South Cambridgeshire.

The new service will also offer guidance to companies on the climate emergency, including generating their own electricity, improving energy efficiency and recycling more waste and water.

The intention is to make the entire Council more business-friendly, creating one point of contact for local companies linked to other business support organisations.

Other initiatives

South Cambridgeshire's Blue Plaque scheme was launched at Girton College in June in conjunction with Cambridge Past, Present and Future (CPPF), which already runs the scheme in the City. The first plaque was unveiled in honour of the two principal founders, Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon, on the 150th anniversary of its foundation.

Please contact District Councillors Nick Sample or Peter Fane if we can help with local council matters.

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