

Report for Great Shelford Parish Council:

South Cambridgeshire District Council – March 2019

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@scams.gov.uk or Peter Fane cllr.fane@scams.gov.uk

Residents' surgeries reminder

Peter and Nick will be holding a drop-in surgery for residents each month at 7pm before the start of every Great Shelford Parish Council meeting. We invite residents to drop by with any district matters they would like to discuss.

February full council

Full Council on 21st February was dominated by discussion of the Business Plan and Budget, both of which were passed. As previously advertised, the increase in SCDC tax will be £5, taking the charge for a Band D property in the District to £145.31.

Council tax increase on empty homes

To try and encourage empty homes back into use, the council has agreed new council tax arrangements. Currently the owners of homes that are left empty for more than two years must pay an extra 50% on top of the regular bill, but from April homes that are empty for two years or more will be charged an additional premium of 100%. From April 2020 homes that have been empty for five years or more will be charged a 200% premium and from April 2021 homes that have been empty for ten years or more will be charged a 300% premium.

Across South Cambs there are 100 properties that have been empty for between two years and five years. There are 41 homes that have been empty for between five and ten years and 39 properties that have been empty for more than ten years.

Greater Cambridge Partnership choices for better journeys survey

The GCP have launched a consultation following up on their previous 'Big Conversation'. We urge everyone to take part in this survey as it will help shape a much broader strategy for improving transport in and around Cambridge. In particular the survey seeks to address how greatly improved public transport services could be funded and what further measures could be taken to reduce the traffic that is clogging up the roads not just in Cambridge, but in South Cambridgeshire. The survey close of 31st March and can be accessed online here: <http://bit.ly/2EGTNmR>

Grants for mobile warden scheme

Fourteen South Cambridgeshire community groups have been awarded £23,410 by the District Council's long-running Mobile Wardens grant scheme. The funding will help the groups to tackle isolation by supporting elderly residents to stay in their own homes and communities. Mobile Wardens regularly visit elderly residents in their homes, helping with light practical tasks and establishing supportive relationships.

The applicants for 2019-2020 grant funding included 11 schemes that were supported during the previous year, plus three additional schemes. In order to fund all 11 returning schemes to the same level, as well as the three additional schemes, including two in Stapleford and Great Shelford, the total funding for 2019-2020 has increased by £3,300, despite misleading and incorrect reporting of grants being cut being placed on social media.

East West Rail Consultation

The consultation closed on 11th March. Information about the options being considered can be found on eastwestrail.co.uk/haveyoursay

This is just a start and there will be more opportunities for people to comment as proposals evolve. At a meeting of South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet on Wednesday 6 March, Councillors discussed the response that the authority subsequently made to the consultation on Monday 11 March.

Five route options are currently being consulted on and all include a proposed station either around Cambourne or at Bassingbourn Barracks. The consultation indicates there is the potential for significant additional housing and jobs that aren't already planned around whichever station is selected. The preferred route is due to be announced later in the year.

The Council's response makes clear that it supports the principle of the Bedford to Cambridge section of the new railway line – saying it 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, there are many issues that need clarification. As the District Council's response makes clear, there is significant uncertainty in the plans around the scale of growth envisaged around potential station locations. Furthermore, “the consultation does not make clear how the East West rail line would join the West Anglia Main Line south of Cambridge, and it is therefore difficult to comment on the implications of this for communities and the environment. The Council seeks in-depth engagement with EWR Co. on this point as it develops further its proposals for the rail line.”

Climate and Environment

Solar panels have been installed on top of South Cambridgeshire District Council's waste depot – which will generate around a quarter of all the electricity the building uses.

The installation is the latest stage in the Council's efforts to be “green to the core” and will deliver clean, renewable energy, reduce costs and cut carbon emissions. It follows on from a recent Council commitment to work towards the ambitious target of making South Cambridgeshire carbon-neutral by 2050, and a purge on single-use plastics at the authority.

The solar panels have been mounted on the roof of the building at Waterbeach that is home to the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service, a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils.

The installation will generate 19,121 kilowatt hours per year of energy savings. According to Ofgem figures, that's the average amount of electricity used by around six homes every year. The installation is expected to pay for itself within eight years. It will take advantage of the last of the

Government's feed-in tariff, which is a payment to an energy user for the renewable electricity they generate. It will provide income to the Council for 20 years.

One of the key pledges of the administration is to make climate change mitigation and environmental impacts key considerations in everything we do. These panels will generate clean, free, renewable energy but are just one part of our much bigger plans to be even greener. We're also working to maintain and improve air quality, reduce waste and are determined to leave a positive environmental mark.

My South Cambs Customer Portal - Reminder

A new South Cambs Council customer portal went live on 21st January. Users will be able to sign in using e-mail, facebook, Microsoft and Google. The system allows customers to submit questions, contact the Council about planning, benefits, waste collections etc as well as to report problems. The system is evolving and will enable customers to track the progress of their complaint or enquiry. As the system is web based, it will free up officer time to carry out their work – we welcome any feedback. The new portal can be accessed from the South Cambs Council homepage or on <https://mysouthcambs.scambs.gov.uk>.

Jobs & Employment

House prices in South Cambridgeshire (averaging £439,000!) make it very difficult for many businesses, including the Councils to recruit staff. South Cambridgeshire District Council is hoping to fill quite a number of job vacancies early this year including apprenticeships. If you are thinking about a job change please do keep an eye on the website site. SCDC has a good reputation as a good employer and offers flexi-time, excellent training and many other incentives to ensure that it attracts the right people.