

District Councillors' Report to Parish Councils – June 2023

East West Rail

The government announced the route of East West Rail this week. We had some concerns that the northern route was still being considered but it's now clear that the threat of EWR being built through our ward has now dissipated.

Waterbeach Community Forum

The Waterbeach Community Forum will be held at Waterbeach Baptist Church on 7 June starting at 6pm.

Date : Wednesday 7 June 2023

Times : Drop in from 6pm; Presentations from 7pm

Format : Face to Face

Location : Waterbeach Baptist Church Chapel Street, Waterbeach, Cambridge CB25 9HR

Confirmed agenda items:

- Planning update - SCDC
- Development Update - U&C
- Presentation – Darryl Preston, Police and Crime Commissioner

If you have any questions that you would like answered at the forum, please send these to waterbeach.community@scams.gov.uk quoting your full name and whether or not you'd like to ask the question yourself.

Warm Hubs become Community Hubs

Residents across South and East Cambridgeshire will continue to benefit from local support in community buildings this summer, thanks to a new initiative developed on the back of the original Warm Hubs concept that ran in local communities from October 2022 to the end of March 2023. In South Cambridgeshire, 16 Community Hubs are funded until at least the end of August 2023 with more funding under negotiation. There has been a Warm Hub in Landbeach which had 265 attendances up to March '23 and also in Milton where there were 142 attendances up to March '23. There were nearly 10,000 attendances across all South Cambs Warm Hubs up until March '23.

Four Day Week Trial

All local authorities across the country are facing huge problems in recruiting and retaining staff. It is impossible to compete with the private sector especially for planning and environmental officers and so councils have to offer something other than money. Also, the cost of having to use agency staff to fill vacant posts is currently running at £2m per year - which is a lot of money for a district council. For this reason, South Cambs District Council has been running a trial for office based workers since the start of this year of the Four Day Week. This means that staff have to work very differently and more intensely in order to do 100% of the work in 80% of the time to receive 100% of the pay. The report of this trial has now been published and is very encouraging showing that performance has in general been maintained and in some instances improved and staff who were thinking of leaving are now likely to stay. By extending the trial for a year, this will enable the Council to get a clearer picture of whether recruitment and retention levels increase which would

reduce the need for short term temporary agency staff thus providing a better service to our residents.

The continuation of the trial was approved last month by SCDC's Cabinet. A three month trial in the first instance will start at the beginning of July in the waste service which is shared with Cambridge City. Waste will be collected Tuesday – Friday which also has the advantage of reducing disruption from changes in collection days for bank holidays which often fall on a Monday.

Cambridge City Sustainable Travel Zone

The consultation on a sustainable travel zone and an improved bus service is now closed. The results have now been published. Around 24,000 people took part and there were over 100,000 open text responses analysed so it has taken several months to do this.

Questions were asked about whether people wanted greatly improved bus services (cost circa £50mil per year) and what they should look like. Also, the consultation examined whether there is demand for much improved cycling and walking infrastructure. The most controversial question was whether people supported a 'congestion charge' as the means to pay for buses and cycling infrastructure. These results will now be used to adapt the original proposals into a form that addresses people's concerns. This may include a charge being levied for fewer hours, more categories of drivers being exempt etc. The final decision rests with the County Councillors.

It is important to remember why it is considered necessary to do something to address congestion in Cambridge and South Cambs (Greater Cambridge):

- Greater Cambs has 35,000 more residents in 2021 than 2011.
- There will be 44,000 more jobs by 2031 and 33,500 more houses.
- Traffic levels need to decrease by 15% of 2011 levels to be able to run better public transport.
- 35% of carbon emissions are from transport.

Also, what could a better bus look like:

- Cheap fares
- Increase in routes
- Increased frequency
- Faster and more direct
- Simple through ticketing
- Increased bus infrastructure
- Significant increase in rural services

Right to Buy

Council house tenants have long had 'the right to buy' their home at a discount. What has been frustrating for councils who own the houses is that government takes most of the money from these sales which makes it really hard for us to replace sold homes with new ones. Finally, it appears that Michael Gove is allowing us to keep our Right to Buy receipts but only for 2 years. We sell about 30 properties a year and this will mean that we have to borrow less when we build new houses.

If you are interested in a council property you need to register with HomeLink via

the South Cambs website. This allows you to bid for available properties when they are released every fortnight. If you find doing this for yourself difficult and you do not have someone to help you the council offers an 'assisted bidding service'. Just ring up and ask to speak with a housing officer.

Community Group Funding

Community groups in South Cambridgeshire have been given a funding boost thanks to grants from the District Council. Supporting local people with their mental health, helping families with young children, supporting the elderly, tackling poverty and disability transport are among the community groups to share more than £148,000 in grants. A total of 11 voluntary sector groups have received funding for the coming financial year as part of the Council's Grants to the Voluntary Sector scheme.

Home Start Royston £13,711

Cambridge Dial-a-Ride £5,000

Care Network Cambridgeshire £8,000

Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service £11,400

Cambridgeshire Older People's Enterprise £2,000 - a voluntary organisation comprising residents aged 50+

Arts and Minds £4,000 -

The Voluntary Network £5,000

REACH Community £5,000

Disability Huntingdon £6,289

Royston District Community Transport £7,000

Citizens Advice £100,000

The grants are given at the start of each new financial year and the Council makes a pledge to continue that support for the next three years, subject to satisfactory progress reports

Five Year Housing Land Supply

Both councils (SCDC and Cambridge City) who make up the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service can demonstrate a housing land supply of 6.1 years over the period of 2023 – 2028. This continuation of a 5YHLS is really welcome news as importantly this means for the Council that full weight can be given to its adopted local plan and other documents such as neighbourhood plans, unless there are other material considerations to be taken into account, when deciding upon planning applications. This is crucial in preventing speculative and unplanned development which is often not supported by the amenities required to adequately serve our communities.

Bus Fare cap extended until the end of October

As you may already be aware, the government have announced that they will continue to cap single bus fares at £2 outside of London until the end of October 2023 and then at £2.50 until 30th November 2024 when the cap will be reviewed. Having checked the Stagecoach services locally all the routes which serve our ward and beyond continue to be part of the fare cap scheme.

Cllrs Paul Bearpark, Anna Bradnam and Judith Rippeth

