

## **District Councillors Report – for Milton, Landbeach and Waterbeach PC,**

### **March 2020 - Cllrs Hazel Smith, Judith Rippeth and Anna Bradnam:**

#### **Budget-setting meeting**

In her position as Vice-Chairman of council this year, Anna chaired the 6 hour long budget-setting meeting of South Cambs District Council. The council is currently in a good state, with healthy carried-forward balances, and funding this year will be sufficient, but we are expecting a step-change in government funding next year. The Fair Funding Review will be bad for us, as we have done well by increasing our businesses and the rates they bring in. Next year the baseline will be reset so we will lose that advantage (worth £3m to us). We had expected the New Homes Bonus to be cut, but that is also postponed by a year. The rates for SCDC for a Band D property will go up by the £5 maximum per year allowed.

#### **Greater Cambridge Local Plan**

The consultation on the local plan has now finished: the Council made great efforts to get the views of those young people and other groups who tend not to get involved, and it seems to have been successful with a good turnout at the evening debating event in the Corn Exchange. We also went out talking to people on Traveller sites including Fen Road. They are asking for ideas of where more Traveller sites could be planned for.

#### **Cambourne to Cambridge busway**

The Greater Cambridge Partnership has got to a critical point in the planning for this busway, and Mayor Palmer has blocked them from making a decision on the route. This is a power struggle in which South Cambs and its local plan may be the casualty: without a plan to provide the busway in a timely fashion, the sites along the A428 where the local plan has allocated development cannot be sustainably delivered. The upshot of this may be that South Cambs loses its deliverable 5-year Housing Land Supply, and as we saw in the last few years, developers would then again be able to get planning permission for housing estates with no contribution to infrastructure (as happened at Bannold Road, Waterbeach) – a disaster for our villages and something over which South Cambs has little control.

#### **Fen Road, Chesterton Policing meeting**

This meeting was largely to reassure Chesterton residents, and to report back on the targeted action the police have taken. They targeted anti-social driving in December, then in January there was a problem with ball-bearing guns or catapults being used in the dark, from two particular cars, which again meant car patrols and stopping passing vehicles. This stopped when one of the cars in question was found burnt out in a field in Milton, but the perpetrators were never caught. There is regular drug dealing on the towpath, and the police are investigating this.

The Chisholm Trail bridge across the river should be in place by the end of summer. At this time Fen Road near the railway crossing will become very much busier with people crossing to Cambridge North and the Science Park from the Newmarket Road area. We are still trying to get a link to Fen Road straight off the bridge.

#### **NECAAP – North East Cambridge Area Action Plan**

The area covered by the plan now includes the Regional College and the car showrooms beyond the Guided Busway, which are scheduled for redevelopment in the City's plans. The

College will be involved in training apprentices to help build out the new development, as they recognise that labour supply will be a challenge.

### **Green to the Core Workshop**

We councillors had a workshop to flesh out ideas for the council to reach Zero Carbon by 2050. An electric refuse collection vehicle is coming for a visit on 20<sup>th</sup> March, and we have ordered a new one as a planned replacement vehicle which is due in the summer. They are already generating electricity at the Waterbeach Depot and are looking at possibilities to increase this. The Council has agreed a budget including many energy improvements to South Cambs Hall, including solar canopies over the car park and a Ground Source Heat Pump. The most difficult aspect of the Council's operations is its council housing, and we have commissioned a study of our housing stock, to guide us to setting out a plan to improve all the council houses to be fit for 2050.

There is a day of briefings on Community Resilience and advice about future bids to the Community Energy fund. All welcome Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March at Cambourne (incl. lunch).

### **More on Planning:**

At February's Planning Committee meeting a small change was made to the Scheme of Delegation. The scheme which was approved back in April 2016 to facilitate timely decisions on straightforward applications by delegation, with only the more contentious and less clear-cut applications coming before Committee, remains in place. The only change that has been made is to the clause whereby if a senior planning officer and the Chair of the Planning Committee could not agree on whether an application goes before the Committee or not, the officer would now have the final word. In practice the chair, vice chair and senior planning officer look at any application which has been called in by a Local Member or Parish Council and come to agreement on whether it goes before Committee or not. To date there hasn't been an occasion where the officer and Planning Chair haven't agreed. This change has been made as it was pointed out that the previous wording giving the final say to an elected representative could carry too much power and could be challenged legally. The Committee asked that the whole scheme be independently reviewed and that a report on progress be brought back to Committee in four months' time. The Council will be looking at schemes of delegation in other local authorities across the country as part of the review.

### **Five Year Housing Land Supply:**

A government inspector recently dismissed an appeal at Over from the developer's agent who had fought the appeal arguing that the Council didn't have a deliverable five year housing land supply. Although the inspector dismissed the appeal she did also remove some of the homes from the supply arguing that it would be unlikely that they would be completed within the next five years. A few weeks ago, the supply was on a knife edge at 5.07 years across the Greater Cambridge Planning Authority. Following last month's planning committee where the Reserve Matters for Phase 2A was approved at Northstowe, this situation has improved but there is still little room for manoeuvre. The homes coming forward in this phase at Northstowe are modular where they are built on a production line off site, speeding up delivery so very important in the current situation.

### **Recycling - Food Waste:**

A small area of Milton has been chosen as part of a six month pilot for a weekly food waste collection. Each household will receive a supply of cornstarch liners for their indoor smaller food caddy to be deposited in a larger caddy which will be collected roadside on a weekly basis. Research suggests that this should increase composting rates and reduce the amount of food waste deposited in the black bin. Amey will report back on whether the In Vessel Composter is able to break down the liners and hopefully later in the year this will be rolled out across the district.

### **Waterbeach Greenway:**

At the Greater Cambridge Partnership board meeting on 19th February, Phase one of the Greenway was signed off. The timetable for delivery is 2024 but with a bit of luck and much pushing, hopefully this can be delivered a little ahead of schedule. We wait in much anticipation for this off road route!

### **New Taxi Licensing Policy**

In 2017, South Cambs started work to revise its Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy to improve safety for drivers and for the travelling public. Vehicles have always had to display the South Cambs Licensing Authority crest on rear doors and in 2018 we introduced the requirement for operator signs on the front doors and for CCTV in Hackney Carriage and Private Hire vehicles by 31 March 2021. During 2019 the Licensing Authority has held two separate consultations with a two day workshop listening to views and concerns from all sectors of the business. All the views were reported and carefully considered by the Licensing Committee in drawing up the most recent version of the policy which has now been approved by full Council. This policy includes the introduction of a probationary period for all new drivers and operators, introduction of a safeguarding course and a requirement to carry a fire extinguisher. The maximum age of all vehicles has been limited and the current policy for CCTV and an Internal Vehicle Notice in Private Hire vehicles have both been extended to plate exempt vehicles as well. Plate exempt vehicles may now only do executive work with pre-arranged contracts.

These changes will make travelling by taxi safer for the public. Operator signage on the front doors makes it possible for pedestrians to call the operator if they are concerned about the safety of a passenger in a taxi. Internal Vehicle Notices will give all passengers contact details for the Operator. CCTV offers the driver the security of knowing that false claims against them and quibbles over fares can be backed up by CCTV footage, which also protects passengers in cases where there are disputes. The encrypted imagery will be held securely and can only be accessed by the Licensing Authority or the Police. To improve air quality, all newly registered vehicles must be zero emission or ultra-low emission by 1 December 2021 and we require all vehicles to be zero/ULEV by 1 December 2028. Recognising that there are very few zero/ULEV wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) on the market at present, we have exempted WAVs for the time being but will review this again by 2026 or sooner as new non-polluting models become available. The policy comes into force on 1 April 2020 and will be kept under regular review.