

Melbourn Parish Council District and County Councillors' Report June 2019

District Council

Cambridge Ice Rink:

This new facility located near Newmarket Park and Ride (funded in the main with a large donation by a Cambridge University alumnus, but also with an additional loan arrangement from South Cambs District Council) is nearly completed and is scheduled to open in July.

SCDC CEO: The council is currently undertaking the recruitment of a new Chief Executive. We will report on the outcome of the recruitment process in due course.

SCDC Investments: Government grants to local authorities to pay for services such as bin collections and planning services are a thing of the past. The only option that councils of all tiers now have is either to cut services or to find ways to generate income either through investments or through their own operations and activities. However, there are limitations on which of their own operations and activities they can earn money from. For example, we are not allowed to make a profit from handling planning applications. South Cambs has decided that it does not want to decrease the services it offers its residents and in fact aims to increase and improve them. In order to achieve this, South Cambs has committed to an investment portfolio of up to £100 million over the next five years. Though the council does hold some modest reserves it is able to borrow relatively unlimited sums from the Government's Public Loans Work Board. The fixed, long term interest rates mean that councils of all tiers (including parish councils) can borrow money to purchase assets that will deliver them an income. South Cambs has already installed photo voltaic panels on the roof of its waste collection depot in Waterbeach. In the past three weeks we have also purchased a premium office block on the prestigious Cambridge science Park at a cost of £13 million. This will deliver a return of over 5% which we shall use to support services to our residents.

We are especially interested in investments that, as well as giving a financial return, also provide what is referred to as Environmental Capital or Social Capital. Environmental Capital means that the project does something to improve the environment such as generating sustainable electricity or saving water. Social Capital means that it benefits our residents. So, investing in a doctors' surgery would benefit the patients of that surgery.

New Local Plan: South Cambs is now working with Cambridge City on a new Local Plan. The 'Call for Sites' has resulted in about 700 potential new sites for development across the Greater Cambridge area. Some of those will be relatively small but others will be very large and potentially for thousands of new houses.

Parkside Police Station set to move: There will be a verbal report on this issue.

'South Cambs is Good Place to work': South Cambs is the only council in the area where women are paid, on average, more than men. So why is South Cambs bucking the gender pay gap when the national picture is terrible? The reality is that when we look around South Cambs' offices we see a real mix of men and women at all levels working together for our communities. We have been successful in recruiting and retaining talented females by being a flexible and modern employer offering flexi time, generous maternity leave and a lot of helping with work life balance including ensuring they have good mentoring and opportunities. Diversity is across the Council too as we have a proper mix of ages, background and sexes of our elected members. This certainly wasn't the case before the elections last year.

Community Sweeper: Last year, SCDC initiated the Community Sweeper pilot in Melbourn and the A10 cycle path. The core principle of the pilot involved volunteers fully trained to drive and operate the SCDC street sweeping vehicle, which was transported down the Melbourn from the Waterbeach depot on a number of weekends when it was not in use elsewhere. The pilot has now been assessed and has been judged to have successfully improved the state of paths, and engaged the local community. However, costs have been higher than expected. A new phase of the pilot will therefore commence with SCDC deploying

the street sweeper with its own operatives in areas specifically identified as needing attention. Along the cycle path generally, the A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign will endeavour to liaise with the local community on litter picking ahead of grass cutting, to reduce waste debris along the path.

County Council

Melbourn Greenways consultation starting this month: This long-awaited consultation on the improvement of the A10 cycle route between Trumpington and Royston starts mid-June and ends late-July. This is our best shot at a cycle/walk link connecting to Royston.

July 11, 6:30-8:30PM – Melbourn Greenways main consultation event, at the Melbourn Hub. Please mark the date in your diary, come along and fill out a consultation form. We need a strong consultation response. Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire are increasingly working together, largely in response to representations by A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign members to formal meetings in both counties.

The A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign has produced a guide for responding to the consultation form, in order to galvanize support for the bridge. Attached for information.

County Council: Climate Emergency: Last November as you know, South Cambridgeshire District Council declared a Climate Emergency and set itself a Zero Carbon by 2050 ambition, setting the basis for adapting new policies to meet its goals. The new Zero Carbon Communities Grant is one example. In April, school children planned a demonstration at Shire Hall to raise awareness at Cambridgeshire County Council of the Climate Emergency.

At the May meeting of Cambridgeshire County Council, Leader Cllr Steve Count brought forward a motion pledging to continue and improve the council's good work on environmental challenges and proposed that officers be given six months to develop a new Climate Change and Environmental Strategy. The Liberal Democrat group proposed an amendment acknowledging the Climate Change Emergency and setting a Zero Carbon target ambition for 2050, in line with many other local authorities; the amendment also tasked a group of cross-party and cross-committee councillors to take the lead on setting new policy. The amendment was lost, with objections raised against the Zero Carbon target and councillor involvement. However, the amendment proposer (Susan) came back with a suggestion confined to the declaration of a Climate Emergency and this was unanimously agreed.

As painfully preoccupied with process as this might seem, the outcome was significant because consensus building does not often happen in this way. It's good to see consensus developing across the councils too. That said, the County Council's planned move to Alconbury, away from public transport links, will be difficult to reconcile in climate emergency terms.

Shire Hall: Following a meeting behind closed doors, Cambridgeshire County Council has announced regeneration company Brookgate as its preferred bidder for its Shire Hall site in Cambridge. The decision was taken in confidential session very much against the spirit of openness and transparency. Brookgate will lease the Shire Hall site for a period still to be agreed. The company proposes to establish a hotel and office accommodation, while the County Council moves its HQ to Alconbury. The Lib Dem group opposed the move to Alconbury, on the basis that there are too many levels of government in Cambridgeshire, and we should not be building an expensive new headquarters at a time when we should be reducing the number of councils and moving to a unitary structure. The proposed lease arrangement leaves the council with a high level of future risk. The expectations of income over the next 30 years depend on complex calculations of inflation and rental income. This income is far from certain.

Rail updates

Train Driver shortages: The Rail User Group has been alerted in advance to another period of rail service disruption. Bern Parsons at Meldreth is keeping passengers alerted via our Facebook page. It has asked

GTR if arrangements can be made for student rail passes to be accepted on Stagecoach Busway A from Melbourn.

Passenger Benefit Fund: Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton, along with the other most impacted stations during last year's timetable disruption, have been allocated £80k from the Govia Thameslink Railway fund designed to benefit passengers. The Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group will be putting together a submission for these stations, and would like to hear what passengers think would be the best use of the fund. Please contact railusergroup@gmail.com.

This was discussed the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group meeting on June 19th. The most popular suggestions so far are to do with greater station accessibility: a ticket machine on the London platform, and better cycle parking, including at the base of the London platform, rank highest. Staff have also been asked for their ideas and have suggested a redesign of the car park layout to accommodate minibus turning.

At the same time, a £13.5K Dept for Transport grant has been awarded for secure cycle parking at Meldreth Station, though about double the award is needed, including a 10% contribution from the local authority. An early approach has been made to South Cambs District Council Zero Carbon Communities Fund; the Passenger Benefit fund may also be deployed.

Melbourn-Meldreth Station Access Path: A verbal update will be provided.

Wider District and County issues

Marshalls Move to Duxford: Marshalls has announced that it intends to move from Cambridge Airport, something which has been on the cards for many years. The site could provide space for 12,000 new homes as well as about five million square feet of business and commercial space.' Added to the 7,000 homes planned for the Anglian Water sewage site on North East fringe, this is considerable growth in Cambridge. One of the possible relocation sites being considered by Marshalls is Duxford.

The Mayor's new staff: Employment shortcuts: The Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, James Palmer, has been in the news following the recruitment into his political office of ex-Cllr Charles Roberts without any reference to the Combined Authority's Employment Committee, job advert or as far as is known even a job description. Last month, Cllr Roberts was Leader of East Cambs District Council and one of the members of the Combined Authority Board. He has now stood down from that role to be employed part-time by the Mayor on a £70K pro-rata salary.

The Mayor has also decided to appoint (also without the involvement of the Employment Committee) the current two interim CEOs as permanent for the duration of his term. These two individuals (one of whom is also the CEO of East Cambs District Council) were standing in following the sudden departure of the previous incumbent. A new full-time CEO was advertised for and interviews took place but despite there being very credible candidates the Mayor exerted his power of veto and no appointment was made. The Board voted to support the two interim roles being made permanent until the Mayor's term of office ends. SCDC Leader Bridget Smith did not vote in support.

Finally, the Mayor took the initiative to write to the Government Planning Inspector in support of a major development just off the A505 near Duxford and Hinxton. The reason this is an issue is that the application by Smithson Hill for an agri-tech site was rejected by SCDC Planning Committee and then, as is their right, Smithson Hill appealed the refusal. For the Mayor to try to interfere in a decision made by SCDC councillors (and bearing in mind that a planning committee is non-political) is quite extraordinary. SCDC Leader Bridget Smith has made formal complaints about all these issues both to the Combined Authority and higher up the political food chain.

