

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Haslingfield Parish Council August 2019

July Full Council

The Council has met twice in July.

At an extraordinary meeting on 4th July, the council approved the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Liz Watts. Ms Watts is the former East Herts Council Chief Executive and previously to that held several senior roles elsewhere in local Government. Prior to her work in the public sector, she worked with asylum seekers in London and as part of the post-war peace process in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where she was based in Sarajevo for eight years.

At the regular council meeting on 18th July, the council passed two motions. One motion aimed to double the area of rich wildlife habitats, tree cover and accessible green space in South Cambs laid out measures including the development of a mandatory biodiversity net gain policy and directing developers to use the Developing Nature Toolkit to use in planning new developments, as well as identifying areas for tree planting for carbon sequestration, flood management, air quality improvement and other environmental services.

The other motion, proposed by Ian, instructed the council to make representation to the Secretary of State for Education and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling for them to take action to reverse, in full, the real-terms cuts to per-pupil school budgets since 2015 – meaning schools in South Cambridgeshire would receive £3,837,946 additional funding in 2020 – and fix the historic underfunding of Cambridgeshire schools by putting in place genuinely fairer funding through the National Funding Formula. Though the District Council is not directly responsible for education, schools are an important part of the communities we represent and the funding pressure they are under is beginning to damage those communities.

Both motions were supported by the opposition.

Problems with the Council's finances uncovered

The Council's Audit and Corporate Governance Committee has received a damning report about the previous administration's management of the Council's finances. After taking control of the Council last year, it was found that the Council's accounts were not in a fit state to be audited. This extraordinary and unacceptable situation was made worse by a failure to ensure that corrections requested by external auditors were carried out. The errors go back over several years of Conservative control of the Council. Unfortunately, this means that the audit of last year's accounts and that of the year before cannot be closed before the autumn, though we have put measures in place to ensure this doesn't affect the setting of the budget for next year.

Draft Greater Cambridge Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Proposals to help make new housing developments as green as possible have been published by South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council. The draft guide to sustainable design and construction will, when adopted, give house-builders a clear steer on what is expected of them to reduce the environmental impact of developments. This includes setting out the need to minimise carbon emissions, flood risks, pollution and pressure on water sources and, following the motion passed this month at full council, strengthen biodiversity. The SPD provides additional technical

guidance to developers, practical advice and examples of best practice, to demonstrate what planning officers will expect to see included in new applications. A consultation on the draft SPD is open until 5pm on Monday 23 September 2019 and can be reached here: <https://cambridge.jdi-consult.net/localplan/>

New Hackney Carriage and Private Hire ‘green fleet’ licensing policy proposed

The Council has published a draft new licensing policy to make the taxi fleet greener. If adopted, the proposed policy changes would see drivers and operators making the move to zero and ultra-low emission vehicles. To support the transition to an electric fleet, South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council have secured joint Government funding to establish new electric car charging points across the district by the end of 2019 for exclusive use by taxis.

In addition to new licences no longer being granted to vehicles older than four years, the policy would see licences no longer renewed for: petrol or diesel vehicles older than seven years; ultra-low emissions vehicles older than 12 years; or zero emissions vehicles older than 15 years.

New conditions have also been added that would see all first-time vehicle applications be zero or ultra-low emission by December 2021, and all licence applications be zero or ultra-low emission by December 2028.

You can comment on the proposed policy here: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/licensing/types-of-licence/taxi-licences/>

Green coffee shop initiative

An initiative from the shared waste service is giving practical support to a green initiative that takes used coffee grounds from local coffee shops and turns them into biofuel. Free caddies to collect and transport the coffee grounds are being supplied by the Commercial Waste team to Cambridge Food Hub, which runs the Green Coffee Shop Scheme. This involves Cambridge Food Hub delivering barista-style oat milk produced at Glebe Farm in Kings Ripton to coffee shops, while at the same time collecting used coffee grounds. These grounds are then delivered to bio-bean, a clean tech firm at Alconbury which manufactures biofuels and biochemicals from spent coffee grounds.

90 new Council homes under construction

A priority in the Council’s Business Plan that was agreed in February this year is to bring forward housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in, including doubling the number of energy-efficient Council homes built each year. Within the last year, 44 new Council homes have been completed in Gamlingay, Great Abington, Longstanton and Waterbeach (a mixture of affordable rent and shared ownership properties). A further 91 Council homes are now being constructed in Caldecote, Balsham, Great Abington, Waterbeach, Hardwick and Foxton and there are plans for a 178 Council homes in the pipeline.

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