

County Councillors' report - Sawston & Shelford Division

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Former local Councillor found guilty of breaking code of conduct on several counts
Private Eye picks up on “Farmgate” scandal as an independent report is published in full.

This report, regarding the actions of Roger Hickford, former Conservative County Council member for this division. He acquired the tenancy of a County Farm and later a loan of £187,000 from the County to develop a dog grooming business he planned to set up.

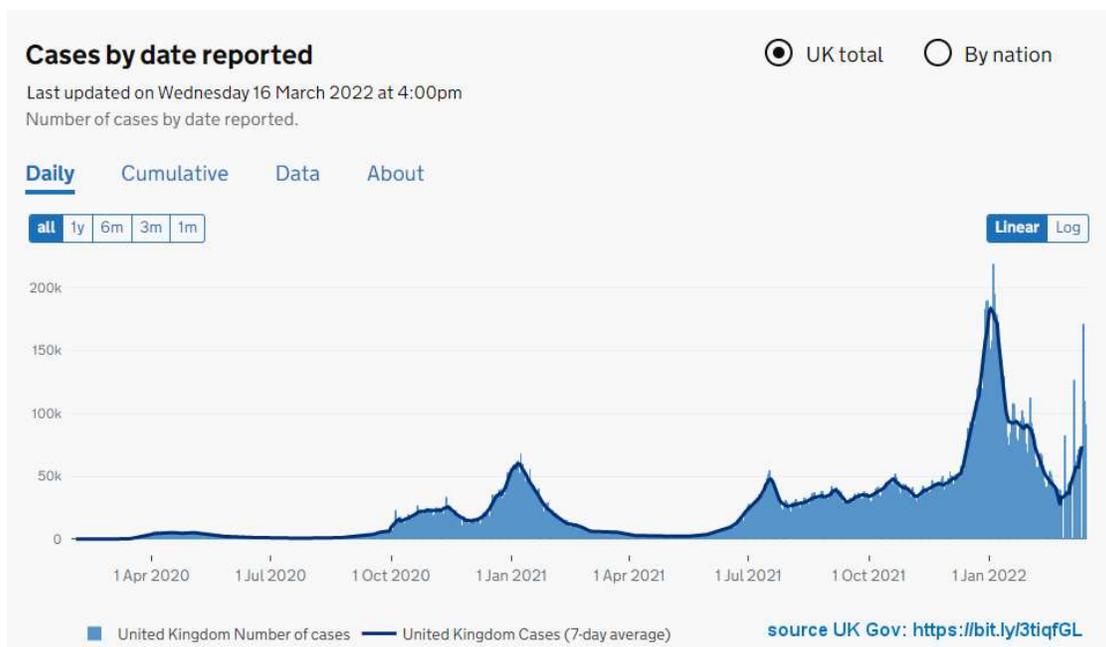
The report found him to have breached codes of conduct by, • failing to show respect to Council officers • bullying officers • compromising their impartiality • bringing himself into disrepute • improper use of position (as Tory group Deputy Leader) • failing to disclose a financial interest

The report can be found at www.tinyurl.com/farmgate-report

COVID-19

Not finished yet

Since Covid precautions in England were removed on Thursday 24 February, there has been a sharp rise in cases. The East of England, Cambridgeshire, South Cambs and even Sawston itself are seeing record high cases of infections, amid suggestions that case reporting is quite low.



Highways Improvement Board

The new County Council administration is taking action to address the dreadful state of the roads across the County.

The Government has significantly reduced the amount of funding, despite making much of its “pothole repair programme” in budget announcements. (Once the headline figure was announced, subsequent years saw a reduction in that pot of pothole money.)

It therefore falls to the County to examine the priorities and determine the best use of funds. In creating a Highways Improvement Board (on which Brian sits) we will appraise all the programmes of work, and the nature of the capital and revenue budget allocation to ensure we get best value from our contractors and for our Council Tax payers.

You can see Brian’s video report on this here: <https://youtu.be/AyZFtwjoCJI>

County Farms estate

Cambridgeshire County Council has been advertising for new tenants for seven council-owned farms, part of the council’s 33,000 acre rural estate.

The council’s estate – the largest public sector estate in the country – is divided into 226 holdings, with 160 different tenants. The seven farms up for application, 1,800 acres in total, are in South Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Littleport. Interest is high, with 67 viewings booked already.

The estate brings in £5M in rent to the council each year, to support local services. It contributes to the local economy, enables the council to put its environmental commitments into practice, and ensure public access to the countryside with permissive paths and bridleways.

The council is looking for innovative, entrepreneurial applicants with new ideas for developing their own businesses on the land. These could well be arable or livestock farming, but there are also opportunities for ancillary enterprises such as livery, farm shops or engineering.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and a viable three-year business plan and budget. They will also need to show that they understand the council’s expectations for the farms estate, and in particular are keen to farm in step with nature and do their bit to help tackle climate change and increase biodiversity.

Interviews will take place this month, and tenancies will be ready to take up from October onwards. The council has published a brochure about this opportunity:

<https://bit.ly/3JpozOo>

Household Recycling Centre changes (Thriplow)

COVID-19 measures at the Household Recycling Centres have been changed with from the beginning of March.

Booking requirements for all vehicles at all sites are being removed, and the number of vehicles allowed on all sites is being increased to pre-COVID levels.

There will still be 'meet and greet' staff to limit the number of vehicles on site to the sites' maximum parking bay capacity, site signage related to COVID, hand sanitiser for public use, and social distancing between site staff and visitors.

Anyone who is self-isolating is asked not to attend any site. Where staff assistance is needed, materials must be removed from the vehicle by the site visitor for removal by site staff after the visitor's departure. Staff will maintain social distancing, wear gloves and sanitise after handling waste. Where practical, only one person should be on a gantry at any time unless two are required to lift bulky items.

Visits using vehicles or trailers which require e-permits will be registered by site staff on arrival at a recycling centre, as they were prior to the introduction of the booking system, with no requirement to book visits in advance.

Cambridgeshire Climate COP (Conference Of the Parties)

80 representatives of organisations fighting the climate emergency met on Monday 28 February to kick off a year-long 'Cambridgeshire COP'. After COP26, the climate summit held in Glasgow last November, Cambridgeshire County Council leader Cllr Lucy Nethsingha was inspired to bring together countywide organisations to share information on Cambridgeshire's current position in the race to net zero.

The webinar heard from Cllr Nethsingha, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Mayor Dr Nik Johnson, and Cllr Pippa Heylings who sits on both the Local Government Association Climate Board and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The event included four group discussions on increasing biodiversity, developing sustainable transport, changing heating and housing options, and dealing with waste.

A range of local events and activities will take place throughout the year. These will include a biodiversity in May, to mirror the international national biodiversity conference in China; activities led by youth groups in June to coincide with the pre-COP27 discussions in Bonn; and a two week series of activities across Cambridgeshire 7-18 November to coincide with COP27 in Egypt.

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