

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Barton Parish Council November 2020

Covid 19

Cases are increasing steadily in our area and the big concern at the moment is that our hospitals are close to capacity and will struggle to cope with an influx of patients with Covid. The council is also aware that some GPs practices in the district are beginning to struggle. However, it is vital that if residents need to see a doctor or go to A&E that they still do so.

Though open briefly in September, South Cambs offices are closed to the public once again and there is a reversion to services operating fully online. For the most part this has worked well over the past six months, but please let us know if you experience any difficulties contacting council services.

The council does not intend to introduce Covid Marshalls into South Cambs for now, as there doesn't seem to be the need for them. The decision will be kept under review, but the focus at the moment is working with communities, businesses, shops, pubs and restaurants to encourage everyone to stick to the rules of Hands-Face-Space. Back in the spring the council produced a set of posters and floor stickers for shops to encourage social distancing and mask wearing. These are now being updated and should be distributed to all outlets in the district in the next couple of weeks.

Posters and other reminders have also gone out to parishes and community organisations concerning the need to dispose of facemasks and other items of PPE in the black bin, not the blue bin. Please help spread the message if you can.

The District Council has made available a £50,000 fund to help parish councils and community groups respond to any local Covid-19 outbreak. The money could be used for sanitiser, PPE, or emergency food among other things. The council hugely values the contribution of local volunteer groups in its response to the pandemic. In this new phase, officers are contacting each group once again to assess capability for action in future, to understand what has worked well and not so well in the past and to listen to concerns and queries. If people need supermarket deliveries for good reasons the district council can facilitate getting Tesco and Iceland delivery slots – currently key workers are the priority.

It is expected that large numbers of people who have been on furlough may lose their jobs before December – as ever, if people are in financial trouble they should contact the council as soon as possible so that they can get support to put a plan into place to manage their outgoings.

Finally, if any resident needs to apply for a government grant because they are required to self-isolate and consequently lose income, all the information is on the South Cambs District Council website: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/coronavirus/self-isolation-payment/>

Local Plan: Call for Sites

The number and location of the sites received by the Greater Cambridge Planning department in the 'Call for Sites' process have been published. The Councils concerned are obliged to publish this information. The number of sites – well over 600 – and the number of houses (220,000) proposed across these sites way exceeds the sites that will come through the detailed assessment process and the number of houses needed during the course of the next Local Plan. As a general guide it is worth noting that at the last 'call for sites' in 2011, ca. 400 sites were put forward but only 34 (less than 10%) went forward for development.

None of the 600 plus sites has any planning status – the sites on the list have all been proposed by landowners, not by the council. The next formal public consultation, on the preferred options for the

Local Plan will be held in the second half of next year, but in the meantime, the planning service will be working on evidence that will inform the Plan, and engaging parish councils and community groups to discuss findings and get their steer on the development of those preferred options.

The next immediate step is a report on some initial findings of key the evidence, including scenarios for the jobs and homes we should plan for, and for strategic spatial options. This should be published soon. There should be some engagement with the Parish Council after that has been published so do keep an eye out.

Cambridge South Station Consultation

The next round of public consultation on Cambridge South Station opened on 19th October. Owing to the pandemic it is being conducted remotely. The consultation materials will be available via an online web-portal for six weeks and there will also be opportunities to speak to project representatives via a webchat facility accessed via the project webpage or by calling a dedicated consultation phone line. <https://cambridgesouthconsultation.com/>

East West Rail

Ian attended several meetings regarding EWR last month – two organised by Cambridge Approaches, with Anthony Browne MP and Deputy Leader of South Cambs District Council Aidan Van der Weyer, and also a separate follow up meeting with Anthony Browne. We have asked Anthony to lobby for a route from a proposed Cambourne North station into Cambridge North to be included in the next consultation on specific route alignment, expected early next year. Cambourne North is extremely popular in Cambourne and has the potential to align much better with the next local plan. A route from Cambourne North to Cambridge North may also have much better / further opportunities to integrate with the local plan as well as further growth in the area beyond the next local plan.

We understand the Parish Council have been concerned about how Cambridge Approaches have presented themselves to EWR and others as representing all the parish councils in the route E corridor East of Toft. We have made it very clear in meetings that they are a lobby group. EWR have also launched their community hub website (<https://communityhub.eastwestrail.co.uk/>) to engage directly with residents along the route.

District Councillor resignation

As you may have seen, our ward colleague Phil Allen has resigned from the district council. Due to the pandemic, a by-election will most likely not be held until May 2021 (alongside County Council, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections). We will obviously be stepping up to cover Phil's duties in the meantime, and hope you won't see any difference, but do let us know if you have any concerns.

Police cuts

We are very concerned about the impact of cuts to PCSOs in the county, as outlined in the Chief constable's recent statement. The reduction is from 80 PCSOs to 40 across the county, as part of a package to save £1.7 million in next year's budget. We are still waiting for more details of exactly how this will affect the villages in the ward.

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