

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Barton Parish Council March 2022

Civil Parking Enforcement

The District Council and the County Council are working together to introduce civil parking enforcement. This will see responsibilities for dealing with illegal parking shift from Cambridgeshire Police to Cambridgeshire County Council. This will mean drivers parking illegally, such as on double yellow lines, could be issued a ticket by Civil Enforcement Officers and ordered to pay a penalty charge.

The County Council will prepare an application to the Secretary of State for a Special Enforcement Area, via the Department for Transport, to introduce the scheme. Subject to the approval of this application, it is expected that civil parking enforcement could begin in South Cambridgeshire in the autumn of next year.

In South Cambridgeshire, the upfront costs of introducing civil parking enforcement will be funded by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, including a full review of road lines and signs. They will also cover any financial deficit of the scheme for the first five years and all income that is generated by fines will be used to help pay for the costs of running the scheme.

Budget

The budget for next year was approved at the February council meeting. Continuing to have one of the lowest Council Tax charges in the country, councillors agreed to raise it by 10 pence a week or £5 a year for a Band D property.

This coming year it will cost over £80 million to run South Cambridgeshire District and Council Tax will bring in £10.7 million. Business Rates bring in £11.6 million. Only £2million is expected in government grants. Investments account for over £5 million in income. The council's investments include Ermine Street (a wholly owned housing company providing private rented accommodation, such as houses in multiple occupation for single people), the Cambridge Ice Rink and even Cambourne Youth Centre. The council is also supporting business start-ups and the development of tech industries by investing in the Cambridge Science Park.

The council also receives income from fees and charges and contributions from fellow councils for the cost of running the shared planning and waste services. But unlike many other Councils, South Cambs does not have income from car parks or civic amenities such as a sports centre.

Council housing stock, is now growing again and with 189 new council homes having been built over the past three years it now stands at over 5,500. This is mainly funded from council rents. £7 million will be spent on refurbishing council houses to reduce tenants' heating bills.

The council has recognised those on lower incomes are facing particularly difficult times and there are now more officers advising those finding themselves in financial difficult (alongside the payment the council makes to Citizens Advice of £85,000 a year to help residents too). Apart from Housing Benefit, there is also a Local Council Tax Support Scheme and discretionary support for Council Tax. Last year South Cambs District Council was the best in the country for collecting Council Tax and in the top ten for the collection of Business Rates.

South Cambs is one of the few councils in the country to have set a balanced budget for the coming financial year with a small surplus going into reserves to off-set possibly deficits in the future.

Grants to help Children

Thirteen local organisations across South Cambridgeshire have been awarded a total of almost £78,000 from the District Council, for projects which help motivate and empower children and young people.

The grants were awarded to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies for projects aiming to improve quality of life for hundreds of children and young people in the District, addressing social disadvantage and equality of opportunity and issues such as mental health, diet and nutrition and anti-social behaviour. The full list of organisations can be found here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-of-almost-78-000-given-to-local-groups-working-with-children-and-young-people/>

Wild Minds

Covid has affected very many children's mental health and current services are not sufficient to meet the urgent need. The Wild Minds project, sponsored by South Cambs aims to help young people experiencing mild to moderate mental health issues to improve through activity courses.

Young people benefit from spending time in a therapeutic outdoor environment with qualified activity instructors, trained youth workers, and a small group of peers. The course is designed to help teens tackle things like mild anxiety, low mood and depression, and to improve self-confidence and esteem. A clinical psychologist oversees the course, providing support to young people who may otherwise go without, due to not meeting the threshold for NHS mental health care.

Young people who would like to attend, or parents or carers who think the course may be suitable for a young person in their care, can register now online: www.scambs.gov.uk/wildminds

Bio Diversity Supplementary Planning Document

The council has just published a Bio Diversity Supplementary Planning Document which supports the Doubling Nature Strategy published last year. It details how all new development must protect, preserve and enhance nature and encourages parish councils to develop their own nature recovery plans. You can see the document here:

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/2476/gcsp-biodiversity-spd-feb-2022.pdf>

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