

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Barton Parish Council March 2019

February Full Council

Full Council on 21st February was dominated by discussion of the Business Plan and Budget, both of which were passed. As previously advertised, the increase in SCDC tax will be £5, taking the charge for a Band D property in the District to £145.31.

Council Tax Increase on Empty Homes

To try and encourage empty homes back into use, the council has agreed new council tax arrangements. Currently the owners of homes that are left empty for more than two years must pay an extra 50% on top of the regular bill, but from April homes that are empty for two years or more will be charged an additional premium of 100%. From April 2020 homes that have been empty for five years or more will be charged a 200% premium and from April 2021 homes that have been empty for ten years or more will be charged a 300% premium.

Across South Cambs there are 100 properties that have been empty for between two years and five years. There are 41 homes that have been empty for between five and ten years and 39 properties that have been empty for more than ten years. Some of these are in our ward and we hope these measures will help bring them back into use.

Greater Cambridge Partnership: Choices for Better Journeys Survey

The GCP have launched a consultation following up on their previous ‘Big Conversation’. While we are aware there is some cynicism around about GCP consultations, we do urge everyone to take part in this survey as it will help shape a much broader strategy for improving transport in and around Cambridge. In particular the survey seeks to address how greatly improved public transport services could be funded and what further measures could be taken to reduce the traffic that is clogging up the roads not just in Cambridge, but in South Cambridgeshire (including Harston & Comberton ward).

The survey close of 31st March and can be accessed online here:

https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/choices-for-better-journeys/survey_tools/choices-for-better-journeys1

There are also several events scheduled – details can be accessed via the GCP website.

Strawberries and Creem Festival

The licence application hearing took place on 1st March and the licence was approved with extensive conditions. Those who made representations may now choose to appeal to the Magistrate’s Court. Anyone may also request the licence to be reviewed after the event.

Preferred route for A428 improvements announced

The proposed route for improving the A428 between Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet has been announced. The route is close to the existing A428 and is based on the preferred route of the Council in the earlier consultation as it will cut journey times while also protecting the environment.

Local Plan – Call for Sites

A ‘Call for Sites’ has gone out as part of preparations for the next local plan. The Government requires Local Planning Authorities to conduct a ‘Call for Sites’ exercise as a key component of the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment to inform policies in the new Local Plan for housing, employment and other uses.

Public consultation on Issues and Options for the new Local Plan is proposed for the Autumn.

Statement of Community Involvement

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have jointly drafted a new Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI describes how the public, businesses, interest groups and individuals can get involved in the creation of local planning policy and the planning application process. A consultation on this document is live asking for views on this, and the approach to consultation and community involvement in the planning process. You can access the statement and consultation here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/local-plan-and-neighbourhood-planning/statement-of-community-involvement/>

The consultation closed on 25th March.

Northern Fringe Regeneration

Another consultation is underway on the vision for the Northern fringe – the area including land to the west of Cambridge North station and adjoining the science park. Though not directly impacting on Harston & Comberton ward, the vision for a low carbon community may be of interest. The consultation is available here: <https://necaap.uk.engagementhq.com/> (closes 25th March)

Waste depot solar panels

Solar panels are being installed on top of South Cambs waste depot in Waterbeach that will generate around a quarter of all the electricity the building uses, the latest move in our attempts to make the council “green to the core”. The installation will generate 19,121 kilowatt hours per year of energy savings. According to Ofgem figures, that’s the average amount of electricity used by around six homes every year.

The installation is expected to pay for itself within eight years, taking advantage of the last of the Government’s feed-in tariff. It will provide income to the Council for 20 years.

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