

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – October 2024

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

Your Councillors are always ready to help. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA or District Councillor for The Mordens Heather Williams: cllr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk / 07885 774 775.

Gamlingay Village Primary

Congratulations to all involved with Gamlingay Village Primary which has been judged 'Good' by the latest Ofsted - and especially to the pupils who clearly made a big and positive impression on the inspectors with comments such as "Pupils value that staff have thought carefully about how best to cater for their needs. Where pupils struggle with their own behaviour, staff support them to cope well. This means that lessons are calm and focused and interactions around the school are positive and kind."

Vaccination update

Vaccinations are now available for eligible people against a range of conditions including Covid, flu, pneumonia, shingles, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Local GP practices are calling up eligible patients, or you can find out more at <https://www.cpics.org.uk/the-vaccinators/> and book with a local pharmacy or attend a convenient drop-in session without an appointment.

School place appeal panel volunteers

Volunteers are urgently needed to hear appeals when children are not offered a place at their preferred school. All parents or carers have the right to make an appeal to an independent appeal panel if their child is not offered a place at their preferred school. The role of the panel is to decide whether a child who has been refused a place by Cambridgeshire County Council should be given a place. All parties involved must be given an appeal hearing that is transparent, accessible, independent and impartial. The appeal panel is independent of the local authority and its decisions are binding on all parties, unless overturned by the courts. Volunteers will sit on the independent admission appeal panels and ensure that parents feel they have had a fair and independent hearing and have been given every opportunity to put their case and have been taken seriously.

The time commitment depends on how much time volunteers are willing to give. While appeals are held throughout the year, the peak months are between April and July. The appeals are arranged either for half a day or a full day, and hearings are currently held online using Microsoft Teams. Anyone interested in applying or who would like an informal chat about the role should contact clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Weeds

The first round of weed treatment, for those communities wishing to have this, is now coming to an end, and the second round will begin in October.

Winter gritting

Preparations are under way for the 2024 winter, which starts on Friday 1 November, with salt barns being replenished and servicing of gritting vehicles.

Small Business Support

Small businesses in South Cambridgeshire are being invited to apply for funding of up to £5,000 each in a new grant programme available to those already trading with ambitions to grow and will provide grants, advice and support for existing businesses with up to nine employees. The new support grants are available as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

For those looking to start a business and get their foot on the ladder, there is free advice on offer, including how to create a viable business plan. The startup advice will be delivered by the Business and Intellectual Property Centre and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Growth Hub.

Applications are open until 31 October 2024. Businesses may only make one application. More information can be found online or please email businessgrants@scamb.gov.uk quoting Small Business Grant.

More broadband

Openreach's broadband upgrade plans for Cambridgeshire were announced at the end of May, meaning full fibre broadband is heading to a further 16 Cambridgeshire towns and villages, as part of a huge upgrade including Steeple Morden.

Household Support Fund

Very good to be able to report that the government has just announced an extension to the Household Support Fund for the next six months to support struggling households with bills and essential costs. The £421 million extension gives certainty to councils in England over the winter months – up until April 2025 – as they work to help those struggling with the cost of energy, food, and water. Many councils also use the funding beyond emergency support, including working with local charities and community groups to provide residents with key appliances, school uniforms, cookery classes, and items to improve energy efficiency in the home. Pensioners and others struggling to heat their homes or afford other essential items over the colder months should contact their council to see what support

may be available to them. Details on the latest scheme will be communicated in the coming weeks.

Bluetongue

In late September, the Bluetongue Restriction Zone, which had previously covered most of the east coast of England, was extended further inland, incorporating Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This brings in certain restrictions for keepers of susceptible animals in our area. The restrictions can be viewed at gov.uk but in essence they look to reduce the spread of the disease from the restricted parts of England to the areas that fall outside the zone through movement restrictions. Some movements are permitted under General Licence, whilst other movements need a specific licence to be issued.

Bluetongue (BTV) is a viral disease which affects ruminants (such as cattle, sheep, goats, and deer) and camelids (such as alpacas and llamas) caused by a virus that is spread by biting midges. It is classified as a 'Notifiable disease' which means livestock keepers have a legal obligation to report any signs of the disease in their stock to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) immediately on 03000 200 301. **It does not pose a risk to public health or food safety.**

Pension Credit

Pension Credit is worth, on average, £3,900 per year and unlocks additional support including the Winter Fuel Payment, help with Council Tax, NHS dental care and a free TV licence for those over 75. Pension Credit backdating rules mean it is possible for individuals to apply for Pension Credit and have the claim backdated by up to three months if they were entitled to claim in that time. This means that the latest date to apply and still qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment is 21 December. The Department for Work and Pensions has produced [a toolkit to support councils to ensure older people understand how they can get Pension Credit.](#)

Climate change progress report and carbon footprint

For Cambridgeshire as a whole, in 2022—the most recent available data—total greenhouse gas emissions were 6.45 million tonnes CO₂e, a 3% fall from 2021. Transport (27 per cent) remains the highest emitting sector in the county, followed by land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) (23 per cent), agriculture (15 per cent) and domestic energy use (13 per cent). The risk of not reaching the Council's carbon targets has reduced but still remains considerable. Delivery of these targets relies on collaborating with our partner organisations.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has now been released from the 'Best Value Notice' placed on it in January 2023 as the Government has recognised the improvement in the organisation.

The Authority's Transport & Infrastructure Committee is recommending that the Board allow older people and those with disabilities to use their bus passes before the current 9:30AM start. The new Tiger Pass offers bus travel for £1 per journey for those aged up to 25. Details of how to apply for the new pass can be found at <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/onepoundbusfare/>

It's very good to see the Vision Zero road safety project is being revived. Its aims are to reduce the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on our roads and the social and financial impact of this, and to develop financially sustainable models of road safety activity. The original prospectus in 2020 aimed for zero killed or seriously injured by 2040 though this seems unlikely to be met.

A reminder that the Combined Authority's consultation on bus franchising continues until 20 November. Short and long questionnaires can be found at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

Support for Affordable Housing tenants

Following contact from local residents in affordable housing who are struggling to make ends meet: The SCDC Welfare and Benefits Team (01954 713000) and Citizens Advice can help with access to financial support. The Cambridgeshire Community Foundation helps disperse support and accepts donations too.
Energy bills

If you are struggling to pay your energy bills or can't afford to heat your home: Energy Partnership: support@applyforleap.org.uk, Tel 0800 0607567

South Cambridgeshire District Council housing adaptations

Funds are available to carry out adaptations for residents of South Cambs whether they are homeowners, private renters or live in social or council homes. This means that people are able to remain living independently in their own homes for longer. Bids for the funds can be made on this website. Disabled Facilities Grants: How to apply - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Changes to Voting Rights

South Cambs elections team is currently undertaking a review of all EU electors held on the Electoral Register. This is a statutory exercise required by the Elections Act 2022. Recent changes to voting and candidacy rights for EU citizens mean that **not all EU citizens will qualify to register to vote** or be a candidate at local elections going forward.

Under the new rules a citizen from an EU country is only entitled to remain registered if they meet one of the following criteria: a citizen of Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal or Spain (with whom we have a reciprocal agreement) or a citizen of any other EU country who on or before 31 December 2020 had permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man or who did not need permission, and this has continued without a break.

CCC Quality of Life Survey

Most Cambridgeshire residents continue to feel happy and safe in the county, well connected to their local communities, and still believe it's a great place to raise children – according to the County Council's second annual Quality of Life survey involving more than 5,500 residents.

However, cost of living remains the issue of most concern in Cambridgeshire amongst residents, with almost half of residents using less heating, and a quarter cutting back on nutritious food in the past 12 months. Residents continue to feel positively about their local community; 85% feel safe and 75% feel they belong. Significant numbers of young people (43% of 25–34-year-olds and 40% of 18–24-year-olds) continue to be more likely to report mental health struggles. The proportion of residents reporting that they often feel lonely remains higher than national data, at 31% of residents. Younger residents are again more likely to report loneliness (53% of 18-24 year olds).

Technology Enabled Care

A flat which uses everyday technology to help people become more independent at home was recently launched in Godmanchester to showcase ways in which new and existing technology can be used to help prevent, delay and reduce the need for formal community or acute care.

The equipment available ranges from simple pill reminders to sophisticated detectors, sensors, smart devices and trackers. To arrange a viewing, please contact our TEC team, either by phone, on 01480 378 160, or email: TECS@cambridgeshire.gov.uk (pre-arranged viewings only).

White Ribbon

South Cambridgeshire District Council has become White Ribbon Accredited in recognition of its commitment to preventing harassment, abuse and violence against women and girls. The District Council is committed to working towards ending men's violence against women by becoming accredited and aligning with White Ribbon UK, the leading charity engaging men and boys to end violence against women.

Mobile Warden Schemes

A total of £345,000 has been pledged to Mobile Warden Schemes in South Cambridgeshire for the next three years to help more elderly people stay living in their own homes for longer. The District Council has traditionally had an annual budget of £21,000 to support schemes but invested around £300,000 to try and increase the coverage of the service in South Cambridgeshire communities by supporting new schemes to develop.

The review is important as it has taken into consideration predicted high growth in over 65-year-olds over the next 20 years and recognises that with age comes increased risk of deteriorating health, loneliness, and feelings of isolation. Councillors have backed a new three-year funding scheme that starts from April 2025. There are currently 16 active Mobile Warden schemes in 49 Parishes funded by South Cambridgeshire District Council. AGE UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough run 11 of them, while five are run by local groups.

Reminder

A reminder that Church Street Gamlingay will be closed for overnight works starting October 28th for 2 weeks; and Croydon Hill between Croydon and East Hatley will be closed from November 18th again for 2 weeks.

South Cambridgeshire Peer Review

A follow-up report by the Local Government Association has praised South Cambridgeshire District Council's 'strong ambition', 'good leadership' and 'innovative approaches' following a recent visit.

The return visit comes after a Corporate Peer Challenge Review by the LGA last year described the Council as being in a positive financial position – with a comprehensive and innovative response to the cost-of-living crisis. Typically, all councils have one of these reviews every five years and they always contain recommendations to help councils improve. A total of 12 recommendations were made by the peer team last year. A return visit last month and update report, a usual part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process, shows how 10 of those recommendations are completed or well underway and two are progressing.

In Finance, peers had recommended the Council accelerates the closure of its outstanding accounts. Since their visit in late 2023, the draft accounts for each and every year up to 2023/24 have been published – meaning they are as up to date as possible. Meanwhile, a scheme to uncover further savings by close working between members of the Council's Leadership Team and service areas has identified a further £1.5 million to help meet a £3 million savings target over the next five years.

Peers had also suggested the need to better convey a vision for South Cambridgeshire. To address this, the Council is now part-way through a consultation to develop a new Corporate Plan, outlining that vision, priorities, and long-term goals for South Cambridgeshire in the years ahead.

The Council's business team have visited local businesses to discuss matters impacting them - obtaining 100 completed surveys that are feeding into the consultation.

As part of its Transformation programme, peers have also commented on how the District Council has made considerable progress with introducing an Organisational Development and People Strategy – with a new set of values for Council colleagues brought in earlier this year. Peers were impressed with the innovative approaches to people development and engagement – highlighting an online skills hub for short skills sessions, as well as maximising apprenticeships and a coaching and mentoring programme.

Mill Road Bridge Closure - Cambridge

Someway off, geographically, but important for some residents to know. The Highways and Transport committee voted to approve the modal filter on Mill Road bridge so it will be closed to all motor vehicles, except buses, pedestrians, cyclists, emergency services, taxis and blue badge holders' registered vehicles.

A five-week TRO notice period from 9 August to 13 September was advertised following the publication of the proposed Traffic Regulation Order. The council received 1,894 objections (46.5%) and 2,155 comments supporting (52.9%) the proposals. The special Highways and Transport Committee following a majority vote agreed to proceed with the scheme.

The closure will be implemented as a bus gate and blue badge holders will need to register up to two vehicles for exemption via an application form online, which will be available from Monday, 7 October. Blue badge holders will be required to provide a copy of their valid blue badge paperwork.

Following approval, work will now get underway to implement the bus gate and work is expected to start next month (November) and be completed in December. More details will follow.

The bus gate will be enforced by Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras (ANPR). Once installed, there will be a month where non-exempt vehicles will receive warning notices only and if they are exempt, would be encouraged to register online.

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can!
