

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

### News from South Cambs District Council

#### **Change to Pre-Scrutiny**

Martin and Steve attended the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> June, following a valuable training session for its members and substitutes.

An important change is that District Council is moving to pre-decision scrutiny, which means that planned decisions will be examined by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee before a decision is made by the cabinet. This contrasts with the previous system of post-decision scrutiny, in which the Committee looked at decisions after they were made, potentially delaying their implementation.

Pre-decision scrutiny provides a way to influence and improve decisions in a timely and efficient manner. It is a fundamental change to the way oversight is done, and the committee will now draw up its working agreement, work programme, and priorities.

One consequence is that the committee will meet more frequently than in the past, approximately monthly. The council is also looking into the recruitment of a Scrutiny Officer.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny provides an informative guide to pre-decision scrutiny which can be read here: <http://www.cfps.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/PG-2.pdf>

#### **Chair's Dele (not the pastry and cheese type, sadly)**

Pippa is the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee and meets every Tuesday morning in Cambourne for the "Chair's Dele" with the Chair of Planning Committee and the Heads of Development and Planning. At this weekly meeting, the Planning Officers bring forward the applications which are less straightforward, have raised concerns and/or objections and need a decision as to how they should be handled. The Planning Officers, one by one, lay the plans out on the table and take us through all the evidence from the applicant, the consultees (Highways, drainage, ecology etc), the objectors, the Parish Council submissions and those of the relevant District Councillors; and they then give their considered opinion. It is at this meeting that the application status is confirmed as either: a) a delegated decision to the Planning Officer to approve or reject the application; or b) a Planning Committee decision. These meetings have proved to be a steep learning curve for Pippa in terms of the planning process and the "material considerations" which determine a final decision; and the fact that the decision process requires a fine art of weighting between these different material considerations, such as: design and visual impact, privacy, light, access, noise, ecology, landscape etc. The first filter and greatest weighting is always given to whether the application complies with national policies, the Local Plan (soon to be approved), the Green Belt, the Village Framework and the Neighbourhood Plan (if one exists) – now that the Five-Year Housing Land Supply has been met. Pippa is very impressed with the detail, commitment and professionalism of the Planning Officers that she has met in these weekly sessions. There are sometime complaints about poor response rate from Planning and this has been the case in

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

certain situations. Nevertheless, the majority of Planners really do care about collating all the evidence, talking to consultees and developers and shepherding a constructive process.

Meanwhile, the Chair of Planning has introduced a change to the Planning Committee process: all voting will be recorded i.e. which member voted which way. This means a more transparent process.

### **Brexit Committee**

The new Brexit Impact Committee is being established and Martin has attended several meetings between members in order to define the terms of reference. It is proposed that this be an advisory committee to the cabinet which will investigate both the impact of Brexit on the authority's activities and on the various economic and social interests in the district. The committee will investigate different scenarios until such time as it is known what will be the actual conditions pertaining in March 2019. Contacts have been made with both Cambridge City Council and Huntingdon District Council which are interested in cooperating with this Committee.

### **Consultations on Licensing and Gambling**

Steve attended the Licensing Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> June. There were two substantive items on the agenda, which were to review and approve the draft Licensing Policy and the draft Gambling Policy ahead of a 12-week consultation scheduled to begin on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Both drafts are fairly minor revisions of the existing policy documents, mainly to bring them in line with changes in legislation such as the Immigration Act 2016 and the Police and Crime Act 2017, and changes to the Gambling Commission guidance to licensing authorities updated September 2016.

A range of interested parties will be invited to participate in the consultations, including Parish Councils, Police and all premises license holders. The consultations are open to the public. It is worth noting that in a change from previous practice, faith and belief groups will not be specifically consulted regarding the Gambling Policy.

After the consultations are complete, responses will be collated and considered before final policy documents are presented to the Licensing Committee for recommendation to full council and adoption no later than 31st January 2019 in line with the council's legal obligations.

### **Cambridgeshire-wide Air Quality Learning and Networking Event**

Pippa attended this important event on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June, where worrying information was presented regarding the increase in pollutants in the atmosphere in Cambridgeshire, especially in and around roadside developments. Of particular concern is the rise in the particulate pm2.5 which has been the cause of 40,000 premature deaths in the UK. Early data shows that there is a correlation between spikes in pm2.5 and spikes in attendance at A&E. The good news is that City Council has managed to drive down pollutant levels in the Air Quality Management Area in the centre, and plans to drive them down even further with its new Air Quality Action Plan

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

which is now out for consultation. Pippa is keen to prioritise air quality improvement in South Cambs, too, and is pushing for South Cambs to prepare its own new Air Quality Action Plan in a harmonised way with the City plan. She is leading discussions with the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder and the Head of Health and Environmental Services at SCDC.

### Consultation on Communal Rooms

Across South Cambs there are 44 sheltered housing schemes, 41 of which have a communal room. These are primarily for use as a social space by the residents, but they can also be hired for a small fee by others, for example community groups or clubs. In Histon and Impington, there are communal rooms at St Audrey's Close, Kay Hitch Way and Homefield Park.

The Sheltered Housing team is doing a review of these rooms. The idea is to consult with residents of the sheltered housing schemes to understand how they use the rooms, and determine whether the level of provision is appropriate. For example, if a communal room is unwanted or under-used, it could be converted into a dwelling. All residents at our four sheltered schemes will be contacted, including those at Greenleas which does not have a communal room. Parish Council and external users of the rooms will also be consulted.

There will be two events which sheltered residents will be invited to so they can meet with staff and the project team and share their views. The first will be held on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> July at St Audrey's Close from 10am to 12pm, and then Kay Hitch Way from 1pm to 3pm. Sheltered residents at Greenleas will also be invited to attend either of these. The second day will be on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> July at Homefield Close, Impington from 10am to 12pm. Councillors will also be welcome to attend. It seems to us that the existence of these rooms (and particularly their availability to hire) is something of a well-kept secret, and it would be a shame to lose them if they could be better utilized instead. Indeed, it was in the St Audrey's Close communal room that we held the key meeting between South Cambs, Highways England, the A14 contractors and the residents' Action Group. The communal rooms will also be used for the IT drop-in sessions for the elderly (see below).

### More Local Matters

#### IT drop-in sessions

SCDC has agreed to provide venues for the initiative for IVC students to provide IT help to older members of the community, and this is now going ahead in the autumn term. Students will run drop-in sessions where people who need help setting up their device – laptop, tablet or smartphone – will be able to get hands-on assistance. There will be advice on IT topics like setting up an email account, calling relatives on Skype, etc. Discussions with staff from Firs House Surgery are underway to see if they can attend some of the sessions, to show people how to access health resources such as booking appointments or requesting repeat prescriptions.

The provisional programme is: St Audrey's Close Communal Room, 2.30-3:30pm, Wednesday Sep 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>; Oct 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup>; Nov 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>.

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

The use of the Communal Room is supported by SCDC, and these sessions are open to all. There will also be sessions at Brackenbury Manor for its residents. More venues are being sought.

For more details please contact Jean Newman, H&I Older Persons Co-ordinator ([jean.newman7@ntlworld.com](mailto:jean.newman7@ntlworld.com)) or Gaynor Russell at IVC ([GRussell@ivc.tmet.org.uk](mailto:GRussell@ivc.tmet.org.uk))

### Planning Issues

Since the last report, the proposal for 4 houses on Impington Lane that Martin requested to go to committee has been referred to delegation with a recommendation for refusal. The larger application on Impington Lane will probably be considered by Planning Committee in September.

### A14 Works: From conflict to dialogue

The A14 works are affecting residents from Impington, Histon and Orchard Park alike. The H&I Action Group facebook page now has many members from Orchard Park, too, and the Chair of the OP Community Council has become a member of the Core Group. This Core Group is chaired by County Councillor, David Jenkins, and has been meeting weekly to strategise and to analyse the new information that is coming to light as a result of complaints, enquiries and Freedom of Information requests. The Core Group has discovered that there are multiple reasons for concern and is demanding much greater effort and investment to combat the environmental impacts of the A14 project on us all, especially:

- Traffic noise, which was already bad and will increase as traffic volume and speed increase. It affects hundreds of households, some of them more than 1 km away from the road.
- Air pollution, especially particulate pollution PM2.5, which causes 5% of deaths in South Cambridgeshire. This is a health concern for all. Highways England admits that pollution here will worsen but is not even monitoring PM2.5. This constitutes a serious breach of the planning condition.
- Damage to our green spaces and natural environment, especially the woodlands that were felled without warning and the degradation of the green gateway, which separated our village from the highway, and served to reduce the noise and pollution.
- The noise of the works themselves, especially at night. Some residents have been unable to sleep until after 3 a.m. for five nights in a row.

Since the end of May, Pippa has also been meeting on a weekly basis with senior Officers in Cambourne in order to raise awareness and catalyse a change in attitude and action regarding the auditing by SCDC of Highways England's compliance with planning conditions on noise and air pollution. As a result of these meetings and conversations with the A14 Project Director, it was agreed that there should be a formal effort at meaningful engagement through face-to-face dialogue and accountability between Highways England, the A14 contractors, South Cambs and the H&I A14 Action Group. The agenda was agreed by all sides beforehand and on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the first session of the dialogue was held. The meeting started with the

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

explicit recognition that there were serious issues on the table; there was very little trust between the sides and there were bridges to be mended; however, all hoped that there could be some effective changes through dialogue rather than conflict. Pippa helped to facilitate the meeting, seeing her role as one to ensure that our local voices are heard, that there is accountability and that, where possible, clear agreements are reached for the benefit of all. You can read more about the meeting here: <https://hiopcouncillors.wordpress.com/2018/06/22/the-start-of-meaningful-dialogue-with-highways-england-over-the-a14-works/> and here for detail of the actions agreed at this first meeting: <https://hiopcouncillors.wordpress.com/2018/07/01/actions-speak-louder-than-words-a14-agreements/>

This is all very tenuous still and the effectiveness of the dialogue will depend on whether we see a real change in what is happening. The next meeting will take place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> July to review progress with the agreed actions and to focus on air pollution.

### Diary

#### Next Month's Scheduled Meetings

Date	Time	Meeting	Venue	Councillor
1 <sup>st</sup> July	14h.00 - 18h.00	Assistance with Parklife Open Day	Milton	Martin
3 <sup>rd</sup> July	10h00 - 11h00	Weekly Delegation decision meeting of Chair & Vice-Chair Planning and Head of Planning	Cambourne	Pippa
3 <sup>rd</sup> July	13h30-15h30	Weekly A14 meeting with South Cambs senior officers to review progress on resolving problems at J32	Cambourne	Pippa
5 <sup>th</sup> July	16h.00	Housing Training	Cambourne	Martin, Pippa, Steve
10 <sup>th</sup> July	9h30 – 15h00	Site visits for Planning Applications going to Planning Committee		Pippa, Martin
10 <sup>th</sup> July	10h00-11.000	Weekly Delegation decision meeting of Chair & Vice-Chair Planning and Head of Planning	Cambourne	Pippa
10 <sup>th</sup> July	13h30-14h30	Weekly A14 meeting with South Cambs senior officers to review progress on resolving problems at J32	Cambourne	Pippa
11th July	10h30-14h00	Planning Committee	Cambourne	Martin, Pippa
11th July	19.00	Orchard Park Community Council	Orchard Park	Martin, Pippa
12th July	18.00	Scrutiny and Overview Committee	IVC	Martin
13 <sup>th</sup> July	9h00-12h00	A14 Engagement Group meeting: Highways England, A14 Team, SCDC and A14 Action Group	Communal Room, Histon	Pippa
16th July	19h30	H&I Parish Council	PC Offices, Rec	Martin, Pippa, Steve

## Joint District Councillors' Report June 2018

District councillors' monthly report for the communities of Histon & Impington, Orchard Park and King's Meadow.

17 <sup>th</sup> July	10h00-11.00	Weekly Delegation decision meeting of Chair & Vice-Chair Planning with Head of Planning	Cambourne	Pippa
17 <sup>st</sup> July	13h30-14h30	Weekly A14 meeting with South Cambs senior officers to review progress on resolving problems at J32	Cambourne	Pippa
17 <sup>th</sup> July	14h.00	Environmental Health Training	Cambourne	Martin
18th July	10h30	Joint Development Control Committee – Cambridge Fringes	Guildhall, Cambridge	Steve
19th July	10h00	Safeguarding Training for Councillors	Cambourne	Pippa
19 <sup>th</sup> July	14h. 00	Full District Council meeting	Cambourne	Pippa, Martin, Steve
23rd July	09h00-12h30	Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Fenland District Council	Pippa
24 <sup>th</sup> July	10h00-11.00	Weekly Delegation decision meeting of Chair & Vice-Chair Planning with Head of Planning	Cambourne	Pippa
24 <sup>th</sup> July	13h30-14h30	Weekly A14 meeting with South Cambs senior officers to review progress on resolving problems at J32	Cambourne	Pippa