

Joint District Councillor's Report April 2020

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

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact us. Councillor Steve Hunt is on 01223 455180 or Cllr.HuntS@scambs.gov.uk, Councillor Martin Cahn is on 07826 748407 or Cllr.Cahn@scambs.gov.uk, Councillor Pippa Heylings is on 07837 228416 or Cllr.Heylings@scambs.gov.uk. You can also follow your councillors on our webpage <http://hiopcouncillors.org>, on Twitter @pippa4hiop, and on Facebook @pippaheylings4hiop

Covid-19 Response

We have been actively involved in the Covid-19 response for the ward, through which community efforts are delivering a very effective level of service to self-isolating families. The village has been completely covered with street level coordinators through the work of the local coordination group – coverage recently being extended to the Kings Meadow area south of the A14.

SCDC officers have contacted all residents in Council housing (including sheltered housing) to ensure that they are aware of the local support available.

A significant number of vulnerable individuals in the villages are on the NHS shielded list and are receiving primary support from the Cambridgeshire “Hub”. Teething issues seem to have eased with access to priority online shopping at supermarkets now becoming easier to secure but we have been made aware that the food boxes appear to be poorly targeted and often inadequate.

We have been helping to ensure that businesses and organisations in the villages are aware of their eligibility for central Government schemes for Small Businesses and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality sectors, which are being administered locally by SCDC. A number of businesses and organisations in the villages were not aware of the workings of the scheme and have now applied for and received grants as a result of us contacting them – indeed some are still coming forward as late as the second week of May and so it is still not too late to apply. It is commendable that the scheme was launched so quickly but the consequence is that it is a blunt weapon; many businesses are falling through the cracks of the rules. This is the case, for example, where companies are not registered as the business ratepayer for their premises, as can be the case with managed office spaces. These anomalies have been raised with local MPs and government, and it appears that the government has recognised this and a top-up fund of £617 million is to be made available (5% of the funding previously announced for small businesses and the retail, hospitality and leisure sector). The top-up is aimed at small businesses with ongoing fixed property-related costs and the amount available to SCDC will be confirmed next week. Grants will not exceed £25,000. We await further guidance but we understand that the allocation of funding will be at the discretion of local authorities and the criteria are to reflect local need. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/top-up-to-local-business-grant-funds-scheme>

South Cambridgeshire District Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council has experienced a decline in income as we continue to deal with the local impacts of Covid-19. Business Rates income is suffering as local companies understandably struggle. It is too early to get a true picture of the impact on revenues from our housing rents but financial hardships experienced by residents will likely translate into rental receipts.

In recognition of the cash flow pressures on local authorities, the Government has deferred the timing of the payment of Business Rate to central Government and has allocated additional funding to District Councils across the country on a per capita basis. SCDC's allocation is £1.57 million. This is most welcome. Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government suggested that some of these funds could flow to Parish Councils "if they are in financial distress." We have asked through the Local Government Association for further guidance.

Waste Collection

Green bin collections were restarted on a phased basis from May 4. Each household is asked to put green bins out at the same time as the blue bins with a commitment that they will be emptied at least once during May. The guaranteed date is available on the SCDC website and may not be the same for all households in the area.

The recycling centre at Butt Lane reopens from May 11 with additional measures to minimise infection risk. They are operating normal summer hours. Please see here for details before making a journey as there are various restrictions to bear in mind; in particular, vans and trailers requiring a permit are not allowed yet.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/waste-and-recycling/household-recycling-centres>

Planning

Planning Committee has been affected by the lockdown and is restarting in May when there will be three committee meetings to deal with the backlog of applications that has built up. In the meantime officers have been working their way through the backlog resulting from the upgrading of the computer systems in January. Officers are working from home but the normal processes of consultation and processing of applications are proceeding.

A particularly welcome event that has happened in the last month is the winning of Royal Town Planning Institute national planning awards by the Marmalade Lane Cohousing project in Orchard Park. These awards were presented (virtually) to the developers, Mole Architects & TOWN, South Cambridgeshire District Council (now Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service) as planning authority, and Cambridge City Council as land owner for the cooperation which has achieved a nationally pioneering scheme.

The Chair of the award panel, Prof. Sadie Morgan, said "Everyone involved is delighted that Marmalade Lane has won this prestigious award. It sends a strong message that a collaborative approach between Council planners, developers, architects and end-users has real value. We hope this will be replicated for many more projects as community-led housing comes ever more into the housing mainstream." Those of you at the opening ceremony will know that this is a truly

remarkable scheme and the award is really well deserved. The achievement was truly remarkable since the awards were won in all three categories applied for, for Planning for Health and Wellbeing, for Small Schemes, and the overall winner's award, the Silver Jubilee Cup.

Traffic and Transport

The Government rules on lockdown have highlighted for residents the impact of traffic on our villages. The reduced amount of traffic, especially in the earlier weeks of lockdown, has resulted in residents, who are taking their daily exercise, noticing how much more pleasant it is to walk or cycle without the usual traffic. Many media articles have also highlighted the improvements in air quality resulting from reduced traffic. At the same time, a few drivers have taken advantage of emptier roads to speed. We are receiving representations from residents asking for Councillors to seize this opportunity to introduce measures to reduce the speed and volume of traffic through our villages so they continue to be pleasant and cleaner places for people to walk and cycle. In the meantime, the Government has announced (9 May) a £2 billion package to create a new era for cycling and walking. See link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-billion-package-to-create-new-era-for-cycling-and-walking>

The thrust of this announcement is to encourage people to take up cycling and walking as an alternative to public transport but also to encourage low traffic neighbourhoods. In fact, the Government recognizes that the difficulty of implementing social distancing on public transport could result in drivers taking to their cars and causing congestion and gridlock on the roads. The emphasis is, therefore, to encourage people to continue to cycle or walk where they can and to improve the road space to enable them to do so. Now would therefore be an ideal time for community groups to come together to consider ways in which our roads could be improved to reduce and slow down traffic so that cycling and walking become the safe and favoured travel options for residents and to improve the air quality for the wellbeing of residents, especially those with respiratory illnesses.

The Parish and Community Councils are invited to discuss ways of taking this forward.

Kings Meadow

Further problems have arisen with regard to grass cutting of public areas in the Kings Meadow estate, and the issue was raised with the owners, Clarion Housing – the areas were finally cut in early May. This has been a long standing issue of dissatisfaction with residents there and once the lockdown is over it may be worthwhile trying to raise the issue again with Clarion to see if a more satisfactory arrangement can be devised. The problems are typical of the situation arising when such areas are managed at a distance – in this case from Norwich.

Meetings in April

The first formal virtual meeting under new provisions introduced by Government regulation has recently taken place, but there have been weekly online Covid-19 situation briefings to all District Councillors from Cabinet members and Officer leadership. Legislation has now been enacted to allow formal meetings to take place online, and during May the normal cadence of Council meetings will resume.

Forthcoming meetings

7 th May	All Member Briefing	Steve, Pippa, Martin
13 th May	Planning Committee	Pippa, Martin
13 th May	OPCC	Steve, Pippa, Martin
14 th May	Scrutiny and Overview Committee	Steve, Martin
18 th May	HIPC	Steve, Pippa, Martin
19 th May	NEC Ward Members' Briefing on draft AAP	Steve, Martin, Pippa
20 th May	Planning Committee	Pippa, Martin
21 st May	Full Council	Steve, Pippa, Martin,
21 st May	All Member Briefing	Steve, Pippa, Martin
26 th May	Planning Committee	Pippa, Martin
28 th May	All Member Briefing	Steve, Pippa, Martin
29 th May	Grants Advisory Committee (regarding Zero Carbon Grants)	Pippa, Martin