

Joint District Councillors' Report March 2021

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.

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You can also follow us on our webpage & blog at <http://hiopcouncillors.org>, on Twitter @pippa4hiop @stevehunt4hiop, and on Facebook @pippaheytings4hiop

His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh

We were saddened by news of the death of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Our thoughts are with his family.

The Union Flag is flying at half-mast at South Cambridgeshire Hall until the day after the funeral. Our Council and committee meetings will continue to take place during the period of national mourning. The website has a message from our Vice-Chair and a link to an online book of condolences: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/his-royal-highness-the-prince-philip-duke-of-edinburgh/>

Covid-19

Vaccine transport

A number of community transport schemes and taxi firms are available to support people with transport to their Covid-19 vaccination appointments. For residents needing help they can access details online or by calling 0345 045 5219 from Monday to Friday, between 9am and 5pm. The call operator will run people through the form to identify transport options available locally. All transport providers are DBS checked and most require a minimum 24 hours' notice for bookings.

Home testing

Regular home testing is now available to everyone to help stop the spread of the virus. Free tests can be ordered online at, or collected from, the testing centre at Milton Road Park and Ride (open 14:30 to 20:00 daily, except Wednesday 14:30 to 19:00). More information and links to order tests here: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-rapid-community-testing>

Virtual Council Meetings

Following news that the legislation that allows local government meetings to be online will not be renewed when it lapses on 6th May, the Leader of SCDC wrote to Jacob Rees-Mogg MP urging for an extension. As well as offering continued protection against the risk of spreading Coronavirus, virtual meetings are felt strongly by many participants to have been a boon by reducing the need to travel and increasing public participation. The removal of virtual meetings will put some local government bodies in a difficult or impossible position for holding their meetings in the short term. A copy of the letter is attached at the end of this report.

Local Authority Remote Meetings - Call for Evidence

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is running a survey to find out views on the success of the remote meetings that have been done to date. This may influence future legislation to enable remote participation on a permanent basis. It is open to anyone who is an officer or member of any tier of government and can be accessed until 17th June at this address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence>

Histon and Impington Neighbourhood Plan

This goes to referendum on May 6th (same day & polling stations as the local elections) and every registered elector in the community should have received a poll card for it. This is the culmination of many years of work by some very dedicated volunteers, with input from a huge number of local people and organizations. If the Plan passes the referendum, then it will come into force and applications for planning permission within its area must then normally be determined in accordance with its policies. Why is that important? Because Planning Committees may only determine planning applications according to whether they are legal in planning law and meet relevant planning policies, which would include the Neighbourhood Plan. They can't reject an application just because it's unpopular.

It's important to know that the time to ask whether the plan can say this or that has long since passed. It has been verified by the Independent Examiner to have met all legal requirements and the text is final. All that we can do now is vote to accept or reject it in its entirety. We urge you to vote in favour.

For full information, visit <http://www.hiplan.net/>

East-West Rail

The East West Rail Company has now presented the routes being considered for the third stage of construction of this route for public consultation. This includes a 'northern' route from Cambourne via Oakington (with additional station) and approaching Cambridge from the north via Cambridge North station. EWR has stated that its two preferred routes follow a 'southern' route with the same alignment in South Cambridgeshire; both provide a station north of Cambourne and a southern approach into Cambridge to permit through working to Norwich

and Ipswich. Cllr. Martin Cahn attended a virtual meeting online with the Company on April 7th and it was apparent that the northern route had a number of disadvantages as far as EWR is concerned – it would need greater works and more embankments due to the flat nature of the topography necessitating significantly higher cost; it has a much higher amount of engineering works necessary through floodplain; it would require negotiation with a much larger number of landowners and would require the demolishing of a large number of properties due to the need to construct four lines from Milton to Cambridge. A ‘northern’ route would necessitate working going into and out of Cambridge on the same side of the town, involving reversing and change of tracks which would slow travel times compared to simple through working, it is slightly longer; and there would be many more residential properties affected by noise and disturbance. One useful piece of information gathered was that the motive power has still not been decided and it was suggested that it might be electric or diesel, or electric but with batteries so that it would not be necessary to erect overhead lines along all of the route. The consultation will continue until 9th June and you can make your input via the web page <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation>. Public consultation events are proposed on the Bedford to Cambridge section Thursday- Friday 15-16th April and Monday-Tuesday 10th-11th May. Details are available on the website.

Your local councillors will be consulted on their views. It would be useful to hear back from local residents – do you want us to press for or against the northern option, and do you have preferences about the proposed services and the alignment of their preferred option.

Community Chest Covid Recovery Grants

SCDC’s Grants Advisory Committee have agreed to relax the eligible body requirements for Community Chest Applications until 28th May 2021 committee meeting (and a second round of applications to be invited to June 2021 Committee if unspent funding remains). This is to allow any group or Parish Council to apply for a Covid recovery related grant of up to £2,000. The Committee can award a maximum grant allocation of up to £2000 specifically in the case of applications designed to mitigate the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic and aid recovery.

This is in addition to the standard Community Chest application that may be made.

This is a temporary change to Community Chest Guidance, for applications brought before May 2021 (and possibly June 2021) committee meetings depending on remaining funding. For example, a parish council which would usually be ineligible for funding can apply for Covid specific funding for up to £2,000, a group could apply for up to £2,000, or if a particularly worthwhile project requested part funding, the Grants Advisory Committee may fund the project at a higher level than requested if it feels appropriate to do so. Covid recovery related applications are restricted to one application per eligible body, and a group may apply for both Community Chest grant and Covid Recovery Grant in the current financial year. This is a temporary change in guidance and any applications reviewed under this guidance are done so entirely at the discretion of the Grants Advisory Committee. No guarantee of funding is made for normal or Covid recovery related Community Chest Applications.

Response to Government Consultation: Planning for the Future White Paper

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) ran an eight-week consultation on proposals to establish a new Office for Place, which would require all local planning authorities to create their own design codes in consultation with local stakeholders. These design codes would have to be adhered in the planning submission process by all developers, and would entail some alterations to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Overall, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Officers consulted agree with the government that the planning system could be improved and should have more emphasis on design. This view echoes Greater Cambridge's response to the Planning White Paper last year where proposals that simplify processes and take advantage of more digital approaches to provide more certainty, design quality, and an emphasis on sustainability were welcomed.

However, there are significant concerns that some of the proposed changes may undermine its stated objectives of achieving good design. This concern is centred on proposed changes to Article 4 directions and the resources to deliver the design codes in a coherent manner.

The full response can be found here:

<https://scambsm.moderngov.co.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=11566>

Disposing of soil

As people start to spend more time in the garden, the question arises as to the best way to dispose of excess soil. **Soil should not go in the green (or any) bin.** It will make them too heavy and result in a missed collection as the crews will not be able to empty the bin.

Of course, small amounts of soil on roots of plants are acceptable in the green bin. However, it's worth remembering that soil and stones are not compostable and larger amounts can cause problems in the intensive composting process that waste from the green bin goes through. Soil can be taken to the recycling centre at Butt Lane, bearing Coronavirus restrictions and guidance in mind.

Planning Enforcement

A number of people have been in touch about planning enforcement issues, notably with regard to the movement of construction vehicles and related matters like mud and dirt on the roads. We are happy to either report them for you, or to follow up with officers if you feel that your complaint has been overlooked. Probably the best thing is to report them to Enforcement by emailing enforcement@scambsm.gov.uk and CC us. That way, we are in the loop from the

beginning rather than only finding out after the problem has existed for some time. More information at:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/planning/planning-control-and-enforcement/planning-enforcement>

Fly-tipping

Again we have heard about serious fly-tips but only after they were slow to be dealt with. As councillors we don't have access to the reports you make on the South Cambs website. When reporting a fly-tip feel free to also email one of us so that we can monitor the response and if necessary engage with officers to ensure it's dealt with promptly.

Zero Carbon Communities grant- round 3 opens 10 May

A reminder that Round 3 of South Cambs District Council's Zero Carbon Communities Grant will open on Monday 10th May to provide funding of between £1,000 and £15,000 to parish councils and voluntary sector organisations for projects that support the shift to zero carbon emissions by 2050.

This time we will be inviting applications under two main themes plus an extra general theme for exceptional projects; with each theme being allocated a nominal percentage of a £100k grant fund:

- Community buildings (40%)
- Nature (40%)
- Other projects (20%)

The closing date for applications is 30 July.

We will be looking for projects which achieve wider community engagement and behaviour change around climate change and the environment as well as a measurable reduction in carbon emissions.

Potential applicants will also be provided with an opportunity to join a workshop on how to make successful grant applications; date to be announced shortly.

Please email zcc@scambs.gov.uk if you would like to discuss your potential project before making an application. See also <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/zerocarbongrant>

Meetings in March

9 th March	Climate and Environment Advisory Committee	Pippa, Martin
10 th March	Planning Committee	Pippa, Martin

10th March	Orchard Park Community Council	Pippa, Martin, Steve
11th January	Patch 9 GRT Community Inclusion Workshop	Martin, Steve
15th March	Community Briefing for Parish Councils	Pippa, Martin
15th March	Histon and Impington Parish Council	Pippa, Martin, Steve
16th March	Nature Forum	Pippa, Martin
16 th March	Planning Briefing	Pippa, Martin, Steve
17 th March	Joint Development Control Committee	Steve
18th March	Scrutiny & Overview Cttee	Cancelled
25 th March	Civic Affairs Committee	Martin
29 th March	Start of 'Purdah'	

Meetings in April

8 th	All-Member Briefing	Pippa, Martin, Steve
13 th	Planning Cttee	Martin, Pippa
13 th	Briefing on Cambourne Business Park	Pippa, Martin, Steve
14 th	JDCC	Steve
14 th	OPCC	Martin, Steve, Pippa
15 th	Full Council	Pippa, Martin, Steve
20 th	Scrutiny & Overview Cttee	Steve, Martin
22 nd	All-Member Briefing	Pippa, Martin, Steve

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Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP
Lord President of the Council and
Leader of the House of Commons
70 Whitehall
London
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18 March 2021

cc. Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Mr Anthony Browne MP

Dear Mr Rees-Mogg,

Extending provisions to enable council meetings to be held remotely

We are writing to you today to call for the provision for council meetings to continue remotely, to be extended beyond 6 May 2021, for the safe and effective conduct of council business, in line with the Prime Minister's Roadmap out of the national restrictions amid the pandemic.

We would urge the Government not to make the mistake of conflating the desire for Parliament to return to in-person meetings with the appropriate arrangements in local government. Councils are different beasts to Parliament – our councillors act on a near voluntary basis, as they receive only a modest allowance, and many are clinically extremely vulnerable.

As we carefully transition out of the pandemic, let us decide how to best mix in-person and remote meetings locally. District Councils are democratically elected and locally accountable bodies, and we should have the flexibility to determine how, when and where to use this flexibility to benefit local communities. We fully understand that many meetings are best held in person – in many instances there can be no substitute for the face to face contact we have all missed. But our council meets for many reasons, taking decisions across a wide variety of issues, and in many of these cases a meeting can be held just as satisfactorily online.

In the short term, if these powers are lost after 6 May, we will be in the impossible position of not being able to hold meetings remotely, but also having to restrict the numbers of councillors that attend in-person meetings to adhere to social distancing requirements. Whatever our ambition, it is not realistic for councils to find alternative local venues that can host a whole council meeting of 50+ councillors, officers and members of the public in ways that adhere to current requirements. South Cambridgeshire District Council is exploring hire of a large-scale venue at which to hold its meeting in May. However, a consequence of adhering to social distancing in a large venue is that participants will be spaced apart from each other in a space much larger than the usual Council Chamber setting and therefore unable to hear each other adequately. The cost of hiring portable mics, which would need to be allocated to each individual for COVID-19 safety reasons, and which would require additional officer resources to set up and test, may very well be disproportionate.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Local government is supportive of the Prime Minister's Roadmap to move our communities out of restrictions. The roadmap makes clear that gatherings of over 30 people outdoors will remain illegal until at least 21 June. Families and friends will continue to miss funerals and weddings, and so we do not see how it is credible that we simultaneously hold lengthy gatherings of well over 30 people indoors to carry out council business easily conducted remotely until further restrictions are lifted. Paragraph 3.4 of the Government's own guidance on "Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)" makes clear the arrangements that businesses should make, the first step being to avoid in-person meetings.

The Government's roadmap rightly seeks to protect all of us and especially the vulnerable in our communities. Many of our councillors are clinically extremely vulnerable and will not be able to return to in-person meetings before the requirements for social distancing are lifted. If the provisions are not extended, it will be the case that many democratically elected councillors will be disenfranchised, and communities will effectively lose representation on the local issues at a key point in our local health and economic recovery. Indeed, remote meetings have facilitated local democracy, making it more accessible to different groups in our communities, making it more accessible to different groups in our communities, and we want to keep that flexibility about how we hold our meetings in future, not just during the pandemic.

It has been said that there is not sufficient time to bring in alternative arrangements before the May deadline. However, we consider that the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has the power under section 16 of the Local Government Act 1999 to modify the Local Government Act 1972 to allow these arrangements to continue, without the need for primary legislation - although this route would not cover parish councils. Alternatively, a deregulation order could be considered under section 1 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, even though there is now limited time for consultation.

We would encourage you to work with the Secretary of State the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP to enable District Councils like ourselves to have choice about how we organise our meetings, so that we can use our local knowledge, and local judgment, to conduct our business effectively for the benefit of local communities.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Bridget Smith
The Leader, South Cambridgeshire District Council (Liberal Democrat)