

Report for Parish Councils - April 2019

A1307

Partly under pressure from SCDC Leader, Bridget Smith, the Combined Authority has turned down a request for a funding contribution towards a so called 'A1307 Options Appraisal Report' wanted by the Haverhill based A1307 Strategy Board. The CA did not consider it worth spending money on considering the scheme does not align with either CAM (Cambridge Autonomous Metro) or GCP upgrades. This is good news since it makes less likely the plan to build a completely new dual carriageway A1307

Settled Status

A reminder to EU citizens that – thanks to Brexit – you need to apply for Settled Status. This has to be done online: this can be done via computer rather than smartphone, however required documentation must first be scanned via a Home Office app downloaded onto an Android device with specified features. Providing support for this was one factor contributing to County Council withdrawing fees for computer use in libraries.

Ofsted of CCC's Children's Services

Cambridgeshire County Council's Children's Services has recently been assessed by Ofsted. Sadly, Ofsted have downgraded the council's children's services from 'good' (in 2014), to 'requires improvement' a sign that the quality of children's services has moved in the wrong direction in recent years.

SCDC Developments

The CEO of South Cambridgeshire District Council has taken early retirement. Mike Hill who was the director responsible for Environmental Services is acting up as interim while a new permanent CEO is recruited. The council is also undertaking a review of all of its operations to make it more efficient and to greatly improve the services it gives to the residents.

South Cambs approved its business plan last month which sets an ambitious and clear direction for the council with a focus on business support and protecting the environment. Equally important is the intention to secure new housing to meet the needs of all residents by making new homes as cheap to run as possible. This could involve water recycling, using renewable energy, building homes close to where people work and ensuring that you can get where you need to get without a car. These are big ambitions but only by aiming high will we really make a positive difference to the cost of living and to the environment.

Making Money the Green Way

South Cambs has installed a large array of solar photo voltaic panels on the roof of the waste management depot at Waterbeach. The money to do this has come from a

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fund resulting from the business rates from the large number of solar farms in the district. This initiative will generate income for the council which it can invest in other green enterprises. The Solar panels which will generate around a quarter of all the electricity the building uses.

This is the latest stage in the Council's efforts to be "green to the core" and will deliver clean, renewable energy, reduce costs and cut carbon emissions. It follows on from a recent Council commitment to work towards the ambitious target of making South Cambridgeshire carbon-neutral by 2050, and a purge on single-use plastics at the authority.

Empty Homes

South Cambs is planning to increase the council tax on houses that have been left empty for a significant amount of time.

Currently the owners of homes that are left empty and substantially unfurnished for more than two years must pay an extra 50% on top of the regular bill. Following the full Council meeting, the 50% premium will be replaced by the following arrangements:

* Homes that are empty for two years or more will be charged double their regular Council Tax (i.e. an additional premium of 100%). This will come into effect from 1 April 2019

* Homes that are empty for five years or more will be charged a 200% premium on top of their regular Council Tax. This will come into effect from 1 April 2020

* Homes that are empty for ten years or more will be charged a 300% premium on top of their regular Council Tax. This will come into effect from 1 April 2021

Right now across South Cambridgeshire, 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. There are 39 properties that have been empty for more than ten years.

Refugees

South Cambs has announced that it will be working with the City Council to provide homes for five Syrian Refugee families.

Combined Authority

The high profile CAM Metro project which aims to run largely off road using wheeled, tram style vehicles out to the furthest reaches of South Cambridgeshire and beyond (St Neots, Haverhill) has been costed at the impressive sum £4 billion. The really expensive part is the tunnelling under Cambridge City and the creation of an underground station somewhere under the historic city centre. Critical to this is a new Cambridge South Station to serve Addenbrookes and the Bio Medical campus both of which are growing at significant rates and which will have tens of thousands

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of new employees before too long. £5 million has already been spent on the Cambridge South Station project some of which came from businesses in that area.

Moving the Sewage Works

An application for over £200 million to Government from South Cambs, Cambridge City and the County Council to move the existing sewage/water works from North Cambridge has been successful. Moving this facility which has a reputation for being pretty smelly will free up a significant site for some thousands of houses. The next big decision is where will the new sewage/ water works go.

Community RePaint

Community RePaint - a partnership with CCC, Cambridgeshire Community Reuse and Recycling Network (CCORRN) and Amey – has collected and treated over HALF A MILLION LITRES of paint in the last 8 years. The scheme collects used paint from Household Recycling Centres where it is sorted, tested and re-manufactured so that it can be resold or donated into the community.

The scheme has been going from strength to strength and has a range of re-manufactured emulsion paint and chalky furniture paint in a host of great colours for great prices. So if you are thinking of redecorating, upcycling or know of a community or school project that needs paint, why not visit CCORRN (located in March) or follow them on Facebook.