

SCDC Report to Parish Councils / Community Council September 2011

Full Council

A meeting of Full Council took place on 22 September 2011. One of the more controversial decisions came right at the start in deciding whether to allow councillors to access social media (blogging and tweeting) from the council chamber during the meeting. With 26 voting in favour and 11 voting against, the Chairman informed us we were banned from doing 'this sort of thing' as the motion had not gained the sufficient two thirds majority. It would appear that neither enlightenment nor democracy has yet reached South Cambs!

LPSA Grants and community projects

When this was withdrawn in July 2010 it left SCDC without £468,000 that had been committed to local community projects. The County has now received £4.5m to complete the LPSA commitments, but rather than hand it over to district councils, it has ring-fenced it towards their broadband proposal - a worthy project, but not the correct use of the money that should have gone to community projects like Connections Youth Bus, in my opinion.

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)

Recent headlines proclaiming thousands of houses to be built in South Cambs arise from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites. In June 2011 a general invitation was issued for landowners, developers, agents, organisations or the public to put to the Council sites that they would like to be considered for inclusion in the new plan.

A large number were put forward, and 270 meet the basic requirements for assessment. These have been registered and will now be thoroughly looked at to see if they are suitable. This is preparation work for a new South Cambridgeshire Local Plan to set the strategy for, and locations of, new development in the district over the next 20 years."

The list of sites and an interactive map is on the SCDC website under Idf and public consultation will be in summer 2012.

South Cambridgeshire Housing Repairs Service

South Cambs has recently put the repairs service for its 6,000 houses out to tender and the tender was not awarded to our successful in-house service. The new provider is based outside the county and there are concerns that we potentially lose some control over the quality of service and its costs.

Tenant Participation Group (TPG).

For the first time in its history South Cambridgeshire District Council is running a ballot of all its tenants and leaseholders in October 2011 to elect tenant representatives onto the Tenant Participation Group (TPG).

The TPG has been running for over 10 years, but until now has been a group of unelected interested committed tenants and leaseholders working with the Council to shape and improve housing services.

Northstowe

The Joint Promoters for Northstowe are preparing an application for a Phase 1 development to the north of the land identified for the new town in the Northstowe Area Action Plan (adopted 2007).

This Phase 1 application, expected in Jan 2012, will be for 1,500 homes and associated social and physical infrastructure. Officers are working with the Joint Promoters and relevant stakeholders who are preparing a "Vision document" and a framework plan to influence the design and development of future phases of the new town. They are also scoping what to include in the Transport Assessment (TA), which will accompany the application.

Street Lighting

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) entered into a street lighting PFI contract with Balfour Beatty in July 2011, covering all 60,000 CCC street lights throughout Cambridgeshire. The PFI contract does not cover any other lights e.g. footway lights maintained on behalf of Parish or District Councils.

The Portfolio Holder at South Cambs has reviewed footway lighting maintenance role and responsibilities and is minded to take over all day-to-day maintenance responsibilities for footway lights from Parish Councils, with effect from the start of the PFI contract. This would mean that SCDC would be responsible for all aspects of footway lighting maintenance, including day-to-day maintenance, renewals and replacements. Parish Councils would no longer have any maintenance responsibilities.

A final decision is due in October and questions or comments should be directed to Environment Services Manager, Paul Quigley 01954 713 134.

Water, Water

Mike Mason will be hosting a Briefing on Flood Protection, Drought and Water Management, which is open to all District Councillors and Parish Councils on Wednesday 26 October 2011 from 5.30pm - 7pm in the Monkfield Room at the South Cambs Offices. There are only 25 spaces available for this Briefing so please confirm attendance to Claire Dillon by email or on 01954 713 026.

Casework

Your councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact us with comments, questions or problems.

Jonathan Chatfield
05 October 2011