

The budget is the item on all agendas at SCDC at the moment. Cabinet will meet on Thursday 09 February to consider their recommendations to Council. These recommendations include freezing council tax for another year. This is a particularly difficult time to set a budget with so many uncertainties. The day is also approaching fast when SCDC will have to pay £205m to the Government for its housing stock. Cabinet will consider a recommendation to Council that this is financed through borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board which is offering an attractive discounted rate. This will be available for one day only, 26 March and a new website has been set up to facilitate applications. There is understandable nervousness about the robustness of the application process. There is less nervousness, however, about the taking on of this debt. Having done the sums, there is confidence that this loan can be met from day 1 and could, in fact, be paid off in 20 years. However, the plan is to use the headroom in the loan facility as it develops over the years to fund council house building. There are now 6,000+ applicants on the waiting list for housing in South Cambridgeshire so commitment to a house building programme couldn't come at a better time.

### Meetings attended in January:

11/01: Planning Committee: Item of local interest: 88 Rampton Road, Cottenham: Approved.

12/01: Cabinet: [i] Considered proposals for a new management structure which would necessitate the deletion of 3 posts and the creation of a new Head of Service Post. Whilst there is great sympathy for the individuals affected by the deletions, the new structure will be more effective in ensuring that the Council is fit for purpose in the future. Cabinet agreed to recommend the proposals to full Council.

[ii] Voted in favour of authorising the CEO to enter into a formal agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council to allow SCDC to fully participate in the 'Low Carbon Investment in Greater Cambridge & Greater Peterborough' project. It is notable that this project is greatly dependent on the already planned work of SCDC to qualify for approximately £1m in EU funding. SCDC will use its own investment programme for its housing stock to play a leading part in addressing the issues of fuel poverty and carbon reduction and will secure approximately £100,000 of EU investment in South Cambridgeshire. The project will directly benefit at least 670 council-owned properties by reducing fuel costs for the householders. The EU funding will enable the Council to employ a project officer for 3 years and provide it with the capacity to contribute to the wider project.

17/01: [i] Environmental Services PfH Meeting: Fees and charges for the coming year: Many of the responsibilities of this service are statutory duties and the fees are set for councils. Discretion is allowed for such items as the licensing of sex shop establishments [new application proposed to go up by £88 this year to £3,588 and renewal by £15 to £615], dangerous wild animals [proposed increase of £2 to £59] and taxi licensing [increases proposed to initial licence of £18 to £187 and renewal £9 to £95]. Despite these fees being discretionary councils are only allowed to charge sufficient to recoup costs. The increases in taxi licensing will obviously impact on small businesses at a difficult time and the PfH requested that these be carefully monitored.

[ii] Finance & Staffing PfH Meeting: The PfH endorsed the central costs and recharges to individual services and approved the revised scheme of Land Charges.

24/01: Assessment for Charter Status in Member Development: SCDC was successful. Democratic Services officers put in a lot of hard work to support the efforts of the Member Task & Finish group to achieve this. Whilst it is a great success in terms of laying the foundations for giving elected councillors the support to develop the skills and knowledge required for their roles, the real success will be measured in the commitment of all 57 members to self-development and ultimately in the level of service they are able to offer residents.

25/01: Northstowe & New Communities PfH Meeting: The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all local planning authorities to maintain a Local Development Scheme [LDS]. This sets out the timetable for preparing Development Plan Documents [DPD] over a 3 year

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Your councillors are here to help you. Please feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but, if we can't, we probably know a [wo]man who can.

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period. The PfH was asked to agree a revision to the LDS indicating that the Gypsies & Travellers DPD will no longer be prepared separately and any policies and proposals for Gypsy & Traveller accommodation will be included in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. A summary of the timetable for the development of the Local Plan is as follows:

- 2011/12: Evidence gathering
- 2012/13: Consultation on issues and options and draft plan
- 2013/14: Finalising and submission of plan to Secretary of State
- 2014/15: Examination and Inspector's reporting
- 2015/16: Completing the Inspector's reporting and adoption

It is thought there may be some scope to shorten the programme during 2014/5 and 2015/6 but this will depend on the way in which the examination/reporting process is managed.

- 26/01: [i] Policy & Performance PfH Meeting: The PfH agreed to the reduction in opening hours of the Contact Centre. The contract for this service provided by the County Council will end in December 2012 and the service will be provided in house by SCDC at an appreciable cost saving. Opening hours have already been reduced but County have now advised that Monday-Friday the contact centre will operate from 08.00 to 18.00 [previously 20.00]. Saturday service will remain 09.00 to 13.00.
- [ii] Council voted in favour of the management re-structuring recommendation [see note above under Cabinet meeting].

### Items of Interest/Forthcoming Events:

I watch eagerly for applications from our ward for money from SCDC's Community Chest but, apart from the one put in by Oakington Parish Council immediately following the reintroduction of this source of funding, I have been sadly disappointed. Grants for up to £1,000 are available so please publicise this to appropriate organisations within your parishes. The process is very simple and the decisions are made very promptly. Further information at [www.scambs.gov.uk/communitychest](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/communitychest) or you can contact the partnerships officer on 01954 713290.

SCDC's response to the Right to Buy consultation. I can forward it to anyone wishing to view it.

- 10/02: Fuel Poverty Day – Press Release from Cambridgeshire Acre – I am not sure how widely this was circulated. Please let me know if you would like it forwarded.
- 13/02: 'Be A Councillor' event at SCDC, Cambourne. Information about becoming a councillor. RSVP to Claire Dillon, [claire.dillon@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:claire.dillon@scambs.gov.uk) or 01954 713026
- 28/03: "Parishes' Roles, Responsibilities and Partnership Working": a training event that is open to both SCDCouncillors and Parish Councillors. Starts 17.30. The venue is published as being the Monkfield Room at SCDC which would indicate that places may be somewhat restricted.

Late last year Mike Mason led a training event called 'Water, Water, Everywhere'. Those who were able to attend will attest to its quality. Unfortunately, some parish councillors were unable to attend due to an administrative error by SCDC and there may be others who missed it for other reasons. I have spoken to Mike and he would be willing to repeat the event locally if there is sufficient demand. Please can I ask you to contact me if this is something that you would be interested in and I will then liaise with Mike on the arrangements?

Finally, may I please ask you all to note that I shall be away from Thursday 01 to Monday 05 March, inclusive although I hope to be back in time for Rampton PC meeting at 19.30 on the Monday.

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