

## **Whaddon Parish Council April 2025 – District and County Councillors’ Report**

### **Anglian Water**

We have not yet had a response from AW to our request for a meeting date for the ‘annual’ meeting we’ve held with them for the past several years.

### **Vacant council house query**

The two ‘Ridgeway Close’ properties queried at a recent PC meeting in terms of ‘vacancy’ are in fact listed as ‘Bridge Street’ properties. Both require extensive refurbishment and are in the currently awaiting the surveyor’s report.

### **Cam Vale Bus User Group – data request to Combined Authority**

Anecdotally we hear that the 17 bus is doing well with a significant increase in ridership, and strong passenger confidence. Much praise has been given with regard to the integrity of the operator, Myalls.

In response to questions from the Cam Vale Bus User Group about ridership levels, the Combined Authority has written to say:

*Data received by the Combined Authority shows that there has been an increase in the number of journeys recorded on this contract. In 2022/23 there were an estimated 6,840 journeys, whereas in 2024/25 it is estimated that there will be 19,462 journeys. Caution should be exercised in attributing this to one specific reason, as there has been a gradual increase in patronage nationally since Covid, and measures introduced to assist with increasing bus patronage, such as the £2 fare cap in England in January 2023, and the Tiger bus passes for Under-25’s in our region in May 2024.*

*As part of the Road to Better Buses strategy, the Combined Authority is in the process of surveying and identifying ownership of almost 3000 bus shelters and stops around the region so that we can start improving the ones that need it. We are also looking to improve the information available at bus stops. Progress on these improvements will be shaped by the funding available.*

*We shall investigate whether the timetable can be amended to enable improved integration with bus service 26. Bus service 26 currently operates on a commercial basis, so the bus operator, in this case A2B Travel Group, decides when the bus will operate. Under a franchised network, the Combined Authority will contract bus operators to run services on its behalf and with more control over the routes it could provide further scope to better integrate the two timetables.*

### **Fancy becoming a farmer?**

Cambridgeshire County Council is offering five initial tenancies of 10 years to allow development of a rural business on one of Cambridgeshire’s leasehold farms. Our Farms Estate is the largest in England and Wales and covers over 13,400 hectares, supporting over 160 tenants with 45 new entrants in the last 10 years.

We are seeking to continue our long track record of helping establish new farming businesses in the county. With five initial tenancies of 10 years currently available from October 2025, successful applicants will have the opportunity to join the Estate’s community and exercise their entrepreneurial abilities to develop a rural business on one of the leasehold farms listed below.

Recent new tenants have included businesses that seek to address the climate change challenge, with some exploring regenerative farming, which benefits carbon capture and biodiversity.

The properties come fully equipped with a house and various outbuildings, offering potential for cereal and root crop farming, as well as other diversified uses. Council Farm, Little Wilbraham; Larkhall & Block Farm, Fordham; Whitehall Farm, Littleport; Fen Bridge Farm, Cottenham and Chancel Farm, Wicken are the farms in question.

### **Learning Disability Support**

County Councillors have confirmed their commitment to ensuring ongoing support for people with learning disabilities and their families, following changes to how the council works with the NHS in Cambridgeshire. The Learning Disability Partnership (LDP), which has provided integrated health and social care support for adults with learning disabilities in Cambridgeshire, has been formally dissolved from 1 April 2025. Councillors are calling on local health partners to fully share information about the arrangements for NHS funded support from this month and to ensure complete continuity of care from the NHS for people currently receiving services, to match those commitments already made by the council.

The Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) are continuing discussions on how to work together to maintain services across the county. However, discussions are ongoing about payments owed for the services provided by the council, including historical debts. There still remains an opportunity to reach an agreement before entering formal legal mediation, and the council hopes for a constructive resolution that benefits all involved, particularly those who rely on these important services. County councillors have raised concerns about this service separation and the associated financial issues, which has been formally escalated as a corporate risk by the council. The council continues to press for a resolution.

### **Council of Sanctuary**

Cambridgeshire County Council has received Council of Sanctuary status, reaffirming the council's commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for people seeking sanctuary in Cambridgeshire. The council is amongst one of the first county councils in the UK to receive this national award, which celebrates local authorities that work hard to demonstrate hospitality and a warm welcome to new arrivals in the area. The title was awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, a nationally coordinated network of organisations and services that support refugees and people seeking asylum. Cambridgeshire's wider commitment to being a place of welcome and inclusion.

### **Tree & Woodland Strategy**

The County Council has adopted a Tree and Woodland Strategy and Action Plan. It has also approved the introduction of a 'woodland pledge' to increase canopy cover and safeguard existing woodland across the council's own landholdings. A target to increase woodland canopy to 13 per cent, and to increase the hedgerows to 323km, will be included in the Council's performance management framework and in the Climate Change and Environment Strategy.

### **Civil Parking Enforcement Update: October to the end of December 2024**

Cambridgeshire County Council's application for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in South Cambridgeshire was approved by the Secretary of State via the Department for Transport (DfT) on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

Two officers continue to patrol the district to maintain frequent patrols on the various areas of South Cambridgeshire.

A total of 818 town patrols covering 2334 street visits in South Cambridgeshire have been completed by the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) for the period of October 2024 through to the end of December. Patrols have predominantly focussed on areas where parking is in the greatest demand, such as commuting and shopping areas, or where requests have been made.

A high proportion of Penalty Charge Notices continue to be issued to vehicles parked on single or double yellow lines for quarter three, with 80% of cases issued for this offence. This is a higher rate contravention at £70.00. A discount of 50% is applied if payment is made within 14 days of the PCN being issued.

There is an on-going trend of the volume of PCNs being issued decreasing over time, indicating compliance is being achieved across the district.

A total of 75% of PCNs issued within this period have been paid to date. If payment or representations are not received from the remaining cases, the Council will contact the DVLA, and a Statutory Notice called a 'Notice to Owner' will be sent to the registered keeper of vehicle providing details how to either pay or appeal the

PCN. If neither is received, the case will process as per the Statutory process defined in the Traffic Management Act 2004.

The statistics for quarter three reflects the status of the PCN when the report was issued. The cases would have progressed or paid and as such, these figures will change during the course of the PCN progression.

Full details of the case status and income will be provided as a total at the end of the financial year.

(Spreadsheet indicating CPE activity attached)

### **Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report 2025 (5-year land supply)**

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning team have [published a new report](#) that includes a new Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and our latest housing land supply calculations. An updated assessment shows that in the five years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2030, a total of 13,383 homes are anticipated to be built in Greater Cambridge, giving a housing land supply of 5.5 years. As a result of this supply being restored to above five years, planning applications will again be assessed against all the councils' local policies – which include a clear plan for where homes should be built - as well as those set nationally. This means that Greater Cambridge will once again enjoy the full protection from unplanned and inappropriate development provided by its Local Plans.

## **Council Tax Fraud**

Fraud officers have clawed back £360,000 in false claims for council tax discounts, with the money set to be invested back into public services across South Cambridgeshire. The money has been returned to District Council budgets after staff uncovered hundreds of false claims by comparing data records. Called the Cambridgeshire County Council Fraud Initiative, the project continues to identify single person discount fraud and error, since launching in July 2023. It works by comparing data held by the local authority with other information such as the electoral register or credit reference data. Where there is a debt identified, it is recovered through the normal Council Tax billing process, with the income used to fund public services. Data gathered as part of the initiative indicates that around two in 10 claims reviewed by the authority, were being claimed incorrectly.

## **Warmer Council Homes**

More than £8 million in Government funding has been awarded to South Cambridgeshire District Council to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes. The idea is to upgrade thousands of social homes across the country which are currently below the standard of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C. Improvements to South Cambridgeshire's Council homes could include insulation, ventilation, heating controls, double glazing, solar panels, and heat pumps - cutting bills and tackling fuel poverty.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will now work to allocate funding to properties with priority given to those most in need of energy efficiency improvements. Council tenants will be contacted direct if their home is able to benefit – with the aim for the Council to have as many of its 5,500 properties above an EPC rating of C in the next four years.

The funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is part of the national Warm Homes Plan. A total of £8,280,376 is being provided for South Cambridgeshire under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund scheme. South Cambridgeshire District Council will contribute £10 million from its Housing Revenue Account – consisting of Council house rents – to the improvements too.

## **Heathy Start Vouchers**

Parents of children under the age of four years old are being encouraged to check if they are eligible for free Healthy Start vouchers to help buy food and milk. The Healthy Start vouchers are offered by the NHS to parents receiving certain benefits but are estimated to go unclaimed by more than a third (38%) of eligible parents in South Cambridgeshire.

This results in almost £88,000 of unclaimed funds each year in the district, largely due to a lack of awareness of the scheme.

In SCDC's latest campaign to support residents with the cost of living, we have used our new and innovative IT package, called the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT), to identify 377 households who are likely to be eligible for Healthy Start vouchers.

All these households have been contacted by letter and text where possible to encourage them to apply for Healthy Start vouchers if they have not done so already.

Parents are eligible for Healthy Start vouchers if they have a child under the age of four and are on certain benefits. If eligible, parents will receive a Healthy Start card that can be used in most UK supermarkets, similar to a debit card. The card will be pre-loaded with £8.50 a week for children aged under one, and £4.25 a week for children aged between one and four years old.

#### **Local Government reorganisation: Q&A for residents**

A Q&A has been published on the SCDC website.

#### [Local Government Reorganisation - South Cambs District Council](#)

If there is a particular question or subject that you think should be included, please let us know.

#### **New SCDC website launches**

This new website is designed for residents to get personalised, local information at a glance. Residents who have been trying out the new website during the past few weeks will already have seen how they can receive personalised local information in real-time including bin collection dates for their street, local street cleansing schedules, planning applications nearby, District Councillor details and local events of interest – all by entering their postcode [on the new homepage](#).

#### **Community Safety Partnership**

Sally Ann and Susan represent South Cambs and Cambs County respectively on this group, which is a partnership of police, fire, district and county community services. It deals with crime, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence, and provides insights into trends and opportunities for prevention.

We learned that take-up of the Police Community Engagement meetings is low, as is participation in the Police Community survey. Police welcome any ideas and input from the public – please feel free to ask us to liaise.

We have requested an annual report on Community Policing for Annual Parish Meetings. This will be ready sometime in May.

#### **Thank you from Susan**

It has been such a privilege to represent Whaddon at Cambs County Council over the past eight years. Thank you for the always warm welcome I've been given by residents and the parish council, and best wishes to the parish council and the community in all their endeavours.