

Report of Councillor Claire Daunton and Councillor John Williams to Great Wilbraham Parish Council for January 2022.

This report contains factual information which we hope will be of use and of interest to the parish council and to the wider community of the parish.

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Proposed relocation of Cambridge Water treatment Works to Honey Hill

We attended the Anglian Water Community Working Group meetings in December and together with other community representatives including parish councillors we pressed again on the issue of the access route wanting direct access from the A14 for both construction and operational traffic, as well as on the towers and the bund and landscaping issues.

Changes to bin collections over Christmas and New Year

The South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Shared Waste Service had to react quickly just before Christmas to meet unprecedented absenteeism by drivers and loaders by reducing the planned bin collection dates for the Christmas and New Year period.

In particular the non-statutory green bin collections were suspended from Monday 13 December 2021 because of the number of drivers and loaders absent particularly with Coronavirus or due to self-isolating. As we write they are planned to resume on Wednesday 12 January 2022.

As is always the case during the festive period, there will be alterations to bin collection days as hard-working crews enjoy a break. All collections from Monday 27 December through to Friday 21 January are at least one day later than usual due to the Bank Holidays.

Details of the changes were published on the Council's website and its social media platforms and by the news media; and we are grateful for local community social media broadcasting the changes.

More community funding from South Cambs

Eligible South Cambridgeshire community groups which work to improve the quality of life for local residents can now apply for double the amount of grant help from the Council's Community Chest scheme.

Not-for-profit voluntary and community sector groups, charities, small Parish Councils or meetings and public sector bodies can now request small grants of up to £2,000, increased from £1,000, for help in covering one-off costs relating to a project or activity.

This can be for improvements to community buildings and spaces such as village halls, pavilions or play areas; repairs to historic buildings, monuments or memorials;

equipment or capital purchases or materials; or 'Start-up' costs such as training of staff and volunteers, hall hire and other revenue costs.

To be eligible, projects should be promoting healthy and active communities, enabling inclusive communities or helping to develop skills, enhancing the natural environment, meeting a local need and leaving a legacy for the community, and ensuring equality of access.

The Council is also putting £50,000 into a rolling fund for two years for grants for villages who want to develop a community-led plan, with the money to be earmarked for the initial development costs - such as printing, the delivery of surveys and costs involved in holding public meetings - rather than delivering the project. This is open to all Parish Councils.

The Council's Wildlife Enhancement Scheme has also been incorporated and will be administered as part of the Community Chest grant scheme. This 'ring-fenced' purse of £10,000 annually will be used for Biodiversity projects which enhance the living environment around the district.

For details about all the grants available from South Cambs go to:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/search/?query=grants>

South Cambridgeshire wins funding for home heating schemes

SCDC has been awarded funding from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) as part of the government's Sustainable Warmth Scheme. The Sustainable Warmth Scheme brings together Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery, Phase 3 (LAD3) and the slightly more generous, off-gas-only Home Upgrade Grant, Phase 1 (HUG1) to support low-income households living in hard-to-heat private-sector homes by installing energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating.

The award is as a result of a consortium bid from the Cambridgeshire local authorities led by Cambridge City Council and is for a total of £6,464,998 to support improvements to 398 properties in Cambridgeshire. Approximately £1,300,000 has been allocated for 81 properties in South Cambs, of which 20 will be on-gas and 61 off gas.

The scheme will be delivered by the Cambridgeshire consortium working in partnership with contractors from April 2022 through to March 2023. To be eligible, households will be required to have a maximum household income of £30,000, and the property will need to have an EPC rating of E, F or G. SCDC will be adopting a whole house, fabric first approach with the aim of increasing EPC ratings to C where feasible, drawing in additional funding from other sources (e.g. ECO) where possible.

Watch out for the press release on behalf of all the Cambridgeshire Local Authorities via the County Council along with details of how households can register their interest.

Household Support Funds

Letters are going to about 6,000 residents who have been identified as being likely to be eligible for Household Support Fund grants. The letter will include reminders of existing financial support that is available during the year (such as South Camb's Discretionary Housing Payments to provide financial support towards housing costs, or our Council Tax Hardship Fund to provide support to those who are struggling financially because of the pandemic).

Additionally, information will be included to encourage residents to contact our Welfare and Money Maximisation Officer, Lucy Tompkins, who can confidentially discuss residents' circumstances and identify any support that may be suitable.

The Household Support Fund itself is a new one-off grant, which is live until 31 March 2022. This usually provides £49 (for a family) or £29 (for an individual) to cover food or household energy costs, but more funding may be available for people who can demonstrate a higher need – for instance for higher costs of filling an oil tank or buying a new cooker.

To be eligible for the Household Support Fund residents will need to earn less than £17,940 or receive any of the following: Income Support; Income-based Job Seekers Allowance; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Pension Credit; Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit.

Those eligible can find out more, or apply online, on Cambridgeshire County Council's website.

More Government Covid help for businesses

Businesses in the hospitality and leisure sectors in England are now eligible for a one-off grant of between £2,700- £6,000 depending on premises rateable value from the Government which has also announced that additional discretionary funding will be made available for Councils to support other businesses affected.

As soon as SCDC receives further detail on eligibility criteria and total allocation, it will update its website and comms channels further with policy and application details/process. SCDC is also awaiting confirmation of when the funds will be sent through. Guidance from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will be required before software can be developed and policies written.

SCDC is aware of the urgency to deliver financial support to businesses and are putting plans in place to allocate this funding as soon as possible. However, at present a firm date when this money will be distributed to local businesses. Best guess is currently businesses will be able to start applying during the latter part of January / early February for the reasons mentioned above.

The Government has also given guidance regarding a new Business Rates relief scheme – the Coronavirus Additional Relief Fund (CARF), along with a funding allocation of up to £6.3m for SCDC. The guidance sets a new local relief scheme to distribute the funding, which is available to reduce the 2021/22 Business Rates bill.

The guidance states that the scheme should:

- Not award relief to ratepayers that are, or would have been, eligible for the Extended Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Discount, or the Nursery Discount
- Not award relief in respect of a property when it is unoccupied
- Direct support towards ratepayers who have been adversely affected by the pandemic and have been unable to adequately adapt to that impact.

SCDC is currently exploring options for scheme design to ensure support is targeted to those impacted, and will then need to turn its attention to the administrative details. This is a considerable piece of work and it may take some weeks before the scheme is launched. Please be assured that the Council will endeavour to launch the scheme as soon as possible.

Details of both schemes are on the South Cambs' website which will be updated as more information becomes available.

Covid puts pressure on Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency

We would like to make you aware of the pressures and challenges Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency are continuing to experience as a result of Covid. In particular the availability of contractors to carry out works is proving to be very difficult at the moment, with issues over recruitment of workmen and the lack of supplies of building materials and equipment.

To help the team manage caseloads and ensure that quality of works is not compromised, a 'Waiting List' approach is being introduced as a temporary measure. This will mean that applications received will be prioritised to the most urgent, with the remainder of applications likely to face a 2-3 month delay before their case becomes active. All applicants will be kept informed of the progress of their application, timescales, etc. and a triage service will be put in place to ensure those in urgent need are prioritised.

The HIA are actively looking for additional contractors, and have successfully appointed a further six for bathrooms and kitchens. These contractors are currently in the mobilisation phase but will hopefully start to make a difference once contracts have been agreed. Obviously this is not a position that the Agency wants to be in, but unfortunately the circumstances are out of their control and SCDC will continue to review the situation over the coming months.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) funding for social housing

The CPCA has now received the Ministers decision on what the Minister and DLUHC are prepared to financially support from the proposed CPCA 2021/22 affordable housing programme.

Effectively the Minister is prepared to support 1,188 housing units and the minister is approving an additional £18.704m of capital funding above the £55m already received under the previous programme for this. The net effect is that CPCA should receive up to £73.704m of the originally intended £100m to support the delivery of additional affordable housing in the period up to 31st March 2022.

This means that £26 million of the promised funding for social housing in the area covered by the Combined Authority will not now be provided. It follows directly from the Government report on the use of this funding under the previous Mayor and CPCA administration and the decision not to award the full amount. A significant proportion of this lost funding should have been transferred to the South Cambs area for social housing projects.

***Best wishes for the New Year
Claire & John***