**District Councillor report to Parish Council May 2024**

**Licensing enforcement for taxis**

The Council has issued the following statement on enforcement work they have been doing with the Police:

*Taxi drivers were targeted in a partnership crackdown on vehicle safety, parking on double yellow lines and complying with licence conditions. Licensing officers from South Cambridgeshire District Council and Police officers from Cambridgeshire Constabulary carried out the joint operation to ensure taxi drivers and their vehicles were complying with relevant legislation and licence conditions.*

*A total of 19 vehicles were stopped in and around Cambridge to check taxi driver badges were displayed correctly, vehicles had door signage and that they were carrying a first-aid kit and fire extinguisher. Also, under the spotlight as part of the checks, was double yellow line parking on roads around Addenbrookes Hospital amid increasing complaints from residents living nearby.*

*Patrols found issues with three vehicles parked on double yellow lines - including one taxi parked on double red lines at Addenbrookes next to a “no parking at any time” sign. Problems were found with identity badges not on display or missing, and door signage not displayed.*

*More serious issues were found with four vehicles which had tyre tread below the legal limit. The vehicle licences were immediately suspended until the tyres were replaced.*

*One driver was made to remove a large heavy torch secured to the side of his seat, which could be deemed as an offensive weapon. If found attached to the seat on any further checks he was warned that he would be arrested.*

*Another vehicle was found with aftermarket window tints, which are not allowed under the current South Cambridgeshire Hackney Carriage and Private Hire policy. The vehicle will be reinspected at the Council offices and if not removed the vehicle will be suspended.*

*Of 19 taxis stopped, only three drivers and their vehicles were found to have no issue. The other 16 were sent either an advisory letter or issued with penalty points against their Council-issued licence.*

From a local perspective, it is really worrying that only 3 of the 19 taxis stopped by police and enforcement officers were found to be compliant. This will raise serious questions for the Licensing Team and I hope that further checks will be done to make sure compliance is restored. It is really important that our taxi drivers are adhering to the policy set out by SCDC and all of the policies have been considered and voted upon via the Licensing Committee. Taxis / licensed vehicles are often carrying people that are vulnerable, this could be children, the elderly, people that are intoxicated etc so it is hugely important that the enforcement teams take this seriously and in my view, do more checks sooner rather than later.

**Disposal and recycling of vapes**

The recycling of vapes has now been introduced at all the recycling centres across Cambridgeshire including Milton and Thriplow. The vape recycling bins provide a safe and environmentally friendly method of disposing single use and reusable vapes which contain lithium-ion batteries. As many as 3 million vapes are thrown away each year in the UK and research performed by Material Focus has shown that as many as 600 fires (per year) have been caused at waste centres and in refuse collection vehicles by electrical items (including vapes) being disposed of in the incorrect bin.

**Young people’s wellbeing support**

Young people that are experiencing mild to moderate anxiety or depression have been invited to join a free nature-based activity programme to help support wellbeing by getting out and about in nature. The scheme is called Wild Minds and will be running at Milton Country Park with the first course being on the 9th June 3-4:30pm. The programme is aimed at young people aged between 12 and 17 and if you are aware of any residents that might want to attend, they can register through the SCDC website. If residents need any support with this please do contact me.

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on* *graham.cone@councillor.online* *or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable)* ***Councillor Graham Cone***