

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward**

### **Report to Harston Parish Council October 2020**

#### **Covid 19**

As we're sure the parish is aware, new measures have just been introduced concerning homeworking and socialising. As a result, South Cambs offices are closing to the public once again and there will be a reversion to services operating fully online. For the most part this has worked well over the past six months, but please let us know if you experience any difficulties contacting council services.

Posters and other reminders have also gone out to Parish Councils and community organisations concerning the need to dispose of facemasks and other items of PPE in the black bin, not the blue bin. Please help spread the message if you can.

The council hugely values the contribution of local volunteer groups in its response to the epidemic. As we enter a new phase of the virus, officers are contacting each group once again to assess capability for action in future, to understand what has worked well and not so well in the past and to listen to concerns and queries. The intention is to reinstate a similar arrangement to the patch managers (with some changes learning from recent experience). Funding is also available from the district to help local groups where necessary, such as the purchase of PPE and other types of supplies for carrying out volunteer work in the community. If people need supermarket deliveries for good reasons the district council can also facilitate getting Tesco and Iceland delivery slots – the priority is now to key workers.

It is expected that large numbers of people who have been on furlough may lose their jobs before December – as ever, if people are in financial trouble they should contact the council as soon as possible so that they can get support to put a plan into place to manage their outgoings.

The council still have some of the metal signs for village play areas, giving advice on hand hygiene, social distancing, etc, available if they are needed.

#### **Business Support**

The District Council is continuing to provide a high level of support to local businesses through the professional personnel of its Business Support Unit (BSU) and its online communications. The latest newsletter can be found here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/coronavirus-information-for-businesses/latest-business-newsletters/>

and includes items on Brexit, coronavirus finance, business support and employment, innovation and events for businesses.

If you know of any local businesses whom you think we might not have reached, please do tell them about the BSU and suggest they make contact using this email: [openforbusiness@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:openforbusiness@scambs.gov.uk)

#### **Local Plan: Call for Sites**

The number and location of the sites received by the Greater Cambridge Planning department in the 'Call for Sites' process have been published. The Councils concerned are obliged to publish this information. The number of sites – well over 600 – and the number of houses (220,000) proposed across these sites way exceeds the sites that will come through the detailed assessment process and the number of houses needed during the course of the next Local Plan. As a general guide it is worth

noting that at the last ‘call for sites’ in 2011, ca. 400 sites were put forward but only 34 (less than 10%) went forward for development.

None of the 600 plus sites has any planning status – the sites on the list have all been proposed by landowners, not by the council. The next formal public consultation, on the preferred options for the Local Plan will be held in the second half of next year, but in the meantime, the planning service will be working on evidence that will inform the Plan, and engaging parish councils and community groups to discuss findings and get their steer on the development of those preferred options.

The next immediate step is a report on some initial findings of key the evidence, including scenarios for the jobs and homes we should plan for, and for strategic spatial options. This should be published later in October. There should be some engagement with the Parish Council after that has been published so do keep an eye out.

### **Tanner & Hall Site**

We were hugely disappointed that the Planning Committee decided to reject the outline planning application for this site. As highlighted by Niall and Ian to the committee, there is a desperate need for affordable housing in Harston, and it was extremely disappointing to see the opportunity for a significant contribution to that need passed up by the committee. We understand that the applicant is considering an appeal and it appears they may have good grounds to do so.

Ian has raised concerns about how the discussion was conducted with the cabinet South Cambs – there were clearly times when officers could and should have intervened to clarify the status of brownfield sites in the greenbelt when the conversation got side-tracked into a discussion on exception sites and viability and matters that should rightly have been reserved in an outline application.

### **EWR and Cambridge Approaches**

Ian will be joining a meeting with Anthony Browne and Cambridge Approaches next week. If there are any particular points the parish council would like him to raise, do let him know before 8<sup>th</sup> October.

### **District Councillor resignation**

As you may have seen, our ward colleague Phil Allen has resigned from the district council. Due to the pandemic, a by-election will most likely not be held until May 2021 (alongside County Council, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections). We will obviously be stepping up to cover Phil’s duties in the meantime, and hope you won’t see any difference, but do let us know if you have any concerns.

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