

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Harston Parish Council June 2021

Covid Update

In May rates of Covid-19 slightly increased in Cambridgeshire, but at 15 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population for the week ending 15 May, we are still below the England average of 21 and the regional average of 17.5. Hospital admissions remain low and there have been no deaths since the end of April.

With more indoor mixing allowed, larger outdoor gatherings, hugging between family and friends and foreign travel, there is a real risk that rates might start to climb.

There is a push for rapid testing to become a normal part of people's everyday life for the time being. There are several ways people can get a rapid test: they can be collected to complete at home or ordered to be delivered to home; people can also take a test at one of their local rapid testing sites; many employers are offering testing in the workplace and of course secondary school pupils access tests from their school. People can also now access rapid testing at a number of venues across Cambridgeshire. There are three new mobile testing vans which will provide people with the chance to take a rapid test or collect a testing kit for home use at convenient locations. The nearest stops for Harston are Scotsdales (Great Shelford) and Sidney Street (Cambridge).

East West Rail (EWR)

The District Council response on the East West Rail consultation was approved (subject to the inclusion of some further technical comments) at the cabinet meeting towards the end of May (see item 8 on the agenda here:

<https://scambsmoderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=293&MIId=9188&Ver=4>)

The response expressed no preference on route alignment, broadly because EWR have not provided enough information in order to make such an assessment (particularly with respect to environmental and landscape impacts)!

We continue to make the case that the preferred flyover south of Harston and accompanying road closure to Newton is unacceptable and we urge all residents and the Parish Council to do the same.

The consultation closes on the 9th June.

Hybrid Meetings

As the Parish Council will no doubt be aware, virtual meetings for formal council business have come to an end. South Cambs Hall cannot accommodate many councillors and officers with the current restrictions (leading to the expensive use of the Conservation Hall at IWM Duxford for the Council AGM). For some committee meetings, like cabinet and planning, South Cambs have introduced hybrid meetings, with formal decision makers (such as members of the planning committee) required to be in the room, while others (such as those making representations) can contribute remotely.

Free outdoor activities to support young people's wellbeing

Wild Minds is our free programme of wellbeing activities to support 14-17 year olds with things like anxiety and low mood, or to build self-esteem and confidence. The programme was set up over the last two years in response to the current context around the mental health of young people within the UK; NHS mental health services have experienced greatly increased referrals over the last 10 years, increased wait times for specialist support, and increasing thresholds to gain access. It offers:

- Free outdoor activities at Milton Country Park (all equipment will be provided too)
- Group based activities including bush craft, survival skills, paddle boarding, yoga and mindfulness – no experience is necessary for any activities
- An hour and a half sessions, each weekend, for eight weeks
- Support from both skilled instructors and youth workers

The course has been developed by South Cambridgeshire District Council together with Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust and is supported by a Clinical Psychologist.

The next eight-week course, beginning on Sunday is full but there are places available for both the mid-July and October. Teenagers can register for free here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/wildminds>

Zero Carbon Communities Grant

Up to £100,000 of funding is available for local groups to apply for funding to spend on ambitious projects that reduce carbon emission and promote behaviour change towards low carbon lifestyles. Non-profit groups or organisations that are based in the District, and parish councils, can apply. Other groups, such as social enterprises and community interest companies can apply as part of a partnership led by a parish council or not-for-profit group. More information on the grants and how to apply can be found on the website here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/nature-and-climate-change/zero-carbon-communities/zero-carbon-communities-grant/>

New District Councillor

We're delighted to welcome Fiona Whelan to the team of councillors representing Harston following the by-election on 6th May – it's great to be back up to a full complement of councillors and Fiona's experience in local government is a really fantastic addition to the team!

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