

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to Harston Parish Council October 2021

Covid Update

Rates of Covid-19 continue to be driven by cases in schools – in Cambridgeshire nearly 1/3 of cases were in the 10-14 age group in the week ending 22nd September. (Another 11% were in 15-19 age group). However, there is also a rise in 40+ age bracket that is believed to be from children taking the virus home to their parents / carers. Vaccinations are now of course being offered in secondary schools to 12-15 year olds which should help reduce the risk of spread of the virus within schools.

The Government has decided to end the shielding scheme introduced at the beginning of the pandemic to support those most at risk of serious illness from the virus. This is obviously concerning for those who still feel vulnerable, and a letter is going out to reassure them that support will still be available and provide more details.

The Government has, however, decided to extend to the end of March the financial payments available to help people self-isolate – those who will lose income as a result and would struggle to pay bills or buy essentials.

Council services to support people to live independently

As the world increasingly gets more ‘back to normal’, the council is keen to let residents and local community groups know about a few Council services that are in place to support people to live independently at home, to keep connected and to know that someone will regularly be in touch with them or on the end of the phone if they need some practical help.

The Visiting Support Service is free for people over the age of 65, with a short-term focus to support people in their home – perhaps someone recovering from an operation, or who will be on their own for a short time-frame, or who is having an unexpected crisis. The Community Warden Service is longer-term, and a nominal fee is payable; these clients can be of any age, and the wardens will ring up or visit on a regular basis, and can help with tasks such as form-filling, picking up some essentials from the shop, or just being a friendly face. The Community Lifeline Service (under £4.50/week) provides a worn pendant that individuals of any age can press in an emergency, such as if they have a fall at home on their own. You can find out more about all of these services on the website:

www.scams.gov.uk/visitingsupportservice.

www.scams.gov.uk/mobilewardenscheme

www.scams.gov.uk/lifelines

There are some leaflets and posters to raise awareness of these services. If you would find it useful to have a batch of leaflets to share with residents who may find the information useful, or a few posters to display in the village just let us know.

Universal Credit: Support available

Following a question from Ian at last month’s full council meeting, the Council has updated its website to provide the latest information about support that could be available to residents who may be facing difficulties as a result of the changes to Universal Credit payments this month. The Parish Council may have received this information already. Advice on the website includes details on Discretionary Housing Payments, the Council Tax Hardship Fund, support from our Welfare and Money Maximisation Officer and further signposting.

Council services surveys

The council has introduced a number of surveys to capture feedback from residents about their interactions with different departments. The responses will be used to shape the way these services are delivered in the future. Currently, residents are being encouraged to take a couple of minutes to tell the council about their experiences with:

- Benefits service: <https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/BENEFITSSURVEY/launch>
- Council Tax service: <https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/SURVEYCOUNCILTAX/launch>
- Business Rates team: <https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/BUSINESSRATESSURVEY/launch>

Civil Parking Enforcement in South Cambs

Proposals to draw-up plans to improve the way illegal parking is tackled have moved a step closer.

Introducing civil parking enforcement in South Cambridgeshire would see responsibilities for tackling illegal parking shift from Cambridgeshire Police to the County Council. This would mean drivers parking illegally and inconsiderately, such as on double yellow lines or too close to a junction or a school, could be fined by Civil Enforcement Officers. This arrangement is common in most other parts of the country and will be considered for South Cambridgeshire by the District Council's Cabinet as the County Council's plans progress.

A decision made at Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways and Transport Committee will see the County Council prepare an application to the Secretary of State for a Special Enforcement Area, via the Department for Transport, to introduce civil parking enforcement in South Cambridgeshire, as well as the districts of Huntingdonshire and Fenland.

In South Cambridgeshire, the work to draw-up these plans will be funded by the Greater Cambridge Partnership and a formal update on this funding arrangement will follow later this year. A consultation process would be part of the developing plans, allowing residents and businesses to have their say. All civil parking enforcement schemes need to generate enough income to pay for themselves, which will inform how the scheme is developed for South Cambridgeshire.

Electric Bin Lorries

South Cambs is moving forward with its commitment to be Zero Carbon with the purchase of 2 more electric bin lorries. Though these vehicles are expensive the savings that are made on fuel together with the environmental benefits means that they pay for themselves in a relatively short time.

Ian Sollom cllr.sollom@scambs.gov.uk

Fiona Whelan cllr.whelan@scambs.gov.uk

Tony Mason cllr.mason@scambs.gov.uk