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## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT**

### **CLARE DELDERFIELD AND BRIAN MILNES**

**JUNE 2019**

#### **YOU CAN FOLLOW YOUR COUNCILLORS ON FACEBOOK: [BRIANANDCLARE4SAWSTON](#)**

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact Clare Delderfield [cllr.delderfield@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.delderfield@scambs.gov.uk) or Brian Milnes [cllr.milnes@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.milnes@scambs.gov.uk)

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### **ZERO CARBON GRANTS**

We are really pleased that it has been confirmed that a grant fund is to be established to help community groups across South Cambridgeshire shift towards a zero-carbon future.

The new Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme will provide funds for local groups to spend on ambitious activities that reduce carbon emissions and reliance on fossil fuels – as well as helping communities spread awareness and promote behaviour change towards low carbon lifestyles.

As a result, this summer community groups will be invited to bid for grants of between £1,000 and £15,000 each. These funds will be able to be spent on projects such as:

Energy-saving improvements to community buildings, such as insulation, secondary glazing, energy efficient lighting, battery storage for solar panels or other low carbon energy generation measures

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- Community energy projects such as solar panels, community wind turbines and battery storage
  - Electric vehicle charging points which the community could use
  - Purchase of an electric vehicle for community use
  - Community tree planting, to absorb carbon and increase biodiversity
  - Community schemes to scale up local circular economy initiatives (food, fashion, waste, travel)
  - Cycle paths and stands
  - Projects that tackle fuel poverty
  - Simple proposals such as cycle racks at bus stops or drinking fountains to encourage the use of reusable water bottles

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A total of just over £90,000 is being made available for the scheme for 2019/20. The money comes from business rates from renewable energy sites in South Cambridgeshire that are retained by the Council and earmarked for use in green initiatives.

Non-profit groups or organisations that are based in South Cambridgeshire, or parish councils based within the district, will be able to apply from a date to be confirmed this summer. Other groups, such as schools, colleges and community interest companies will also be able to apply, as long as they apply as part of a partnership with a parish council or not-for-profit group. Please do approach us if you have an idea for a project locally that might be eligible for this grant.

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## **COMMUNITY CHEST GRANT**

South Cambs has just made an award of just under £500 to 1st Sawston Boys and Girls Brigade towards materials for developing leadership and team building skills.

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## **NEW LOCAL PLAN**

South Cambs is working with Cambridge City on a new, joint, Local Plan. The 'Call for Sites' has resulted in about 700 potential new sites for development across the Greater Cambridge area. Some of those will be relatively small but others will be very large and potentially for thousands of new houses.

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## **THE METRO MAYOR'S PLANS FOR A METRO**

The Mayor's plans for a Metro running into the City from our surrounding market towns including St Neots, Haverhill and Duxford has been costed at a staggering £4 billion. The route from Cambourne to Cambridge does have funding through the Greater Cambridge Partnership (originally The City Deal) but this is only for the bit that runs over ground. The Mayor's plans for a network of tunnels under the City has no committed funding as yet and we are not holding our breaths until some is secured.

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## **HELP TO CLAIM FOR UNIVERSAL CREDIT**

The "Help to Claim" Universal Support Service is operated by Citizens Advice. This new service offers free, impartial and confidential advice on the Universal Credit application process from expert advisors. You can access the service by phone, face to face or on line from your local Citizens advice - which for Sawston are available on Friday mornings from the John Huntingdon Charity on Tannery Road.

A recent survey has shown that:

- 65 per cent of council chiefs think universal credit is increasing homelessness in their areas, with only 2 per cent saying it has led to a decrease
- 67 per cent of councils think they do not have sufficient funding to fulfil their statutory duty to prevent homelessness
- 41 per cent of councils think they are unlikely to eradicate rough sleeping by 2027.

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## AGRITECH APPEAL

Following last year's unanimous refusal by SCDC Planning Committee of the Agritech Park at Hinxton, the developers appealed the decision. There had already been concerns raised by other local parish councils about the secretary of state intervening in the appeal. Then on 17<sup>th</sup> May, James Palmer, the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough wrote to The Planning Inspectorate to support the application. This is unprecedented, an elected senior local politician intervening in the lawful planning process. We will update on any further news on the appeal which starts its hearing on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June.

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## NEW BUS USERS GROUP FOR CAMBRIDGE AND SOUTH CAMBS

If you would like to have a voice in the debate about public transport you could join this new users' group. They are determined to force the Mayor and the bus operators to improve services from and to our villages.

Web site: <http://bit.ly/2K81sjm>

Email: [secretary.cabu@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.cabu@gmail.com) Cambridge Area Bus Users, an affiliate of Bus Users UK: seeks to represent, and campaign on behalf of bus passengers in and around Cambridge and is independent of any political party.

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## INVESTMENTS

Government grants to local authorities to pay for services such as bin collections and planning services are a thing of the past. The only option that councils of all tiers now have is either to cut services or to find ways to generate income either through investments or through their own operations and activities. However, there are limitations on which of their own operations and activities they can earn money from. For example, we are not allowed to make a profit from handling planning applications. South Cambs has decided that it does not want to decrease the services it offers its residents and in fact aims to increase and improve them. In order to achieve this, South Cambs has committed to an investment portfolio of up to £100 million over the next 5 years. Though the council does hold some modest reserves it is able to borrow relatively unlimited sums from the Government's Public Loans Work Board. The fixed, long term interest rates mean that councils of all tiers (including parish councils) can borrow money to purchase assets that will deliver them an income. South Cambs has already installed photovoltaic panels on the roof of its waste collection depot in Waterbeach. In the past few weeks we have also purchased a premium office block on the prestigious Cambridge Science Park at a cost of £13 million. This will deliver a return of over 5% which we shall use to support services to our residents.

We are especially interested in investments that, as well as giving a financial return, also provide what is referred to as Environmental Capital or Social Capital. Environmental Capital means that the project does something to improve the environment such as generating sustainable electricity or saving water. Social Capital means that it benefits our residents. So investing in a doctors' surgery would benefit the patients of that surgery.

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## **SOUTH CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL IS A GOOD PLACE TO WORK**

South Cambs is the only council in the area where women are paid, on average, more than men. So why is South Cambs bucking the gender pay gap when the national picture is terrible? The reality is that when we look around South Cambs' offices we see a real mix of men and women at all levels working together for our communities. We have been successful in recruiting and retaining talented women by being a flexible and modern employer offering flexi time, generous maternity leave and a lot of helping with work life balance including ensuring they have good mentoring and opportunities. Diversity is good across the Council too, as we have a fair mix of age, ethnicity and gender amongst our elected members. This certainly wasn't the case before the elections last year.

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## **"MY SOUTH CAMBS" CUSTOMER PORTAL - REMINDER**

A reminder that South Cambs Council's developing customer portal that went live on 21st January. Users will be able to sign in using e-mail, Facebook, Microsoft and Google. The system allows customers to submit questions, contact the Council about planning, benefits, waste collections etc as well as to report problems. The new portal can be accessed from the South Cambs Council homepage or on <https://mysouthcambs.scambs.gov.uk>.

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## **PROCUREMENT**

The new administration at South Cambs have been insistent that the council improves the experience of smaller companies wishing to bid for the Council's own contracts. Over the year it has been obvious that the hoops a potential supplier has to jump through are just as onerous regardless of the size of the contract they are bidding for and that some of the requirements for multi million pound insurance policies can make it impossible for any but the largest firms to stand a chance of success. A new procurement process is hopefully going to make the requirements proportional to the size of the contract which should be of particular help to small and medium size businesses. If you have good or bad experience of this please do let us know.

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**PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THESE, OR ANY OTHER MATTERS.**

**BRIAN MILNES AND CLARE DELDERFIELD**

**DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR SAWSTON**