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## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

### CLARE DELDERFIELD AND BRIAN MILNES

NOVEMBER 2021

YOU CAN FOLLOW YOUR COUNCILLORS ON FACEBOOK: [BRIANANDCLARE4SAWSTON](https://www.facebook.com/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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#### ADDITIONAL COUNCIL HOUSING FOR SAWSTON

Continuing on from November's story of new Council apartments at the Hawthorns on Babraham Road, 15 additional apartments were handed over to South Cambs District Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> March by Hills. These further well-appointed apartments are among the 58 dwellings coming forward at this site in the next few months. These all have priority to people with a Sawston connection, and are already proving popular with the families in occupation, with energy efficient heating systems, solar power and electric charging points.

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#### LIB DEM ADMINISTRATION REVIEW:

The provision of affordable and Council housing has been just one of many proud achievements of our administration. It has been 4 years since the incumbent party was swept aside as the Lib Dems took 30 out of the 45 seats available. Through by-elections, we have since gained a further seat.

IN THE FOLLOWING WE COVER SOME OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THAT PERIOD.

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#### IMPROVING COUNCIL FINANCES

When we took control, the South Cambs Finances were in a parlous state. An impending financial deficit needed to be resolved, audits remained outstanding and the Government was signalling further reduction in the amount of grant support the Council was going to receive.

In the intervening years, with sound investment policies, diligent accounting and restructuring our finance team, this Administration has turned around the Council's finances. We have eliminated the deficit, finally got the oldest outstanding audit completed and have built a financial business plan to take us forward on a very sound footing. Each year, our investments are returning some £5m and we are making £200k savings on our running costs.

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## **GREATER CAMBRIDGE LOCAL PLAN – FIRST PROPOSALS**

As the local planning authority, it is the District Council's job to prepare an updated Local Plan. This is a regular process and we have to look at the period beyond this one (up to 2041). The current Local Plan did not get sanctioned by the Planning Inspector until 2018 (taking 4 years to accept it)! As you may have seen recently in Uttlesford, it is possible for the Government to directly intervene if a Local Authority does not deliver a plan with the requisite number of new houses and economic growth.

We previously wrote at length about our Local Plan proposals. Just to recap – for the period 2011 – 2041 the two Councils (City and District combined) are only planning an additional 11,000 homes on top of what was already in the previous Plan, some of which is already built!

Now that the initial consultation has been completed, the new Local Plan will go through further validation and a formal consultation before the final proposal is agreed and submitted for examination. Locally, there are no new developments planned in Sawston, given that we are currently in the process of adding 450 new houses already!

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## **GREEN TO OUR CORE**

We have enacted our Green to the Core policy in many ways. South Cambs HQ in Cambourne is currently going through an extensive ground-source and solar panel programme. Recent fuel price rises have estimated that the savings made will mean a 10 year reduction in the payback period.

We have now ordered a further two Electric Refuse Collection vehicles, putting us in the vanguard of Local Authorities to be converting their fleets to electric. To provide sufficient (renewable) electricity, we are also proposing a Solar Panel Array adjacent to the Waterbeach waste depot.

One further example of our green credentials is our LED street lamp project, which will save some 60% of the energy costs. Elsewhere, we have spent £1½m on making existing council housing more energy efficient, reducing running costs for tenants.

Further grants of over £300k in Zero Carbon grants were made by the Council, enabling communities to afford to start their own Carbon reduction programmes. In addition, we have funded over 600 trees to be planted.

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### **COUNCIL SERVICES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY**

You may be aware that as well as priming the funding for the Sawston Timebank, we have also provided for the Sawston Mobile and Community Warden Scheme (sometimes called Community Care Schemes), These support older people to live independently in their homes and in the community they know, and which knows them.

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### **DEALING WITH THE COVID PANDEMIC**

The District Council had a lead role in dealing with the social upheaval and economic turmoil caused by the COVID pandemic. This continues, as infection rates have again, started to rise following the relaxation of regulations. Hopefully, with milder impact and lower hospital admission rates, this increase won't prove as difficult as previous ones.

During the pandemic, the Council has been responsible for distributing some £44 million of Government COVID support grants (and is one of the fastest in the country to do so). Additionally, we have made 70 grants to local COVID groups, who have been excellent in setting up support schemes to look after local vulnerable and at-risk groups.

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### **REFUGEES FROM CONFLICTS**

At the time of writing, the wholly unjustified Russian invasion of Ukraine is desperately filling our news feeds 24 hours a day. Yet another humanitarian crisis, on top of Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. As with those, where 11 families were provided with housing, our Administration will provide what assistance it can, to provide support to families fleeing to survive the war in Ukraine.

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**BRIAN MILNES AND CLARE DELDERFIELD, DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR SAWSTON**