
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT

LIBBY EARLE AND BRIAN MILNES

MAY 2022

YOU CAN FOLLOW YOUR COUNCILLORS ON FACEBOOK: [BRIANANDLIBBY4SAWSTON](#)

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 Libby Earle cllr.earle@scambs.gov.uk or Brian Milnes cllr.milnes@scambs.gov.uk

DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTION – SAWSTON RESULTS

Libby and I were delighted to be elected to South Cambs District Council, with a 66% vote share. If you voted for us, thank you. If you didn't, or didn't vote at all, we will still do our best to represent you and in all our interests.

As the new District Council administration, we will continue to keep making South Cambs one of the best places to live, work and conduct business.

PROPERTY INVESTMENT PRODUCES EARLY PAYBACK

When we took over the running of Council four years ago, the Lib Dem Group inherited a financial deficit leading to a requirement to generate income. This was to supplement the shrinking central Government's grant payments, which almost entirely disappeared.

This led us to develop a property investment plan, and we purchased several commercial buildings, largely on the science and technology parks. These were, in large part, responsible for the generation of £5m per year additional income.

One of those properties has very recently been sold on, after a very attractive, unsought bid was received, for around double the purchase price just 15 months later. This has added over £10m to the Council's coffers, and provides us with a very strong financial foundation, for the next few years.

ENERGY COUNCIL TAX REBATE SCHEME

The government's council tax rebate scheme went live on 1st April. It is aimed at homes in council tax bands A-D. The amount of £150 will not show up on your Council Tax bill.

The first energy rebate payments are now being issued. On Friday 29 April nearly 22,000 payments were made by BACS, totalling just over £3 million.

These first payments are being made to those who paid their April Council Tax instalment via Direct Debit, and where the bank details held match the names of those liable to pay the Council Tax charge. In addition to the main scheme, payments are also being made from the local scheme, which extended eligibility into the higher council tax bands for those in receipt of Local Council Tax Support, Disabled Band Relief or where certain exemptions apply. The local scheme also provides an additional £25 to those in bands A-D in receipt of Local Council Tax Support. Full details of the schemes can be found here: [£150 Energy Rebate - South Cambs District Council \(scambs.gov.uk\)](#). Payments for those residents that paid their council tax by Direct Debit on 23rd April will be made in the next few days.

For those that do not pay their Council Tax by Direct Debit, or where the bank account name details that we hold do not match the names of those liable to pay Council Tax, a short form will be published on the website soon for residents to provide their bank details for payment. The Government requires that we undertake additional verification checks prior to payment, and so these will take a little longer to process. We are currently looking at how best to support those that may be digitally excluded, and if there are any concerns these should be directed to energyrebate@scambs.gov.uk. We will be offering the option to have the rebate paid directly to the Council Tax account should residents prefer, and a separate form will be available on the website soon for residents to complete should they wish.

FITNESS AND WELLBEING GRANTS

South Cambridgeshire District Council is urging instructors to apply for up to £300 to lead fitness and wellbeing activities in their communities.

Anyone who leads an existing group or who wants to set up a new initiative in the District, such as leading a walking group in their local park or running a weekly yoga class in a village hall, could be eligible for the small grant. Providers running multiple groups can also apply to fund multiple programmes.

Activities could range from walking football/rugby/netball, to chair-based exercise classes, diabetes walking groups, yoga for the over 60s, baby yoga classes or more.

The grant, which is funded by Cambridgeshire County Council, is to help deliver physical activity programmes provided by the District Council in partnership with Living Sport. It is designed to cover costs such as venue hire for up to six weeks, with new participants being entitled to four free sessions. Once the free sessions are complete, participants would be expected to begin paying a small fee to continue participation, meaning that the initiative should become a sustainable source of income for the instructor.

ZERO CARBON AWARD - APPLICATION DEADLINE EXTENDED

South Cambridgeshire District Council has been recognised for its work to tackle climate change, with a Silver accolade at the 2022 Public Sector Transformation Awards. The Council's Green to our Core programme is supported by its Zero Carbon Strategy and Doubling Nature Strategy.

Highlights of the Council's approach include Greening South Cambridgeshire Hall with a £1.8M energy efficiency retrofit to include a ground source heat pump, solar carport, upgraded lighting and other elements.

We were one of the first Councils to adopt a fully electric refuse collection vehicle with more on the way, and we are developing a solar farm to power the lorries.

We've upgraded 1,800 street lights with low energy bulbs and awarded £314,415 to 51 different community groups to support carbon reduction projects including setting up E-Bike schemes, installing infra-red heating panels in community buildings, holding sustainable food festivals, tree planting, energy efficient lighting and waste reduction.

We have extended the deadline of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme and will now be receiving applications until 5pm on 17th June. We are welcoming applications for two categories: Carbon Emission Reduction or Locking up Carbon, and Engaging the Community on Climate Change. Projects could include energy efficiency improvements for community buildings, a large-scale tree planting project, funding for an Eco Festival or campaign, or encouraging active, sustainable travel. More information, and guidance on how to apply, is available on our website here. If you have any questions, please contact zcc@scambs.gov.uk. Please share this information with groups who might be interested.

BRIAN MILNES AND LIBBY EARLE, DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR SAWSTON