

Melbourn Parish Council May 2021 – District and County Councillors’ Report

Elections

Sally Ann Hart is our new District Councillor following the Melbourn Ward by-election. South Cambridge District Council, SCDC, make-up is now 31 Liberal Democrat, 11 Conservative, 2 Labour & 1 Independent Councillor.

SCDC Committee membership for Jose and Sally Ann are as follows:

Jose will be part of the Licensing Committee and continue to chair the Grants Advisory Committee.

Sally Ann will be part of Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Employment and Staffing Committee and also sit on the Community Safety Partnership group.

Susan was re-elected as County Councillor. County Council elections resulted in Conservatives holding 28 seats, the Liberal Democrats 20, Labour nine, and the Independents four. This means that no one political group has a majority on the Council.

The Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent groups have announced a new Joint Administration for the Council and published an agreement about its priorities and how it will operate. The County Council Joint Administration Agreement prioritizes Green investment, Covid recovery, tackling inequalities, amalgamation of health and social care; it pledges transparency and publication of the controversial ‘Farmgate’ report as fully and as quickly as possible. The Agreement can be read here:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cambridgelibdems/pages/5179/attachments/original/1620984611/County_agreement_2021_FINAL.pdf?1620984611

Susan is serving as Chair of the Cambs and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board, and Vice Chair of the County Council’s Adults and Health Committee; she’s also on the Education Transport Appeals and Corporate Parenting (adoption and fostering) committees.

Elections were also held for the Police & Crime Commissioner and for the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. The new Police & Crime Commissioner is Darryl Preston (Conservative), and the new Mayor (replacing James Palmer) is Dr Nik Johnson (Labour). The new Mayor has already cancelled the £4bn CAM Metro and we welcome his interest in developing local bus services.

Sometimes we are asked “Why bother to vote?”. An Independent won the St Neots East and Gransden County division by just nine votes. In the Hardwick County division the Liberal Democrats beat the Conservatives by just five votes. Ely North also passed from the Conservatives to the Liberal Democrats by just 153 votes. Those three results, decided by just 167 votes from the 232,000 cast across the county, were enough to change control of the County Council.

Covid-safe Annual Meetings:

CCC and SCDC's Municipal years got off to a 'flying start' on 18th and 20th May respectively with the first meetings of the Council being held at Duxford Imperial War Museum. Because Government decided not to extend the recent flexibility to allow councils to meet online, a local venue capable of accommodating such a large meeting safely had to be found. Despite the amazing backdrop and extent to which officers went to ensure the space was Covid-safe, the public cost of hiring a 'safe space' might bring people down to earth with a bump.

The next round of County Council meetings will not take place until after the June 21st lifting of restrictions.

District Council:

Jose and Sally Ann would like to highlight the following opportunities:

'Wild Minds': free outdoor activities to support young people's wellbeing

Wild Minds is our free programme of wellbeing activities to support 14- to 17-year-olds who are suffering mental-health issues such as anxiety and low mood, and/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 with increased waiting times for specialist support and increasing thresholds to gain access. It offers:

- Free outdoor activities at Milton Country Park (all equipment will be provided free too)
- Group based activities including bush craft, survival skills, paddle boarding, yoga and mindfulness – no experience is necessary for any activities
- Sessions are an hour and a half long, and held 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 begins on Sunday 6 June and you may wish to share the opportunity within your community – [teenagers can register \(free\) now](#).

Celebrate your volunteers

[Volunteers' Week](#) takes place from 1st to 7th June every year and is a chance to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to our communities. During an exceptional year, people have taken the time to volunteer and made a huge difference. Those who have been unable to volunteer during the pandemic may also have been supporting organisations from a distance. Why not celebrate your volunteers by using one of the downloadable resources?

Volunteering and Covid

Government guidance sets out how volunteering can be done safely during the pandemic and has been updated this week to reflect recent changes. This includes [guidance for volunteers](#) and for [organisations/groups](#) which involve volunteers in their work.

Business Grants

The Business Support team at South Cambs have made an enormous effort to get over £11 million in grants out to 4834 businesses since November last year. These government grants can make the difference between life or death for a business and survival or despair for the owners of those businesses. If your business is in trouble and you have not been able to access a grant please contact the council or Sally Ann or Jose.

‘Winter Support Grant’: family fund

Residents can now access schemes which can be used for those in need of urgent food or fuel. The vouchers are worth up to £49 (per scheme) for a family, or £29 (per scheme) for an individual. The first scheme allows a voucher for food or fuel, and the second scheme is for a fuel voucher only. The schemes are funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the national Winter Support Grant. The vouchers can help residents who find themselves in a desperate situation to address their immediate need. We then work with the resident and other agencies to provide longer term advice and support. If you come across a resident in need of urgent food or fuel, please consider referring them into this scheme by emailing duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk (we will then send you a simple form to complete).

County Council

Melbourn Greenway

Susan has met with the Greenway project manager and requested a meeting, together with the Local Highways Improvement fund officer, as soon as the new Greenway project team is in place next month, to understand how the parish council’s exploration of the LHI scheme might compliment opportunities brought forward by the Greenway. Similar conversations are taking place in other villages benefiting from a new Greenways scheme.

Little Lane access restrictions

We have met up with local residents of Little Lane who’ve been in touch about continuing problems of property damage due to inappropriate vehicles entering the lane. When we looked at this problem last year, our Highways Officer was seconded to Covid response. We are now requesting a site visit to ask for sensible and effective redeployment of restricted access signage that currently makes no impact, and consideration of any other helpful measures.

Beechwood Avenue and associated roads – post-resurfacing jobs

Following the resurfacing works in March and April, line painting has not been completed, in spite of junctions at Elm Way and the Beechwood cul-de-sac having been marked up. We are meeting the Highways officer on site this week to ensure unfinished work is tended to.

Covid Latest

The supply of AZ, Modern and Pfizer vaccines over May and June are limited but should increase significantly mid-June to July just in time for many of us to be completely ready for the summer holidays. Over 90% of over the over-75s have received their jabs and over 51% of the over 50s.

Please remember that Rapid Covid tests are available to collect free from many local pharmacies including Well Pharmacy in Melbourn.

We have seen some increase in transmission in South Cambs and Cambridge City and there is still a possibility of further rise as lockdown lessens. South Cambs is currently at the national average rate of about 25 cases per 100,000 people.