

Melbourn Parish Council April 2022 District and County Councillors' Report

Fitness and Wellbeing Grants

A call to 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, such as leading a local walking group or running a weekly yoga class in local premises, 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 from Cambs County Council Public Health 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. <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/lets-get-south-cambridgeshire-active-grant/>

Welcoming people from Ukraine

Thank you to local residents who've now taken steps to welcome people from Ukraine into their homes. Information on the Ukraine Family Scheme can be found on the homepage at cambridgeshire.gov.uk, and the SCDC website contains more practical information on ways that you can provide support in the community: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/support-for-ukraine/>

Oil Club comes to a close

The Oil Club has been running for many years but sadly comes to a close now as our supplier, Agricole, has found it necessary to cease its brokerage service: 'Over recent years there has been a significant consolidation of oil suppliers in the UK and in our area. Also, these bigger entities are increasingly unwilling to trade via 'third parties'. Poor customer feedback regarding some suppliers further limits our choice. Realistically, and especially during the current war in Ukraine, there is no longer enough competition for us to leverage to get you a good price from a range of reliable suppliers. Consequently, I regret to inform you that with immediate effect, after trading in your area since 1996, we are withdrawing our service and retiring from the domestic heating oil market.'

17 Bus

The operator is looking to extend the service to Biggleswade, as a means of increasing ridership – this seems a popular idea amongst bus users in the bulk of the service area which is from Bassingbourn to the Mordens.. Public transport passenger ridership is in recovery mode since the pandemic with about 65-70% of pre-pandemic levels. The 17 now runs commercially; if the operator wanted to return to a subsidized service, that would automatically require the route to be assessed by the Mayor's office, where bus subsidies are now managed. We've asked for printed timetables for the Hub, shops and pubs.

Train services from mid-May

Half-hourly services from Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton will increase mid-May, building on work and school commuting patterns. A gradual increase in ridership (now at 65-70% of pre-pandemic levels) makes this timetable scheduling build-up possible. Parking charges are minimal or free at Meldreth and Shepreth, thanks again to volunteer community gardening at each station.

South Cambs Turtles swimming near you

Home-start and the amazing work it does supporting young families will be the goal for the South Cambs Turtles relay swim team on May 22nd. Please consider sponsoring the team, which consists of local parish, district and county councillors and friends, on its laps at Royston Leisure Centre – 100% of donations will go to Home-Start. You check out the Turtles, learn more about Home-Start, and make a donation here: <https://visufund.com/south-cambs-turtles>

Practical Solutions Group

The Melbourn PSG meets once per term, working directly with our village college and aiming to enhance opportunities for young people to become involved in and help to lead community initiatives and to create ways for younger and older people to get to know one another. We know that all schools are in the process of getting back on their feet and still coping with staff absences and a great deal of backlog to catch up on.

The recent PSG focused on taking forward a plan for improving the A10 pedestrian underpass environment, working with Science Park SDC contractors who earlier this month cleared vegetation around the underpass, and the Community Rail Partnership and County Council Youth Services, who are working with Melbourn Village College students to come up with new artwork ideas to brighten up the underpass itself. A community consultation will be launched shortly.

County Biodiversity Initiative

A scheme which will help increase the county's biodiversity and support the development of new homes, businesses and infrastructure has been approved.

Under the Environment Act 2021, the biodiversity of an area resulting from new developments must exceed the pre-development biodiversity value by at least 10 per cent - known as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). This should be provided onsite, but if that isn't possible it must be provided offsite, close to the development and within the local planning authority area. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Biodiversity Special Planning Document, adopted in February 2022, says that they expect to require developers to deliver 20 per cent BNG.

Under the new scheme, developers who are unable to meet BNG requirements on sites in the South Cambridgeshire area will be able to secure biodiversity units from the Lower Valley Farm BNG scheme in Fulbourn. The 358-acre farm, which is part of the council's 33,000 acre rural estate, has been identified as the ideal site for the scheme as it is located within the Cambridge Nature Network and lies adjacent to the Roman Road Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It will also act as a stepping stone to other surrounding SSSIs, supporting habitat connectivity across the landscape from Trumpington Meadows through to Wilbraham Fen.

South Cambs Audit of 2018/19 Accounts

The audit of Accounts for 2018/19 is here:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126682/Full%20SOA%20V1.0.pdf>

This is the audit opinion:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s126680/South%20Cambridgeshire%20DC%202018-19%20ARR%2029%20Mar22%20final.pdf>

Local Plan update

The emerging Local Plan, running from 2011-2041 (i.e. 30 years), makes provision for around 49,000 dwellings across South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City. 37,000 of these have already been built or are in the planning process already, having formed part of two previous Local Plans under previous administrations. The remaining 11k, running from 2022-2041, are nearly all in Cambridge City, with some allocations at new Towns (Cambourne, Northstowe and Waterbeach) and then there are about 350 homes in the rest of South Cambs - all in villages with railway access.

It's necessary to flag up misinformation stating that the current SCDC administration wish to build "49,000 **new** flats and houses". This is of course untrue.

All information is here:

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/>

Should the Local Plan not be supported, the consequence would be the removal of planning powers by Her Majesty's Government and a free-for-all for developers. The last time this happened (for several years up to 2018) over 4,000 homes were given permission which were not in compliance with our policy on protecting villages.

The current SCDC position is that the plans included in the forthcoming iteration of the Local Plan deliver sensible levels of sustainable housing - especially affordable housing - in communities which are themselves already sustainable by virtue of size, public transport links, public services and indeed local will. Should local communities want local affordable housing there is provision in the policy framework to allow this to happen on 'exception sites' where the housing must be provided by a registered social landlord and be adjacent to the village framework.