

Ruth Betson, District Councillor  
Report to Cambourne Parish Council  
4<sup>th</sup> September 2018

### **A428 single lane at Girton**

Following my awareness campaign on Facebook and in the Cambourne Crier, over the summer I collated responses from concerned South Cambs residents, mainly from Cambourne, but also from St Neots, Papworth and Hardwick. These have now been passed on to Highways England with copy to Heidi Allen MP and Mayor James Palmer. I will of course keep you abreast of any response or developments on this.

### **Community grants cut**

I mentioned in my July report that the Grants Committee has been reviewing the Community Grant scheme and that grants requested by Parish Councils would be cut by 50%. The idea behind this is that Parish Councils could use their precept for the remaining 50%. Additional information was made available to the Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> August (agenda item 6). It now appears from section 12, point B, that Cambourne Parish Council would be ineligible to request a grant at all.

I also queried section 12, points F, J and O. Although the Community Chest criteria had not been finalised at that time, I was told that my assumptions were correct - namely that individuals/ associations/ entities registered in Cambourne and using Parish Council property/land for their activities would only receive up to 50% of the money requested (if they receive any), simply because they are using PC facilities. However should an individual/association/entity be registered in a different parish and come to Cambourne to use PC property/land, they would probably receive the full amount.

### **Universal Credit**

Also before the Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> August was the rollout of Universal Credit in South Cambs. This was an opportunity to hear expert witnesses and to ask questions. Guests Dave Winterton, Partnership Advisor DWP & Ana Sivelli, Partnership Manager DWP, talked about lessons learned in other parts of the country and key officers explained how the rollout will work here. Only brand new people going onto benefits in October will go onto UC. The people with single payments, no health issues, etc. The existing claimants will stay on the current system for the time being.

## **Cambridge Congestion Charge**

It is unfortunate that the Cambridge Congestion Charge was back on the agenda at the last Council meeting. The District Council had voted on two previous occasions to oppose a Congestion Charge, but at July's Council meeting, the issue came back a third time and the new administration enthusiastically backed the imposition of such a tax.

Supporters of this tax often refer to congestion charges in London, and sometimes Stockholm, as models of what they want to achieve. But these are not relevant to where we live, because both London and Stockholm have excellent public transport systems, and right now our public transport is very substandard, with driving a necessity for most people.

When Cambridge City Council developed its detailed proposals in 2008, a key feature was that residents of Cambridge City would not pay the tax, but residents of South Cambridgeshire would have to. Any new proposal is almost certain to have the same feature.

In the countryside, driving is a necessity, whereas in the city, driving is a luxury. It is therefore wholly unfair that country dwellers should pay the tax, whilst city dwellers are exempt.

I will continue to oppose this extra tax imposition on Cambourne residents.

## **Next meetings**

1<sup>st</sup> September – catch up with Cllr Philippa Hart, Portfolio Holder for Customer Service & Business Continuity

8<sup>th</sup> September – stall at Cambourne Community Fete

18<sup>th</sup> September – Scrutiny Committee

27<sup>th</sup> September – Council & evening surgery

29<sup>th</sup> September – morning surgery

## **Finally as a point of interest: South Cambs in top three for council tax collections out of 326 Councils!**

South Cambridgeshire District Council's finance bosses have thanked residents, businesses and revenues staff after the authority secured another top table position in the Council Tax collection league.

For the last financial year, the authority is third out of 326 Councils for collecting Council Tax on time. It collected 99.3% of the expected funds in the last 12 months – an almost identical figure to the previous year.

Overall, £107 million in Council Tax was due to be collected by the Council on behalf of itself, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, Fire Authority and parish councils.

The data also shows that Business Rate collection in South Cambridgeshire achieved a high-scoring position, with the Council coming 25th in this category out of the 326 authorities. This was for collecting 99.4% of Business Rates on time – again, a very similar figure to last year.

Councillors are thanking residents and businesses for paying their bills on time and encouraging anyone having difficulties making payments to contact the Council early for support and advice before debts begin to accumulate.

Please note that due to annual leave, I am unable to attend the October Parish Council meeting, but I will send a report in beforehand. Do let me know how I can continue to support Cambourne and this Parish Council within my role as one of your District Councillors.

Best wishes,  
Ruth Betson  
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