

Ruth Betson, District Councillor
Report to Cambourne Town Council
3rd September 2019

Organisational Review

Despite SCDC having had an extremely good past record of efficiency and good management going back many years, the current administration continues to embark on its Organisational Review. This is contrary to the time-honoured maxim: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". Such organisational reviews often result in unnecessary changes, spreading uncertainty and nervousness amongst staff, often prompting the best and brightest to look for more security and better opportunities elsewhere. Adding to this insecurity and sense that ominous secrets are being hidden, the administration insisted on excluding the press and public from the debate on the subject during May's council meeting, and again when the minutes were presented at July's meeting.

Having been present, I am legally forbidden from revealing what was discussed. However, I find myself unable to identify a single piece of the information that actually justifies being kept secret; like many council minutes it is in fact all rather dull and boring. It is a complete mystery to me why this information has been deemed to be confidential or to require the press and public to be excluded. I and others have raised our concern over the number of meetings where the council is requesting the exclusion of press and public. Lack of transparency is not in the public interest.

Chief Executive

The new Chief Executive has been appointed. Ms Liz Watts will be assuming the role in late September at a salary of £129,930.

Staffing

I and colleagues have been raising concerns about staffing levels at SCDC. This is leading in my view to many of the officers still at the council to have increasingly excessive workloads. There is also a high level of long term sickness.

Planning

As reported in the press recently, there is a dearth of Planning officers, so the administration has decided to bring in consultants.

Figures show that between 26th April and 4th June 2019, the council lost almost 40% of appeals.

Zero Carbon Community Grant (otherwise known as the eco grant)

Application deadline 31st October at 5pm.

What is it? The incoming administration froze the previous Eco Grant in 2018-2019 as part of their review when they won the election. The Grant had been for £50K of which £47K remained - this has been added into their new grant so there is **£97K available this year**.

There is a Parish Council and Applicant briefing on 4th September 6-8 pm in SCDC Council Chamber.

Applications can be from any recognised group (with terms of reference and a constitution) including a parish/town council. It can be for any sum between £1,000 - £15,000 with joint funding or partnership arrangements.

The criteria is very broad. It must include community involvement plus one of the following:

- a reduction in carbon emissions
- a reduction in energy use

- a renewable energy source or heat
- promote sustainable travel
- reduce the need for resources both financial or in kind
- increase recycling
- reduce waste

Decision process:

20th Nov - the office panel will consider all applications, seek advice from a range of specialist consultants

27th Nov - report to go to Democratic Services

13th Dec - Grants Committee in conjunction with the Climate Change Committee will make recommendation during a public meeting

16th Dec - The decision sheet will be signed and published subject to call in arrangements

In case of questions, officers Siobhan Mellor and Emma Dyer are leading the team on this.

Fly-tipping education and prevention campaign

South Cambridgeshire District Council is running a campaign between now and March 2020 based on the successful S.C.R.A.P Campaign being run by other authorities. Two thirds of fly-tips come from householders, so it is important that residents understand their Duty of Care. A common scenario is that a householder employs a firm that they believe to be a reputable waste removal company, which illegally dumps the waste in a fly-tip instead.

Householders can avoid an unlimited fine by following the SCRAP code:

- **S**uspect ALL waste carriers
- **C**heck with the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 that the provider taking your waste away is licensed
- **R**efuse unexpected offers to have waste taken away
- **A**sk what will happen to your waste
- **P**aperwork should be obtained – get a full receipt

The campaign reminds people to check their waste is being taken away for disposal by a licensed carrier – either by asking to see a Waste Carriers Licence or by looking up the company on the Environment Agency website: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>

Best wishes,
Ruth Betson
cllr.betson@scams.gov.uk