

District Councillor R Betson Report

Hot off the press: at this afternoon's SCDC Council meeting, agenda item 8a was unanimously passed. It pertains to the Community Governance Review of the parishes of Longstanton and Oakington and Westwick (ie Northstowe is now a town and has boundaries)

Other items from recent briefing notes, that might be of interest:

Future Parks Accelerator

The Council has been asked to collect information on behalf of the Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) Project in relation to the management and maintenance of parks and open spaces within the district. We are aware that a number of parish councils have budgets and management responsibilities in this area and a request is to be made to them to provide information for this initiative.

Businesses invited to sign up to our local business directory

We have created a [local business directory](#) to help residents find out more about what local businesses are offering. Included in the listings will be details of Covid-secure measures that businesses have put in place, and information about current opening arrangements/online ordering/click and collect facilities. Businesses are able to add their details to the directory via the link above, and we will be promoting the directory from Wednesday onwards to help residents support local business in the run up to the festive period and beyond.

During December we will also be inviting businesses to tag us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in their own posts with information about any festive offers or seasonal specials, so that we can help to share these promotions with our followers. Please do spread the word in your wards!

Are rural residents or businesses in your area looking for faster, more reliable broadband?

The COVID-19 pandemic has made us all more reliant on internet services. It's vital that people can keep connected when being asked to stay at home and work remotely where possible. But getting fast, reliable internet access can be a challenge – particularly when several people want to go online at the same time. The good news is that there's still time to apply for funding via the government's [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme](#) to help residents with homes and businesses in our harder to reach rural areas install gigabit-capable, full fibre connections to their premises when part of a group scheme.

- Gigabit-capable broadband connections offer the fastest and most reliable speeds available.
- A group scheme means two or more premises need to want a better broadband connection installed by a supplier.

Groups of two or more **rural premises with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps** can then combine 'vouchers' worth up to **£1,500 per residential premise and up to £3,500 for each small to medium-sized business (SME)** to support the cost of a registered supplier installing new gigabit-capable connections (to more than double current broadband speeds).

- Vouchers don't give you actual money to spend - payment goes straight to the broadband supplier towards covering the installation costs.

Connecting Cambridgeshire has also secured extra top-up funding from the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority to provide an additional **top-up of £1,500 per premise to connect groups of rural properties getting less than 30Mbps** (residential or business).

- Premises that qualify for the top-up will have a total value of £3,000 per residential property and £5,000 per business awarded to the registered supplier.

Eligibility is checked via the postcode search on the [Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme website](#). If the postcode is eligible, results show suppliers in the area registered to the scheme. Contact them to discuss your needs, telling them you want to use the voucher scheme. They will then advise you and guide you through the process. This scheme only remains open for new applications until 31 March 2021 - or until the funding runs out (the supplier then has a year to complete the connection). Connecting Cambridgeshire cannot advise on exactly which supplier to use, however, the team can help to support residents with the application process.

Several rural communities are already planning to use the vouchers to improve their connectivity. [Find out more about one particular village](#) on our website. If you require further information, please contact the Connecting Cambridgeshire team on contact@connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk.

Fraud and Covid efforts

Concerns were raised at tonight's member briefing about a small number of cases of fraud that Covid community groups have experienced. Cambridgeshire County Council have a fraud team who can support if problems occur - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/community-protection/scams>. Please also refer people who need support to the SCDC communities team who can link in with other services such as the County Council. Contact us on duty.communities@scams.gov.uk

Kind regards,

Ruth