

District Councillor R Betson Report

- 1) Cllr Bhattacharya forwarded your email to SCDC and has received a response from CEO Liz Watts which I'm sure she has, or will, forward on to you.
- 2) I met up with Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of SCDC, after full council on Tuesday 22nd February and asked if she could respond to the emails Duncan Mason sent her on 9th February and in December. After showing her the emails on my phone, she said that the email address was wrong and that she'd never seen them before. She told me that she would respond the next morning. I haven't seen anything come through to my inbox, so am not certain whether the required response has been sent through to Mr Mason yet. For future reference, the correct email address is: cllr.bridgetsmith@scams.gov.uk
- 3) At full council, the ruling party put forward their budget for the next 4 years. They are putting Council Tax up by the absolute maximum allowed. After the Lead Member asserted that the tax could only be put up to that amount and no other according to government rules, the Officer in charge of this item unfortunately had to contradict this statement to specify that the amount was in the gift of the Council, up to the maximum amount. Sadly, the ruling party voted through the maximum amount allowed without rethinking or reviewing. I understand that the Lib/Lab coalition at County have also pushed through the maximum allocation. So I'm afraid that the residents of Cambourne will be hard hit this year.
- 4) At full council, the Conservative group put forward a motion on the proposed congestion charge in Cambridge, as we feel that it would be detrimental to residents of South Cambridgeshire who simply seek to get to work and/or do not have access to reliable public transport: *"That this Council opposes congestion charging in Greater Cambridge."* Unfortunately, the Lib Dem councillors voted against it.
- 5) The Conservative group also put forward the following motion which was approved, so please look out for some form of toolkit to be sent to CTC.
 "The UK Joint Nature Conservation Committee states that "Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth: genes, species and ecosystems. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them. Biodiversity matters because it supports the vital benefits humans get from the natural environment. It contributes to the economy, health and well-being, and it enriches our lives."
 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity is a matter of great importance to the parishes and communities of South Cambridgeshire and is a key objective of national and local policy, as recognised in the emerging Greater Cambridge Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document and the new Environment Act 2021.
 Parish and Town Councils have an important role to play in protecting and enhancing biodiversity and have a statutory responsibility to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in the exercise their functions.
 To help Parish Councils meet their statutory commitments and to help meet the aspirations of the communities of South Cambridgeshire this Council commits, as some other councils have done, to producing guidance for Parish and Town Councils as how they can most effectively conserve and enhance biodiversity in their areas, including a toolkit for drafting a Parish or Town biodiversity policy and carrying out a biodiversity audit."