

District and County Councillors' Report June 2021 - Meldreth Parish Council

Apologies

Having spoken with all the clerks in our shared villages, we understand the challenges of holding in-person meetings according to Covid-safe arrangements and the need to minimize the number of people physically present. We look forward to being able to attend again as soon as possible. Please send us any comments or questions on our report.

Elections

Sally Ann Hart has been elected Melbourn Ward District Councillor, joining Jose Hales for the second seat. Following a total of four SCDC ward by-elections, South Cambridgeshire District Council's make-up is now 31 Liberal Democrat, 11 Conservative, 2 Labour & 1 Independent.

Susan van de Ven was re-elected County Councillor. County Council elections resulted No Overall Control: Conservatives hold 28 seats, Liberal Democrats 20, Labour nine, and the Independents four.

Elections were also held for the Police & Crime Commissioner and for the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. The new Police & Crime Commissioner is Darryl Preston (Conservative), and the new Mayor (replacing James Palmer) is Dr Nik Johnson (Labour).

Covid-safe Annual District and County Council meetings

CCC and SCDC's Municipal years got off to a 'flying start' on 18th and 20th May respectively with the first meetings of the Council being held at Duxford Imperial War Museum. Because Government decided not to extend the recent flexibility to allow councils to meet online, a local venue capable of accommodating such a large meeting safely had to be found. Despite the amazing backdrop and extent to which officers went to ensure the space was Covid-safe, the public cost of hiring a 'safe space' might bring people down to earth with a bump.

County Council Public Health Guidance on in-person meetings, Govt consultation on virtual meetings

For information we attach Cambs County Council's Covid Guidance for Local Authority public meetings held in person – this is quite onerous. We'd welcome any comments from a parish council perspective on the current arrangements and will be responding to the Government's consultation on virtual meetings, closing on June 17:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence/local-authority-remote-meetings-call-for-evidence>

District Council

SCDC Committee membership for Jose and Sally Ann:

Jose serves on the Licensing and Audit Committees and chairs the Grants Advisory Committee.

Sally Ann serves on Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Employment and Staffing Committee and sits on the Community Safety Partnership group.

Jose and Sally Ann would like to highlight the following opportunities:

'Wild Minds': free outdoor activities to support young people's wellbeing

Wild Minds is our free programme of wellbeing activities to support 14- to 17-year-olds who are suffering mental-health issues such as anxiety and low mood, and/or to build self-esteem and confidence. The programme was set up over the last two years in response to the current context around the mental health of young people within the UK; NHS mental health services have experienced greatly increased referrals over the last 10 years with increased waiting times for specialist support and increasing thresholds to gain access. It offers:

- Free outdoor activities at Milton Country Park (all equipment will be provided free too)
- Group based activities including bush craft, survival skills, paddle boarding, yoga and mindfulness – no experience is necessary for any activities
- Sessions are an hour and a half long, and held each weekend for eight weeks
- Support from both skilled instructors and youth workers.

The course has been developed by South Cambridgeshire District Council together with Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust and is supported by a Clinical Psychologist. The next eight-week course begins on Sunday 6 June and you may wish to share the opportunity within your community – [teenagers can register \(free\) now](#).

Celebrate your volunteers

[Volunteers' Week](#) takes place from 1st to 7th June every year and is a chance to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to our communities. During an exceptional year, people have taken the time to volunteer and made a huge difference. Those who have been unable to volunteer during the pandemic may also have been supporting organisations from a distance. Why not celebrate your volunteers by using one of the downloadable resources?

Volunteering and Covid

Government guidance sets out how volunteering can be done safely during the pandemic and has been updated this week to reflect recent changes. This includes [guidance for volunteers](#) and for [organisations/groups](#) which involve volunteers in their work.

Business Grants

Grants

As of Friday SCDC has paid out **12,050,994** since November 2020 grants opened (LRSG and ARG/hardship).

£4,576,979 out of our **£4,594,889** Additional Restrictions (discretionary - hardship), 99.6% of fund paid to 1,653 businesses.

On Restart grants, we have paid out **£4,270,018** out of our **£5,814,090** allocation to 453 businesses (73%). Pushing/proactive calling around those who haven't yet applied continues.

Eye watering to think that we've now paid out well over £40m in business grants over the past 15 months but without it, the local economic consequences just don't bear thinking about!

Growth Fund

The South Cambridgeshire Growth fund is opening for applications on 1st July 2021. It is for micro and small businesses operating in/from South Cambridgeshire. Priority applicants will include those who have not previously received government backed (Covid related) funding. A one-off grant of between **£1,000 to a maximum of £50,000** will be awarded to eligible applicants.

Applicants must:

- Be South Cambridgeshire based start-ups since/during the pandemic who are looking to scale and grow quickly in our region
- **Or**
- Be established South Cambridgeshire based companies who can demonstrate evidence of ambitious expansion/growth plans in our District specifically
- Eligible businesses are sole traders, partnerships and SMEs located in South Cambridgeshire

If your business is in trouble and you have not been able to access a grant please contact the council or Sally Ann or Jose.

'Winter Support Grant': family fund

Residents can now access schemes which can be used for those in need of urgent food or fuel. The vouchers are worth up to £49 (per scheme) for a family, or £29 (per scheme) for an individual. The first scheme allows a voucher for food or fuel, and the second scheme is for a fuel voucher only. The schemes are funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the national Winter Support Grant. The vouchers can help residents who find themselves in a desperate situation to address their immediate need. We then work with the resident and other agencies to provide longer term advice and support. If you come across a resident in need of urgent food or fuel, please consider referring them into this scheme by emailing duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk (we will then send you a simple form to complete).

County Council

The Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent groups have formed a new Joint Administration for the Council. Their Joint Agreement, which sets out priorities and the operation of the council going forward, can be read here:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/cambridgelibdems/pages/5179/attachments/original/1620984611/County_agreement_2021_FINAL.pdf?1620984611

The council is now in the process of establishing its new committees (service committees have been reduced by two), which begin formal meetings in late June following the lifting of Covid restrictions. Susan is serving as Chair of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board, and Vice Chair of the County Council's Adults and Health Committee. She will also serve on Education Transport Appeals panels.

Covid Latest

From the Acting Director of Public Health, 29 May:

At 4 Covid-19 cases per 100,000 population for the week ending 22 May for Cambridgeshire as a whole, we are well below the England average of 23.6 and the regional average of 18.6. Hospital admissions are still low and there have been no deaths since the end of April. Although numbers remain low we are working hard through our backward contact tracing team to identify cases as early as possible, identify how the virus has been transmitted and take action to make sure people are tested and supported to self-isolate. Our rates across the patch look encouraging, but we know from past experience that this can change very quickly so we are encouraging people to follow the rules and understand that getting back to a more normal way of life depends on all of us and the actions we take.

Meldreth Coronavirus Community Support remains in place and ready to activate if necessary.

Meldreth Footway resurfacing issues:

- Our Local Highways Officer has placed an order for the resurfacing of the High St footway, as anticipated. Susan has asked that Highways coordinate timings with County Broadband's infrastructure work for sensible timings.
- The recently resurfaced Fenny Lane footway has a tilting camber in places. This has been reported to Highways and the contractor has been invited out to remedy the fault.

Path connecting Meldreth Station to Melbourn

Together with the Community Rail Partnership and County Council officers, an informal catch-up meeting was held in mid-May to outline next steps, now that GTR's feasibility study for the ramp has been completed.

Drains

Please for the sake of completeness could the parish council indicate which drains they believe had problems emptying during recent rainfall – the standard indicator of problems being pooling for more than two hours.

Consultation: Cambridgeshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure

This is an important opportunity to contribute views – please note closing July 6th.

<https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/cc-local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan-consultation-2021>

South West Cambridge Action Group

- SWCAG has invited Thakeham to a public meeting to answer questions from the public, but Thakeham has yet to agree a date.
- The May 26th SWCAG meeting for parish council representatives with Stephen Kelley, Head of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning, focused on the OxCam Arc and juxtapositions of local authority and central government planning powers. This was an excellent session and we'll be looking to replicate it at a forthcoming public meeting – Mr Kelley has indicated that he's happy to attend.
- Mr Kelley reported that Thakeham has to date not lodged a submission to the South Cambs Call for Sites. The window of opportunity to do so is diminishing.
- A response has been received on an appeal to a Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's Freedom of Information Act refusal. This will be posted on the SWCAG website.
- Cllr Sally Ann Hart is not joining the SWCAG Steering Group so as to protect her right to vote on the Local Plan.