

Meldreth Parish Council March 2021 – County and District Councillors’ Report

Gulley emptying: The Highways gulley emptying operation will take place later this month. It begins first in Melbourn on March 11. There, in preparation, we’re working together with the parish council to do a letter drop to all properties in the affected roads, to alert residents to the forthcoming works and to please avoid parking on or near gullies on the day. A copy of that letter is attached for your information. We’d suggest doing something similar in Meldreth.

We’ve discussed with County Highways the protocol for the day including marking gullies cleared and any inaccessible, so that a return visit can be made where necessary.

County Council: council tax set for 2021-22: Most of the County Council budget is already committed to essential statutory services such as adult social care, looked after children as well as highway maintenance. The scope for radical new ideas is very limited. This year’s budgetary process has been overshadowed, inevitably, by the Covid pandemic which has required much flexibility from council employees, with extra costs, partially offset by extra grants from central government.

Council tax increase for 2021-22 will be 1.99% for general expenditure and 1% for Adult Social care. For people living in the Band D benchmark property, the increase amounts to £40.59 per year, or £3.38 per month. County Council tax accounts for 70% of our overall council tax bill, the rest being levied by Fire, Police, District Council and Parish Council.

Less funding for Highways: At first glance, news that the County Council has put an extra £4m into footway maintenance and repair was to be welcomed. The recent announcement by the Government of the allocation of highways maintenance cash for the forthcoming year for each County indicates almost £7.5million less than last year. So in fact we will have £3.5m less to spend on highways maintenance.

Fly Tipping: South Cambs reports that there has been no significant increase in fly tipping since the introduction of pre-book visits to County’s Household Waste Centres. As you know, we all pay for fly tipping through our Council Tax. Officers always sift through the rubbish and very often find personal information they can use to track the perpetrators. South Cambs always prosecute. If you see fly tipping, please do report it straight away - it’s easy to report fly-tipping on-line:

<https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/REPORTENVIROCRIMEWASTEINYOURAREA/launch>

Cambridge Water Treatment Works: South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council are urging local people to get involved in the next stages of the design and planning for a new plant, which Anglian Water says will support the local ambition towards net zero carbon, and also deliver wider benefits for people and wildlife. Anglian Water have announced that the preferred site for their new plant is an area north of the A14 between Fen Ditton and Horningsea.

The proposed relocation would allow a new net zero carbon facility, meeting exemplar environmental standards, to replace the existing plant which is near Cambridge North railway station. This will unlock opportunities for future development on that site, as well as providing for planned growth in places such as Waterbeach New Town. The project means that no additional treatment facilities would be needed at the new town as wastewater would be treated at the new plant.

Deputy Leader of County Council resignation: Ahead of a report to the Audit and Accounts Committee on March 5th, the Deputy Leader of the County Council Roger Hickford has resigned.

The matter involves the award to Cllr Hickford of the tenancy of a County Council-owned farm. Cllr Hickford was a member of the County Council Farms Estates working group, Chair of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Board and the Cambs and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board. The Audit and Accounts Committee will meet in confidential session to consider the 'Manor Farm Audit' and it is not yet known whether the report will be made public.

Thakeham: Updates and discussion with parish council representatives on March 2nd.

Rail updates:

Rail User Group meeting: Our next Rail User Group takes place April 6th, 7:30PM.

Passenger Benefit Fund and Meldreth Station: We'll be seeing a few improvements to Meldreth Station shortly, as a result of the Passenger Benefit Fund – a sort of financial compensation to stations affected by the 2018 timetable meltdown. Again, the bureaucracies involved here are dazzling, and in the end, while rail user feedback was gratefully received, it was the Dept for Transport that decided how the funds could be allocated. We understand that toilets will be refurbished and that we'll see improvements in platform seating and waiting shelter – though no detail as yet). In any case, at last we seem to have action coming up.

Meldreth Station Booking Office – temporary twice monthly closures: Govia Thameslink Railway has indicated that Meldreth Station booking office will be closed, on a temporary basis only, for two of every four Saturdays from 27 February, during this lockdown period when passenger numbers are very low. As number begin to rise, the booking office will reopen, and indeed will play an important component in rebuilding passenger confidence. We don't know if the closures will fall on alternate Saturdays – so please check the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Rail Facebook page for up-to-date information. Our station master Bern Parsons always gives us as much advance notice as possible on any alterations to the usual schedules.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/meldrethsheprethfoxttonrail>

Covid support news from SCDC:

As of 26th February, South Cambs has the lowest rate of infection in the East of England at 44 cases per 100,000, which is far lower than the average in England of 103 per 100,000.

Vaccination briefing – 18 February 2021

The latest vaccination briefing (from 18 February) contained the following highlights which may be of interest:

Cumulative total doses of 215,034 had been administered in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough by 14 February 2021

More than 90% of residents aged 70 and above in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough had received their first dose

Anyone aged 65 and over, or Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (previously on the shielding list), who hasn't yet had their first dose should now make an appointment at www.nhs.uk/covidvaccination or [by phoning 119](tel:119)

Carers are included in cohort 6 for vaccination if they fit the definition of “adult carers”, which is defined as “Those who are eligible for a carer’s allowance, or those who are the sole or primary carer of an elderly or disabled person who is at increased risk of COVID-19 mortality and therefore clinically vulnerable.” Eligible adult carers will be contacted via the National Booking System (NBS) to receive an invitation to book vaccination through Vaccination Centres, Community Pharmacies or Hospital Hubs, once a list of these individuals has been produced

If an individual has been added to the Shielded Patient List as part of the new QCovid model, the NHS will contact them to offer them the vaccine as soon as appointments become available. The NHS may contact patients via text message, letter, or a phone call to offer an appointment.

Winter Support: Direct Award Scheme

Small one-off payments to help South Cambridgeshire individuals and families in acute need can now be made by some of South Cambs. officers and other partner organisations across the county such as Citizens Advice and Age UK. These will be in the form of direct payments under the Winter Support Family Fund. The payments can go towards food and fuel for those who need financial assistance as a direct result of Coronavirus. This is a payment of up to £25 for an individual, and up to £50 for a couple or family. The payments will be made as a one-off grant. These grants are designed as reactive support under the Winter Support Scheme.

The resident will then either receive an email with a food retail voucher or a unique code to credit their fuel account at a pay-point. The second option is a text/email code to take to a pay-point to cash out the money from their text code to purchase what they need.

This is a countywide scheme which will close at the end of March 2021, which is when funding for Winter Support is expected to end. Any residents wishing to apply can do so by emailing duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk. One of the team will then get in touch to understand their situation, offer further advice, and make the award if needed.

Self-isolation update

[Self-isolation payments](#) are expanding. People who need to self-isolate because of Coronavirus and will lose income by doing so may be entitled to a £500 payment that they do not have to pay back. This now also covers **one parent or guardian who has to stay off work to look after a child who is self-isolating** (where the parent or guardian is not required to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace but meets all the other eligibility criteria). Despite this change, the message remains the same. Anyone who has lost an income due to self-isolation should get in touch with South Cambs. as help is available.

Coronavirus home testing kits now easier to order

You may be interested in an [announcement from Government](#) (on 18 February) that it has introduced a number of new accessibility improvements to the home testing programme to make it easier to get tested.

The improvements include:

People who do not have access to the internet are now able to order home testing kits by phone by calling 119.

A new NHS Test and Trace partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) to improve the home testing service for people with visual impairments

A new video-call support service with specially trained NHS Test and Trace staff that will assist people with vision impairments to test at home.

Public Health England launches new Psychological First Aid training

People who care for or work with children and young people aged up to 25 who have been affected by COVID-19 (or other emergencies or individual crises) will be able to access a new online [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) training course](#). The course is free for all who care for and work with children and young people aged up to the age of 25. No previous qualifications are required.