**District Councillor’s Report for The Mordens Ward SCDC July & August 2021**

**Council Emails**

To the best of my knowledge my council email is now working again after several interruptions, this has unfortunately meant that an awful lot of emails have come through at once so please if a matter is urgent call me on the number below.

**Five Year Land Supply**

The appeal I reported on last month was postponed and is due to be resolved now in the Autumn. Meanwhile another challenge has been lodged by a different developer. I have kept the link below to the first appeal in case anyone would like to look at the sites that are being challenged. I would iterate that officers feel that the published figures are accurate and that the council will be successful in the hearing, but I still maintain that we will all feel more confident once the supply has been through the appeal process and successfully defended.

[S/3873/17/OL | Application for outline planning permission for a residential development of up to 40 dwellings with some matters reserved except for Access Appearance Layout and scale. | Land At Mill Lane Sawston CB22 3HY (greatercambridgeplanning.org)](https://applications.greatercambridgeplanning.org/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=ZZZY1NOITV814)

**Concern over increased Confidential Meetings at South Cambs**

Over recent years we have seen a steep increase in the number of meetings that exclude the press and public, over the last 3 years over 50% of Cabinet and Council meetings have excluded residents at some stage. While I understand the need for some matters to be discussed in close session for example if it is about an individual who’s identity should be protected, however the majority of the meetings are closed due to commercial sensitivity. In these cases, the need to be commercially sensitive is over by the time the minutes are produced. With this in mind, and becoming more and more uncomfortable with the volume of information and decision making being kept from the public I moved a motion at full council calling for more transparency as can be seen below. Unfortunately this was heavily amended by the ruling group which I feel has diluted it some what, (also shown below) but I still hope it has acted as a reminder that we do not have to keep such things out of public sight.

**Original Motion :**

This council recognises that the minutes relating to private meetings can be made available to the public if the grounds for exclusion of the meeting no longer apply. This council will seek to share the minutes of meetings wherever possible and will only keep them confidential as an absolute last resort, recognising that it is to the public that we are accountable and it is in the public’s interest that we are as open and transparent as possible.

**Amended version that was approved below**:

This Council recognises that the minutes relating to private meetings of this Council and its Committees can be made available to the public if the grounds for exclusion of the meeting no longer apply. This Council recognises the importance of openness and transparency and will share the minutes of meetings wherever possible in accordance with the provisions of the law and the constraints of commercial confidentiality.

**2018/19 Accounts Audit**

Resource yet again is stated as the main issue while completing South Cambs District Council accounts. I have repetitively raised this since September 2018, with warm words of assurance given and the Audit committee being told capacity and new officers were available, and yet the latest report from the external auditors is that the District Council has failed to meet the deadlines and there will be even further delays. It is not only a lack of stand that is a problem but staff turnover is not only costing the tax payer in gardening leaves and early retirements, but is holding up the production of accounts and resulting in even more money being spent on Auditors fees, often to the cost of a six figure sum per year. We are yet to find out what the bill will be for the 2018/19 accounts. Ultimately this means that the accounts are taking years rather than months to produce and that councillors have not seen any financial statements for the period post March 2019 (28 months ago). I consider this to also be a big issue with transparency at SCDC.

**Possible Green Bin Delays**

Due to staff shortages the collection of green bins will potentially be interrupted. This is predominantly due to the number of waste refuge collection staff self-isolating and difficulty in getting enough agency support to cover vacancies.

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