

District Councillor's Report for The Mordens Ward SCDC

October & November 2021

Local Plan update

The Local plan consultation is now open and will close on 13th December. I would strongly urge as many people as possible to take part. The policies within the Local plan will in many ways dictate how development happens in our villages for years to come. It will be what we rely on to support or refuse planning permissions. It is also vital that it is sound, robust, and reliable as the plan will need to be approved by an independent planning inspector. If the plan was to fail then our district, and our villages would be open to speculative development. This is why, it is one, if not the, most important document the District Council is responsible for producing, and why it is so important that as many people have their say as possible. The following link will allow you to access the proposals and see where development has been proposed. The following link is for the local plan website. [Greater Cambridge Local Plan \(greatercambridgeplanning.org\)](http://greatercambridgeplanning.org)

Making Connections - have your say on greener travel in Greater Cambridge

As a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Assembly, I raised the lack of bus services in our area, and in some cases ridiculous provision and timescales. I also raised how there are no buses to the Ashwell and Mordens Station in Cambridgeshire, in fact it wasn't even recorded on the original travel maps. I'm pleased to say it has now been included in the consultation documents. I believe if we are to reduce car dependency then we must provide reliable public transport. I have stressed the importance of integrated train and bus timetabling, and I hope this will be taken on board. Residents and parish councils now have until 20th December to have their say in the Making Connections consultation, a link to which is below.

[Making Connections - have your say on greener travel in Greater Cambridge | Consult Cambridgeshire \(engagementhq.com\)](http://engagementhq.com)

2018/19 Accounts Audit

The 2018/19 Accounts are still yet to be signed off, or a final report by the external auditors be given. While there is an audit and corporate governance meeting on the 1st December, councillors have been advised that it is unlikely that the accounts will be finalised in this calendar year. The length of time that these accounts are taking to complete is alarming. We will soon be approaching the third anniversary of the 2019 year end and yet no accounts have been agreed. This also means that residents have not been able to see accounts for the 2020 or 2021 year end, only time will tell how long it will take to see this years' 2022 accounts. The administration has apologised for underestimating the amount of work involved, and indeed admitted not always prioritising the year end accounts. This may not be a 'juicy' subject, but it is a fundamental responsibility of the administration to show residents how their money has been spent in a timely manner. I would also question what value the administration puts on the input of councillors from other groups or committees, for since 2018 I and other councillors have been raising the issue of lack of resource in

the finance department. Three years on, for the administration to admit they haven't been resourcing the department sufficiently, shows, in my view, either a lack of willingness to listen to others or a failure to take the appropriate action required. Whatever the reasons, this lack of judgement, means that the council is making multi-million-pound decisions without any up to date accounts.

Universal Credit

Please see below details of how the District Council can support people who are financially struggling at the moment. In the current climate many people will find themselves in financial difficulty for the first times in their lives and seeking help may be a daunting and scary experience. I would stress that all conversations with the council, or myself are confidential. And whether this is the first time or not, if you, or anyone you know, is struggling please reach out, there is support out there, short term/ long term which ever applies to your circumstances please do not suffer in silence.

There are a range of options for those struggling financially, including:

- Discretionary Housing Payments which provide financial support towards housing costs. You can [apply for these Discretionary Housing Payments](#)
- The Council Tax hardship fund, which aims to provide support to those who are struggling financially because of the pandemic. You can [apply for this Hardship Fund](#)
- Support and advice from our Welfare and Money Maximisation Officer, Lucy Tompkins, who can be contacted via Lucy.Tompkins@scambs.gov.uk
- Along with Cambridgeshire County Council and partners, we also still offer one-off small payments to help with immediate food or fuel needs - up to £49 for a family, or £29 for an individual, for food or fuel. Anyone needing that one-off help should [email our communities team](#).

[Email our Benefits team](#) if you have specific questions, or call [01954 713 000](tel:01954713000).

Merry Christmas & A Happy New Year

Last year was a Christmas unlike many we have ever known. I know of many who were unable to spend Christmas with their loved ones due to the Covid restrictions. I hope that you will once again be able to celebrate Christmas in the way you wish, though given the current covid situation I would plead for people to do this in as safe a way as possible. If you would like any covid guidance you can access this on the link below.

[Coronavirus: how to stay safe and help prevent the spread - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Christmas Bin collection Dates

Please see below the changes to the bin collection dates over Christmas.

Wednesday 22 December 2021
Friday 31 December 2021 (changed collection date)
Saturday 8 January 2022 (changed collection date)
Friday 14 January 2022 (changed collection date)
Thursday 20 January 2022 (changed collection date)
Wednesday 26 January 2022

Wishing you, and your families a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2022.

Cllr Heather Williams

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