

## **A meeting of Croydon Parish Council was held on Wednesday 17th January 2024 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.**

**Apologies:** Cllr S Kindersley - unavailable, Ms Newland - unwell, Cllr Williams for late arrival.

**Present:** Mr Barnes, Mr Sole, Mr Wheeler, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Sole, the Clerk and a visiting Chairman.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the December meeting previously circulated, were agreed and signed.

**Declarations of Interest:** Mr Sole - Reading Room trustee.

### **Matters Arising and Village Issues:**

#### **Community reports:**

**Litter pick signs:** Mr Buchanan reported that his contact has been unwell, but he will contact him as soon as he can.

**Speeding and LHI:** The application for the speeding reductions outlined in December's minutes has been completed and sent in to the Local Projects Team at Cambs County Council. A resident had enquired about the cost of the project, but this will not be known until (and if) the proposed scheme has been accepted. As Croydon has such a small number of electors, a contribution of 10% of the cost would be required.

**Lower Road - report from Highways/Police:** Still nothing heard from either organisation yet. Although there are currently temporary bumpy road signs in place, Council would like to have permanent signs on that section of the B1042. Nothing can be done until the two reports have been received, if ever.

**Website:** .

**SCDC Six free trees:** Confirmation of the order placed by Council has been received

#### **Follow up information**

**Gmail address:** The last Councillor has not reported that a gmail address is operational, but will try and get it established by the next meeting.

### **Gamlingay Division Councillors Report - South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council - January 2024**

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

Wishing you all a very safe and prosperous 2024.

**South Cambs DC Finance Settlement and Consultation:** The revised 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy for SCDC shows that if the provision for the Fair Funding Review is stripped out then SCDC will achieve a balanced budget for the next five years from 2024/25. However, the Council is having to make provision for the Fair Funding Review which artificially locks away a sizable proportion of income in future years, because the Government has failed to deliver a medium-term financial strategy for Local Government against which we can make accurate provision. So, SCDC must prudently assume a worse case scenario – as with other Councils - meaning there are likely to be millions of pounds tied up in Council reserves across the country that could be spent on services because of this failure by Government to plan ahead.

The SCDC 2024/25 budget will include more resource to deal with homelessness, help with the cost-of-living crisis and fly-tipping, as well as increasing the Renewables Fund for Green projects. All this at a time when most other councils are in dire financial trouble. South Cambs is in a strong financial position with little risk in future years as reported independently by the Peer Review.

**South Cambs 4 Day Working Week:** The 4 day working week trial has now been in place for 12 months for desk-based staff. Savings made by not overspending the budget on agency staff have been enormous - money which is now in reserves to be spent on services

for communities across the District. The impact on staff wellbeing and attitudes has also been amazing - going the extra mile is now commonplace across the Council, with obvious benefits to our residents and businesses.

**Online Checker for Home Improvement Projects:** The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service has launched a user-friendly online checker to help home owners find out if planning permission is needed for home improvement projects such as dormer windows, fence installations, outbuildings, front porches, flue installations and more! The checker is at <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/planning-applications/check-if-i-need-planningpermission/>. For those thinking about installing solar panels, check out the dedicated webpage for planning permission requirements at <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/planningapplications/solar-panels/>. If still unclear, then book the free 15 minute advice pre-app session through here <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/planning-applications/householder-and-smallbusiness-planning-advice/>.

**Cambridge 2040 and Development Corporation proposals:** In his speech (full transcript at <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/falling-back-in-love-with-the-future>), Michael Gove talked about 150,000 plus houses is what he wants to build in the Cambridge area between now and 2040. Peter Freeman (Homes England Chief Exec) is his choice to head the Cambridge Delivery (super) Group. We still don't know who the members of this supergroup are or will be. His vision of "a new urban quarter" is to be delivered by a Development Corporation with a broadly based Board to steer its efforts". Make of that what you will. He briefly mentioned an approach towards water and steps to help manage demand for water in new developments. But nothing about the current stalemate with Environment Agency for water to deliver sites in the current adopted local plan. And Michael Gove is still not talking to the Local Government leaders in the area – just announcing what he wants to do. So much for localism.

The leaders of Cambridge City Council, Cllr Mike Davey, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cllr Bridget Smith, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, and the Combined Authority Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Dr Nik Johnson, said: "Despite working hard to engage constructively with Government officials since the Secretary of State's initial Cambridge 2040 announcement in the summer, it's deeply disappointing that once again Government plans for Cambridge seem to be being negotiated through the press.

"We note in the latest announcement that the number of new homes put forward by Rt Hon Michael Gove MP has come down from 250,000 to 150,000, but this is still substantially more than the over 50,000 homes we have identified as needed in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (to 2040) – a number which will already be incredibly challenging to bring forward. We are ambitious for high quality sustainable, green growth but can't stress enough how vital it is that Government supports us to tackle the issues that will otherwise act as roadblocks to sustainable growth.

"We have written to the Secretary of State a number of times over the past month to stress the importance of committing to sustainable growth, and to reiterate the support that is needed to enable us to plan for the homes set out in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

"This includes prioritising sustainable public transport, community infrastructure such as schools and GPs, and water shortages in this region, which are putting our chalk streams under extreme pressure – an issue which the Greater Cambridge Planning Service warned in January 2023 could delay existing plans for housebuilding if not addressed by Government. We are still waiting for responses to these questions which would detail how Government proposes to support us in delivering a proposed 50,000 or so homes responsibly, let alone 150,000.

"Clarity is also needed as to who is involved in the 'Cambridge Delivery Group', what it will do, and how it will be governed. Devolution works best when local politicians are empowered to lead and deliver sustainable development and we will continue to work hard to represent our residents and ensure that Cambridge and its surrounding villages grow in a sustainable and carefully planned way."

**Fake News on Council Finance:** An MP made a statement in the House of Commons last month naming councils which were allegedly bankrupt and had issued S114 notices, mentioning South Cambs as one of them. The Council wrote to him immediately asking for the record to be put straight and have had an apology from him.

A 'newspaper' made a claim that South Cambs had a debt that is 21.8 times its spending power. Again fake news and sloppy researching. The figure they'd latched onto is the £205 million that the District had to pay to the Government in March 2012 to enable the Council keep its social housing stock and all the rent from it!. Furthermore this debt is within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which is ringfenced solely for Housing and is completely separate to the General Fund Account used for running the council. The HRA debt is serviced exclusively out of the rental income from the housing portfolio. Read it for yourself at [https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/2364/tenants\\_newsletter\\_a5\\_ssept\\_2012.pdf](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/2364/tenants_newsletter_a5_ssept_2012.pdf)

**Are you claiming the rights benefits?:** South Cambridgeshire DC is making a big push to raise awareness of benefits entitlement. It's estimated that around 25% of benefits go unclaimed. Here's an easy-to-use on-line Benefits Calculator: <https://entitledto.co.uk>

**County Council Budget Consultation:** There's not long left for you to give your views on the forthcoming CCC budget - the consultation closes on January 16<sup>th</sup>. Included in the proposals are Included in the proposals for the coming year are for the council to invest £57 million to sustain children's and adult social care services;

further the Council's commitment to the Real Living Wage, which has increased to £12ph outside London, to take account of the Government uplift of the legally enforceable Living Wage, being paid by adult care providers. CCC intends to prioritise £3m to continue to provide holiday food vouchers for all children eligible for free school meals, despite the government support being likely to end in the next financial year.

We will invest £2.2m to deliver other anti-poverty initiatives – such as support to make sure that vulnerable people are claiming all the welfare benefits that they are entitled to; £1.3m into delivering more accessible libraries to support vulnerable communities and prioritise investment of £23m into making highways, footpaths, and cycleways safer – on top of a recently announced government allocation of £2.3m. This will be to deliver improvements which both repair and prevent potholes, deliver improved drainage schemes, and reinstate cycleway maintenance and weed clearance.

Lastly there will be additional funding into schemes for people experiencing mental health issues to prevent them reaching crisis, particularly focusing on younger people.

The proposals include an increase of council tax by 4.99%, the maximum permitted by Government before a public referendum is needed – with a total of 2% of this increase dedicated to adult social care services across the county, and £17.6m of identified additional savings will need to be made to balance the books.

**£368,000 to help council respond to major projects:** A successful bid to Government means an additional £368,000 to help the council respond to proposals for major infrastructure in Cambridgeshire. The money will help support the council with the administration of Development Consent Orders (DCO) for schemes like East West Rail, the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet upgrade, and the Fenland Reservoir, as well as other Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). £268,000 will bring in extra technical and specialist resource, and a further £100,000 will enable work across all these types of projects.

**Change to access at Royston and Thriplow recycling centres:** Cambridgeshire residents now need to apply for a digital permit to use Royston Household Recycling Centre in Hertfordshire. The change comes following the announcement last year that Hertfordshire County Council would be adopting a policy restricting access to non-residents at Hertfordshire's network of sixteen recycling centres. However, the county council has reached an agreement with Hertfordshire County Council that enables continued cross-border access to Royston Household Recycling Centre for Cambridgeshire residents living close to the county boundary, whilst allowing Hertfordshire residents access to Thriplow Household Recycling Centre in South Cambridgeshire. Resident-only policies are becoming increasingly common across the region and indeed the country, with many neighbouring counties having had this policy in place for some time.

**Parents encouraged to apply for support with childcare costs:** The Department for Education is reminding eligible working parents of two-year-olds that they will be able to register to access 15 hours free childcare per week from April 2024. The recommended time to register is between mid-January and the end of February. More information on the childcare support available to parents can be found on the Childcare Choices website, where parents can explore the early education entitlements and other government help with childcare costs.

**Take 5 Project:** In the light of concerns around Gamlingay Village Primary Take 5 might be a project worth looking into. A walking zone around each school is researched by pupils, and adult volunteers and publicised to parents, carers, and families by a Take 5 map, banners outside the school, and special events. In most cases the Take 5 scheme is also marked out by easily identifiable signs on lamp columns. Families who live in, or near the zone are encouraged to walk, scoot or cycle to and from school every day, while those with longer journeys who need to drive are asked to park safely outside the zone and to walk the last five minutes of their journey.

**Flooding:** The recent extraordinary rainfall levels have triggered road flooding widely including at Arrington and the Cinques in Gamlingay. It would be very helpful if you know of a blocked field ditch or drain if you could plot it on the CCC website at

<https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/> - and likewise with potholes. Thank you!

**Buses:** The Combined Authority has reviewed a number of bus routes including the 75 (Cambridge - Orwell - Wrestlingworth) and the 17 (Royston - Bassingbourn - Guilden Morden) and has decided to retain them despite the subsidy but will review timings to make them work better with other linking services. The Combined Authority is undertaking a public consultation - but hurry as this closes on Jan 15<sup>th</sup>. The ambitions are to add more buses to the network; provide bus users with better information; more reliability across the network; provide nicer, better quality buses and better value for money for users which is why the Mayor proposes to invest up to £2.3 million into improving service so we can keep people connected and make sure the bus routes that are important to the community can keep running. We are also continuing to support the national scheme to cap fares at £2 until the end of 2024 to help bus users struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/better-buses/#questionnaire>

**Road Closures:** Foxton Road Barrington/Barrington Road Foxton will be closed for resurfacing between February 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

**New Highways maintenance way of working:** From April, highways maintenance jobs will be signed off and coordinated by specialist teams rather than Local Highways Officers, though our LHOs will act as intermediaries to keep specialist teams informed of local needs and priorities. Specialist teams will deal with signs, lines, road surface treatment, path treatment and gullies. Teams have formed in anticipation, and we are all getting familiar with new ways of working - we will do our best to help make the transition. Please note that logging jobs on the Highways reporting site is still the right first step. Report a highways fault - Cambridgeshire County Council Any questions please let us know.

**Regularizing gully clearing:** As previously reported, prior to the 2021 County Council Joint Administration, there was no systematic recording and care of gully maintenance. As part of a massive overhaul of Highways maintenance systems, and within a context of managed decline legacy and a visibly deteriorating network, highways maintenance is transitioning to a more accountable system, though resource remains very stretched and need very high. Indeed the upcoming budget requires significant additional expenditure to simply stand still.

All gullies have, for the first time, been mapped and recorded on a system called KaarbonTech. An initial program has been put in place to ensure all gullies are cleared every two years. Data on the state of each gully is now being recorded with each of those cleans. The next step is to put that together and adopt a smarter gully cleaning regime. Not all gullies need to be emptied every two years, but some will need much more frequent routine work. The aim is to build up the data picture and be smart about where scarce resource is deployed. Parish clerks should now be receiving cyclical gully clearance notices. Any hot spots should be logged on the Highways reporting site.

**Electric vehicle charging:** An estimated 10,000 public electric vehicle charge point sockets will be needed across Cambridgeshire by 2030, as motorists choose electric vehicles over

petrol and diesel cars - set to be banned by government from 2035. Using up to £5M in Local Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding, the council is working with the Combined Authority on how to meet this need, with fewer than 500 public charge points currently installed. Officers will develop a plan informed by technical mapping and seek public engagement to find suitable charge point locations. They will report back later in 2024.

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can! Your Councillors are County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or email to [skindersley@gmail.com](mailto:skindersley@gmail.com) or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA District Councillor Bridget Smith (Gamlingay Ward, SCDC) is on 07729 836449 or [Cllr.BridgetSmith@scams.gov.uk](mailto:Cllr.BridgetSmith@scams.gov.uk)

### **Correspondence:**

**Electoral Register alterations:** None received

**Highway Events:** Nothing specific locally.

**Local Transport and Connectivity Plan:** A fresh era for transport in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is set to begin following the approval of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan (LTCP).

The Combined Authority Board agreed to the plan at its November meeting and the LTCP now becomes the statutory transport plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, guiding transport strategy, policy and projects.

The Combined Authority will continue to focus on delivery; making the improvements needed to make our transport system faster, better quality, more convenient, more affordable, greener, and integrated.

That means improving the bus services with more frequent, reliable services which reach more places. It means upgrading the rail network to unlock more local services and get freight off the roads. It means giving more people options for safe, enjoyable ways to make journeys on foot or by bicycle, and it means making the whole transport system more joined up, so people can plan their journeys quickly and easily, where active travel and public transport are the natural first choice.

In the meantime, the plan can be seen on the website [LTCP webpage](#) (strategies) or at the [main document](#). (53 pages)

**Civil Parking Enforcement Update:** From 1 February 2024, Cambridgeshire County Council's Civil Parking Enforcement Officers will issue penalty charge notices which include a fine for parking on restrictions such as double yellow lines.

Clerk reported on an email received shortly before tonight's meeting:-

"There will be two enforcement officers dedicated to South Cambridgeshire as part of a wider team that enforce the CPE scheme in Cambridge City. It is not possible for the officers to be everywhere all the time and work has been done by Cambridgeshire County Council, utilising available data and insights, to maximise the time they spend enforcing and minimising travel time across the large rural area they will cover.

Officers can only enforce restrictions that are in place, such as parking on a single or double yellow lines, or the footpath where restrictions are adjacent, but if town/parish councils feel they have any helpful information to feedback please email it to:- [parkingcontrol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:parkingcontrol@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)"

More information is available from [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cpe](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cpe)

**National Audit Office and East-West Rail:** Conclusions from National Audit report East West Rail represents a £6-7 billion investment to support growth in a part of the UK that the government regards as economically important, but it is not yet clear how the benefits of the project will be achieved nor how it aligns to other government plans for growth in the region. As with many transport projects, the rationale for East West Rail does not rest on the strength of the benefit-cost ratio for the project alone - which is poor - but on its wider strategic aim of overcoming constraints to economic growth in the Oxford-Cambridge region.

This rationale has underpinned DfT's decisions to approve and continue with the project to date. However, achieving the necessary value from the government's investment in East West Rail will require stronger strategic alignment across government. Improved

communication and joint working between central government and local bodies are needed to overcome barriers to progress and achieve the goals of the project over the long term.

The whole report can be accessed on the link below:-

<https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/investigation-into-the-east-west-rail-project-oxford-cambridge/>

**GCP Joint Assembly:** Joint Assembly discusses Greenways and Cycling Plus

A raft of improvements to the region's walking and cycling network have been discussed by the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Joint Assembly this week.

Members were presented on Monday with revised designs for Hills Road and the Addenbrooke's roundabout, which aim to enhance road safety at two busy areas of Cambridge. The Assembly scrutinised a paper outlining the construction programme for the Greenways network and detailed proposals for two of the 12 active travel routes which will connect Fulbourn and Haslingfield to the city.

The Executive Board, the GCP's decision-making body, will consider the assembly's discussions at the next meeting on 4 January to set out the next steps for the schemes.

The assembly meeting can be watched back on the [GCP's YouTube channel](#). For more information visit [www.greatercambridge.org.uk](http://www.greatercambridge.org.uk).

**SCDC Peer Review: Email from Liz Watts, Chief Executive SCDC**

"I wanted to share with you the Peer Review Report for South Cambridgeshire District

Council, which is published on our website here: [2023 Corporate Peer Challenge - South Cambs District Council \(scams.gov.uk\)](#)

I am very grateful to all those who took part in the Peer Review process (which took place during the first week in November); it has provided us with really useful feedback. Our next steps are to draw up an action plan in the New Year. If you have questions or suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact me, [Liz.Watts@scams.gov.uk](mailto:Liz.Watts@scams.gov.uk)."

The report, which is 26 pages long and very interesting, can be viewed in full at:-

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/media/nbah2kxw/20231213-south-cambridgeshire-dc-cpc-report.pdf>

**Street Works:** Notification received that the High Street would be closed to through traffic on 6th January due to road works. As the notification was for emergency repairs it was not received until after the work had been done.

**Any subsequent receipts:**

**CCC Budget Planning:** Cambridgeshire County Council has published its business and financial proposals for 2024-29, and you can view these at the following link –

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#).

As part of considering the proposals the Council is keen to engage with partners and residents. As part of that the Council held an open event on Teams for all Parish and Town Councils on 11<sup>th</sup> January at 6.15pm. More information about the budget can be found in the latest edition of Cambridgeshire Matters: [Cambridgeshire Matters - Business Plan and Budget Proposals for 2024/25 \(govdelivery.com\)](#)

**Cambridgeshire County Council:** The 2024/25 20mph funding process is now open again for applications. The process is open for new applications, as well as providing existing applicants within the long list who weren't successful for fundings last year to review, update and reapply if they wish.

The website pages have been changed to reflect the feedback received from last year's process - thanks to those whom contributed to that - and those pages can be found at the following: [20mph Funding - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Some key changes to the website include around the narrative/guidance for applicants. This explains how to apply with additional narrative and provides some examples previously successful applications for reference.

Applicants are now able to make applications until 17:00PM on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Please send any questions or comments to the Local Projects inbox:

[Local.Projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Local.Projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

From The 20mph webpage:

**Which areas are eligible?**

*In general, a new 20mph limit should be in an area with features that justify a lower speed limit to drivers, for example, an area that has:*

- *evidence of traffic incidents or potential dangers within an existing 30/40mph*

- *vulnerable road users e.g. pedestrians (of all ability), cyclists, equestrian users and motorcyclists*
- *visible homes, shops, and business frontages*
- *a school or a school route*
- *a cycling route*
- *a quiet lane designation*
- *an area that would benefit from more active travel such as cycling and walking*

Council discussed whether or not to apply for the 20mph funding, but as there is already a list of parishes who applied last year and were unsuccessful, it was agreed not to apply on this occasion.

**Adventures Away from Home Fund - Grafham Water Centre:** Hundreds of disadvantaged young people are being offered the chance to take part in activities like climbing, canoeing and orienteering for free at Grafham Water Centre. These exciting opportunities will become available after Cambridgeshire County Council secured £42,375 of funding.

The fully funded residential and day visits are being made available to groups of under-represented young people throughout January, February and March in 2024.

The money has come from UK Youth as part of its Adventures Away from Home Fund. The charity secured £1.5 million from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), to support organisations across England to deliver outdoor learning experiences to about 7,500 underrepresented young people.

The places have been made available to groups who are underrepresented, such as young people living in poverty, young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), young carers and looked after young people. Young people must be aged 11-18, or up to 25 for those with SEND.

Eligible groups can apply for place now by sending an email to:

[gwcbookings@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:gwcbookings@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Council felt that this provision is very worthwhile, but that Council's own funding would be better used locally.

**Volunteer Recruitment Advertising:** CCC is looking for volunteers for the County Council education admission appeals panels. A poster was received with the email request, which the Clerk has added to the notice board.

**Barclays Bank:** A letter acknowledging receipt of Council's complaint has been received, along with an indication of a reply by 19th January 2024. A brochure detailing How to Complain was enclosed with the letter.

**Circulated to Councillors:**

SCDC Parish weekly agendas/e-bulletin

Anthony Browne's weekly updates

NHS newsletter

3C Building Controls newsletter

Cambridge Approaches newsletter

Cambridgeshire Matters

CCC Budget meeting

**South Cambs District Councillor Williams gave a verbal report to the meeting**

**4 day week:** Councillor Williams wants to see what information is being provided to the Government on a weekly basis. This was not forthcoming, so following legal advice she used the Councillors right to information. The Chief Executive responded that all information would be available by 22 January. Apparently, not everything that the Government asked for has been provided. Councillor Williams requested a business plan but discovered that there wasn't one. Apparently there are no costs involved in the 4 day week, but just providing the amount of information to the Government on a weekly basis must cost something. The trial of the 4 day week will end on 31 March 2024, but staff will continue to work in this way until a decision whether to continue or not is made. If a decision is made to continue, then the motion will go to full Council for the first time, for all District Councillors to finally have a vote on it.

**House Building in South Cambs:** A report on the availability of water for a supply to any new build houses is awaited. A shortage in this area has already been discussed.

**Pot Holes:** Cllr Williams reports any potholes she finds when she is out and about. Council drew her attention to some particularly troublesome pot holes at the top of Croydon Hill, which she will investigate..She emphasised the importance of reporting any pot holes through the CCC website:-

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

## **Written report for January 2024 from Cllr Heather Williams Leader of the Conservative Group at South Cambridgeshire District Council**

### **Four-day week data published:**

On 22 January 2024, the administration finally published the four-day week performance data on the council's website that is being sent to government under the Best Value Notice.

This data can be found here:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/best-value-notice-data-requests/#doc-list-53840-53842>

The publication of the data follows my hard-fought battle to gain access to this information for residents and councillors. At an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 20 November 2023, I asked to see the business case for the four-day week.

In January, I still had not had a response to my request to see the business case and followed up on this request. I then learned that there was no business case - only the original proposal agreed by Cabinet on 12 September 2022.

Everything the council does has a cost attached - any time spent on projects by council officers is time being paid for and costing residents, which is why it is so concerning that the Cabinet paper said there was no cost associated with the trial.

### **Financial**

27. There would be no cost to undertaking the trial

With no business case to underpin the trial I am very concerned that the true cost of this trial has not been properly considered.

On 4 January 2024, I received word that Cabinet had decided they would not publish the data until the Best Value Notice was withdrawn. This worried me as I did not know how long this would take and proper scrutiny of the data should be made in a timely manner.

On 8 January 2024, I requested to see the four-day week data under my rights as a member of the Scrutiny committee - to help me properly scrutinise the administration. It was confirmed that I had a right to see the information being sent to government and following my request, the administration finally agreed to publish the four-day week data on the council's website.

While I have succeeded in getting the administration to share the data they are sending to government, I will not stop here. I will continue to push for more transparency in relation to the four-day week to enable residents to see where their money is going.

I also asked to see how much money the administration has spent on legal advice relating to the four-day week. I am still awaiting an answer about this.



## Timeline of Data Requests and Submissions

Best Value Notice issued	3 November 2023
Data request outline received	8 November 2023
Data request confirmed and live online	13 November 2023
Deadline for first weekly data submission	20 November 2023
<b><i>I asked to see the business case for the four-day week trial.</i></b>	<b><i>20 November 2023</i></b>
Deadline for retrospective data submission	11 December 2023
Expanded and revised weekly and retrospective data request received	29 December 2023
<b><i>I received word that Cabinet would not be publishing the data until the Best Value Notice was withdrawn</i></b>	<b><i>4 January 2024</i></b>
<b><i>I requested to see the data under my rights as a Scrutiny member</i></b>	<b><i>8 January 2024</i></b>
<b><i>I received confirmation that the data would be provided to me within 10 working days</i></b>	<b><i>9 January 2024</i></b>
<b><i>I received notification that the data would be made public for everyone to see on 22 January 2024</i></b>	<b><i>16 January 2024</i></b>
Deadline for expanded and revised data request	15 January 2024
Launch of SCDC online publication of data	22 January 2024

### **Best Value Notice:**

The District Council continues to be subject to a Best Value Notice from Government. I am aware that the administration has not been able to supply answers to all of the initial queries and requests. Government have subsequently requested further information from the Council. When there will be a vote to make the trial permanent or not is yet unknown. Cabinet may alone decide to extend the trial.

### **Consultations:**

I am encouraging residents, businesses and local organisations to have their say on the future of housing in Cambridgeshire.

The consultation runs for six weeks from 22 January to 4 March 2024. More information on how to share your views can be accessed via the link below:-

[Have your say on the future of local housing \(scambs.gov.uk\)](https://scambs.gov.uk)

### **Grants for Community Groups and Parish Councils:**

If you are from a local community group or parish council, I am encouraging you to make the most of the available grant schemes.

The Grant Grabber service ([Home | Support Cambridgeshire 4 Community \(idoxopen4community.co.uk\)](http://Home|SupportCambridgeshire4Community(idoxopen4community.co.uk))) helps you search for available grants - all in one place.

For further information on receiving a grant for a community project from the council, please visit the grants web page:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-development/grants/>

Thank you for reading my report. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Cllr Heather Williams

SCDC The Mordens

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Twitter: @Cllr\_H\_Williams

Facebook Page: Cllr Heather Williams

Website: [www.cllrheatherwilliams.co.uk](http://www.cllrheatherwilliams.co.uk)

### **Finance**

**Bank statement:** None received.

**Bank mandates:** Councillors resolved that a mandate should be sought to allow the Clerk to talk to Barclays, should the necessity arise. As a signatory has to contact the bank in order to change/add a mandate, the Clerk will liaise with Mr Barnes in order to achieve this.

**Reading Room Funding Requests:** Mr Buchanan presented Council with his report following discussions with the Chair of the Trustees. The Clerk had researched the giving of donations/grants to charities and believed that, as the Reading Room is now a charity, grants can only be made under Section 137 and there is a limit on the amount available per year. Clerk informed Councillors of a suggested amendment to the nominal accounts, which was accepted. Consequently, after a lot of discussion and based on Mr Buchanan's advice, it was proposed by Mr Barnes and seconded by Mrs Sole that a grant of £720 towards two years' wi-fi (at £30-00 per month) and a grant of £330 towards the Lemon booking system would be made. All eligible councillors were in favour and a cheque for £1050-00 was raised and signed at the meeting. The Clerk will make sure this is delivered, along with a covering letter.

**Precept:** Councillors received the spreadsheet detailing the Council's expenditure to date and projected expenditure for the year 2024-25. After much discussion it was decided to precept for the following amounts:-

• Insurance	£500
• Rent	£300
• Clerk	£1800
• Audit	£75
• Subs	£80
• Cemetery and Village	£1200
• War Memorial	£250
• Street Furniture	£200
• Council and Website	£350
• Contingency and S137	£2000

The precept required for the year 2024-25 is therefore £6755-00. This was proposed by Mr Sole and seconded by Mr Barnes. All in favour. Clerk will action.

**CPRE:** A letter was received asking if Council would consider donating to them, in order to further their work. Council declined and Clerk will acknowledge the letter with the usual response.

**Barclays - confirmation of cheque signatories:** Concern was expressed that the third signatory had not been confirmed by Barclays, as Council is vulnerable with only two

signatories instead of three. Council's account requires any two from three signatories. Council was assured that this would be rectified.

**Items for next agenda:** None put forward

**Next meeting:** Wednesday 21 February 2024 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm

As there was no further business the meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed ..... Date .....