

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Wednesday 17th April 2024 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Cllr Kindersley - will attend, but will be late, Mrs Pillinger - tree warden.

Present: Mr Wheeler, Mr Barnes, Ms Newland, Mr Sole, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Sole, Mr Wenman, Cllr Williams, Cllr Kindersley (later), five members of the public and the Clerk.

Minutes: of the March meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None

Reports:

Police: An email received from our neighbourhood policeman, PCSO Coppard, indicated that the Police no longer attend meetings as all information is available on the local Police website. He did send the following information for the last three months:-

- 1 x report of poaching
- 1 x report of tree down on Croydon hill
- 1 x animals - Deer injured

Patrols in the area do come through the village from time to time, but the South Cambs Neighbourhood team is only ten officers:- 2 x Sergeants, 5 x Police Officers, 3 x PCSO's, who cover 106 villages and towns.

Please feel free to email any concerns you may have or log into the quarterly meetings held via Teams, the next one being in May, details online @cambs police website.

PCSO Coppard is planning to attend the Café from 2.30pm - 3.30pm on 24th April, if permitted by operational issues.

John Coppard

PCSO Cambridgeshire Constabulary

Ext: 7113441 Mobile: 07872357909

Cambridgeshire Constabulary

Hinchingbrooke Park,

Huntingdon, PE29 6NP

Orwell School Head Teachers' and Governors' reports:



Petersfield Church of England Aided Primary School Annual Report - 2024 Headteachers' report

In the Bible, John 10:10 Jesus says "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full". As a Church of England Aided Primary School, our school vision of 'Live Life to the Full' informs every aspect of our decision making and

we strive in this time and this place to enable all children and adults in our school community to flourish.

To enable us to live our school vision, we have identified our 2023-2024 school priorities to be:

1. Following the summer 2023 feedback and implementation cycle, to draft and implement our revised behaviour policy in line with our school vision.
2. Through recruitment, training and induction, ensure clear responsibility and accountability for all staff including senior leaders.
3. Through internal coaching and external support, further develop the quality of learning and teaching.
4. Following redistribution of key roles in autumn 2023, all subject leaders will ensure the rigour of curriculum skills and knowledge progression with a particular focus on:
 - a) accessing the English Hub partnership support to embed the Little Wandle reading scheme.
 - b) aligning with the new 2023-2028 Agreed Religious Education (RE) syllabus with our curriculum teaching.

Since our last report, our staff team has been enhanced by the skills of Miss Williams (administrator), Mrs Wilson (music), Mrs Parkinson (English) and Ms Perkins (Deputy Head).

During the Lent Challenge, set by Bishop Dagmar, we took time to reflect on our actions towards the environment - individually and collectively. Throughout the world there are some wonderful works happening to try and

combat climate change and restore the wonder of creation so that humanity can live with the beauty and peace of all creation. We all learnt from the examples of others and reflected that

once we see the success of a small action taken, it encourages us to think that we can do the same, or more, where we are. Mrs Bonfield, our sewing volunteer, worked with pupils to produce a wall hanging (seen here) in response to the Lent Challenge. Please do look at the 'Latest News' on the homepage of our school website www.petersfield.cambs.sch.uk and the website Gallery to hear about the great place to be Petersfield School is! If you wish to contact us or find out more, join our wonderful volunteers who support children in activities such as reading, sewing, coding and playing, please do not hesitate to do so by calling 01223 207382 or emailing office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk. We very much look forward to welcoming you.

Linda Meredith & Jane Johnson, Laura Penrose and Emma Locke,
Co-Chairs of Governors & Co-Headteachers



Pupil report - Mrs Meredith spoke to pupils in school and asked them to contribute to this report.

Children from a variety of classes spoke to me very enthusiastically about a wide range of highlights over the last few terms. Enjoyment is always a key element to their recollections and our conversation revealed this was to be found in a wide variety of activities.

Once again, the residential trip to Grafham Water was in the forefront of the older children's minds. For some this was the first time away from home. Particularly memorable was the canoeing activity where they had fun with the instructor.

A very recent trip was to the British Museum. The children visited the Parthenon Gallery as they were studying Ancient Greece. They were given iPads and had a variety of activities to carry out when walking around the sculptures; it was like a 'scavenger hunt.'

Some of the children have been trained as first aiders called 'Mini Medics'. They practised CPR on dummies and the child who recalled this felt she was confident enough to put it into practice.

The previous day KS2 took part in Reactive Church where they were able to make Easter Gardens. There were stations set up for different parts of the Easter Story e.g. acting out the disciples washing of Jesus' feet and creating the floor of the garden where Jesus was buried. The children were able to take their boxes home, once finished.

Also, GenR8 had recently been in to school and lead an Easter Collective Worship based around the subject of being given a second chance. The message given was that Jesus had died and then came alive again to give us all one more chance.

Some children took part in a cross country run at Milton Park, running for two miles around the park twice. They greatly enjoyed the physical challenge and the trip out to the park.

Science Week was a great event for the children. There had been many exciting experiments such as putting eggs into a variety of liquids such as vinegar and Ribena to see how it affected the eggshell. This was then related to tooth decay. Also, Mentoes (minty sweets) were put in Coke to see how it fizzed.

A wide variety of topics were mentioned including an activity in English where there was a mystery regarding a robotic arm that had been abandoned in the hall. This was an introduction to the story of The Iron Man. The children produced reports of this for newsletters etc.

A few children were very excited about a new spelling programme that had been introduced. This is computer based and helps to practise spellings and also assesses progress.

The Rock Steady Band continues to provide great enjoyment for many children. The children develop their musical skills on one instrument, but at the end of a term they get to have a go on a variety of different ones. The teacher, Luke, is great fun and according to the children a great teacher. One child said they enjoyed music in general, but particularly liked showing their talent to other people. They are taking part in a concert later in the week.

Croydon Reading Room Charity Number 1185668 Annual Review 2023/24

In May 2023 The Reading Room re opened with a lovely and well attended Cheese & Wine! We have enjoyed many new regular bookings which include Pilates, Art Classes, The Croydon Cafe, Private Tutoring for under 12s and a Monthly Book Club! We are also having our first Book signing for Percy Mark with a reading and celebratory Cheese & Wine on the 9th May! The Reading Room remains fully registered as a Charity and we have a new Treasurer, Tim Walters! Michael Norie has helped me to cut the grass as have other villagers. We are all very concerned about the falling trees in the moat which we have had to cut back again. Mr Farrer has removed several close trees but more needs to be done to protect the Reading Rooms. Any support or suggestions from the Parish council can give would be appreciated. We are very grateful for the Parish Council's support with the WI FI and Web Site for the Reading Room & the ongoing funding. It is SO appreciated as this year has been very difficult. The Dog Bin has been moved and the Gardens kept neat & tidy! The new flooring looks good! Again our thanks to the Parish Council. The new Eco efficient heating is working well - though WE MUST ALL REMEMBER TO SWITCH IT OFF and the Play Area and Baby changing facilities are well used & enjoyed! We had a fire safety check last year and are hoping to have the trees surveyed & the building's structure checked again this year. We still hope to help clear up the moat which could be such a wild life sanctuary in time. The smell continues to be quite bad at times. We also are hoping to have Padel Tennis sessions, more fitness sessions and perhaps a Pop up Shop or Pop up Pub! Although retired I still work at least 20 hours a week for the NHS and have six beautiful Grandchildren! My thanks to all the Trustees, and the continuing support of the Parish Council. I wish all of you good health and safe passage through this next 12 months.

AGM ; 2nd July 2024 All welcome.

Diana Walters

TRUSTEES

Chairman, Bookings Clerk & caretaker; Diana Walters. Secretary; Janice Horsford. Treasurer; Tim Walters, Chris Elsley, Frank Sole, Melita Brownrigg and Chris Sole

Community Reports

Croydon Café

We should like to express out thanks to the Parish Council for their invaluable support of the Croydon Cafe. It is much appreciated.

Kind Regards

Val Barnes, Jackie Newland, Carol McGeoch

District Councillor Annual report:

Cllr Williams gave a verbal report to the meeting.

It has been a busy year.

The budget has been set, with the Council rent increase rising by 7.7% and the Council Tax also rising. A double whammy for those who can perhaps least afford it. If you know anyone who may be in need, please let Cllr Williams know. 20% of people who are in need do not claim their entitlement. Councillor allowances were also raised retrospectively, which Cllr Williams voted against.

Four Day week: This is supposed to be 100% of the pay for 100% of the work in 80% of the time. Desk based officers were working 30 hours, but have now been brought into line with the manual workers, and work 32 hours a week. The Government has tried to stop the four day week but was ignored. The Government has placed a Best Value Notice on SCDC and there are numerous weekly reports that have to be sent to Government to comply with this. All this information is available on the website. 80% of Councillors have not been allowed to vote on the four day week - it has always been a Cabinet decision. There should be a full consultation when the Best Value Notice is lifted.

Corporate Peer Review: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) do not cover the whole of Council business. The road charging option is still on the table.

Flytipping: Please report if you see anyone tipping, or anything tipped. Only one penalty notice has been issued.

Civil Parking Enforcement: This is now active and villages with double yellow lines will be or will have been visited by these officers. It is possible to make an enforcement via the website:-

https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Parking_Enforcement_request

There were no questions for Cllr Williams and the Chairman thanked her for attending and for her report.

Cllr Heather Williams - SCDC The Mordens Ward Tel: 07885 774 775

Parish AGM Report 2024 - The Mordens Ward District Councillor Heather Williams

Financial position of South Cambridgeshire District Council

The Budget for 2024-25 was agreed in February. There were a number of proposals I supported, including continuing the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and additional funding for Ermine Street Housing. Unfortunately, however, there were too many elements that I was uncomfortable with and I voted against the Budget. Below are some of the reasons for my decision:

- The administration's budget gap is now almost £4.5 million. We warned last year that this gap would increase if the administration did not change their mentality - and it has increased. I deemed it irresponsible that the administration is still trying to live beyond the council's means, and was uncomfortable with further increases to borrowing and debt.
- The Budget included increasing the Council Tax by the legal maximum amount, and increased affordable housing rents by 7.7%. I felt this was inappropriate given that many residents are struggling with the cost of living.
- The Budget included increasing councillor remuneration and a second Special Responsibility Allowance for councillors. I was extremely disappointed that the administration voted to give councillors a 5% pay rise whilst putting up Council Tax and rents for residents.

I put forward an amendment to the Budget proposals for 2024-25. This included freezing the Council Tax; removal of the second Special Responsibility Allowance for councillors; bolstering planning enforcement and fly tipping; introducing a Tackling Rural Isolation officer; and scrapping the four-day week to get the best value for money. Unfortunately, the administration unanimously rejected my amended proposals.

If you are aware of anybody who is struggling with the cost of living, please do get in touch. There is support available so please do not suffer alone. For more information online, please see the cost of living support page on the council's website.

Four-day week update

2023 was a year of significant change at the council with the introduction of the four-day working week trial. This has been in place since January 2023 for desk-based staff, who have been working 30 hours a week, and since September 2023 for bin collectors, who have been working 32 hours a week. Since November 2023, the council has also been issued with a Best Value Notice by the government, reflecting concern that the four-day week is not delivering value for money for residents. The council is required to submit historical and weekly data on four-day week performance under the Notice, which is available to view here.

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

I have been absolute in my opposition to the four-day week trial from the beginning. I do not believe it is right that residents are paying five days' pay, for only four days' work. I have consistently questioned the lack of financial business case done in preparation for the trial, despite the significant expense on legal advice to make the trial work and the £3.3 million salaried hours unworked across the entire year.

The lack of transparency has been concerning and frustrating. It has felt nearly impossible throughout this trial to get answers to questions, and it made me extremely uncomfortable to discover that independent reports on the four-day week had been tampered with.

A Cabinet meeting in February brought new suggestions for the four-day week, which gained the administration's approval. I am pleased to see the harmonisation of working hours between desk-based staff and waste crews to 32 hours a week, and have opposed the linguistic and operational discrimination that I believe has happened between blue and white-collar workers since the start of this trial.

However, we are now in a situation where the trial has ended – and yet officers continue to only work four days, for five days' pay, while the evidence is reviewed. 80% of councillors and residents have still been denied a vote on the four-day week. I am deeply concerned that a recent report has shown the longer this continues, the harder it will be to get back to a five-day week. I am concerned this social experiment will have led to significant disruption and demoralisation. I am frustrated that the administration clearly did not plan for this beforehand - leaving its own hands tied.

I am continuing to ask questions, scrutinise the data, and speak out in my opposition to the principle of asking taxpayers to fund five-days' pay for only four-days' work.

Corporate Peer Review 2023

The council participated in a Corporate Peer Review by the Local Government Association (LGA). The last peer review took place in 2020, reviewing the council's Planning Committee.

The full report can be viewed here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/nbah2kxw/20231213-south-cambridgeshire-dc-cpc-report.pdf>.

I was pleased to see that the council is performing well for household recycling rates, and that the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee - of which I am a member - was described as being effective. However, the report also recommends important areas where the council needs to improve. As Leader of the Opposition, I will be closely monitoring how the administration acts on these recommendations, which include:

- Accelerate the closure of outstanding accounts. Since the review, the council has signed off its 2021/22 accounts, but we are still well behind where we need to be.
- Communicate impactful decisions promptly. The report found that important decisions including the four-day week were not communicated effectively or promptly by the administration, which has a worrying impact on the council's culture and transparency.
- Improve responsiveness to member engagement. Councillors reported that access to officers was more difficult since hybrid working has been implemented - undoubtedly worsened by the four-day week working pattern.

Road charging motion

In September at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the Lib Dem Leader of this council voted to support road charging. In November's Full Council meeting, I submitted a motion which stated: 'This Council is opposed to any form of road charging in Cambridgeshire.' The Liberal Democrats unanimously rejected my motion, refusing to withdraw road charging from the table in Cambridgeshire.

I was extremely disappointed that the administration failed to rule out road charging in Cambridgeshire - especially when a majority of residents opposed the now abandoned congestion charge. We have been consistent in our view on road charging - and that is a firm 'no' to a regressive charge on drivers, threatening to harm the most vulnerable in our society. I am working hard to ensure road charging stays firmly away from Cambridgeshire, and can only hope that other parties reach the same conclusion.

Fly tipping

I was disappointed to see only one fine issued for over 500 incidents of fly tipping in South Cambridgeshire. Fly tipping is a blight on our beautiful countryside and residents have been crying out for a crackdown for some time. I am therefore glad to see that Fixed Penalty Notices for fly tipping will increase from £400 to £700 from 1 April 2024.

The administration's budget proposed to employ an additional Envirocrime officer, whose role is to tackle environmental crimes like fly tipping. However, given that we only have one officer at the moment, I felt that two officers was still not enough. Our Budget amendment proposed an additional Envirocrime officer to take the total to three, but this was unfortunately rejected by the administration.

Parking enforcement

Cambridgeshire County Council was given new Civil Parking Enforcement powers, which includes South Cambridgeshire and have been enforced since 1 February 2024. Fixed Penalty Charge Notices will now be issued for illegal parking, with fines between £50 and £70 depending on the severity of the offence.

Illegal parking is a danger to us all, causing obstruction to pedestrians on the pavement and to emergency vehicles who need to get through our roads quickly. I was pleased to see these new enforcement powers against illegal parking, and have encouraged residents to always check the signs and restrictions where they are planning to park to avoid paying fines.

As your councillor

As your District Councillor, I am on the following committees:

- Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
- Civic Affairs Committee
- Climate and Environment Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Full Council
- Employment & Staffing Committee

- Grants Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Licensing Committee (substitute)
- Planning Committee
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee
- Planning Committee Steering Group

In addition to the above, I have additional responsibilities as the Major Opposition Group Leader. I am also a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly.

Political balance of South Cambridgeshire District Council

- Liberal Democrats 35
- Conservatives 9
- Independents 1

Cllr Heather Williams

SCDC The Mordens Ward

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All Saints' Church, Croydon cum Clopton

Fabric Report to the Annual Parish Council Meeting 17th April 2024

At this time last year, after several years of intensive investigations of the Downing Crypt, we reported a less frenetic year. Previous reports described concerns about the safety of the Crypt on which the Chancel floor rests, and as a result the Chancel had been roped off. The Crypt hadn't been accessed for generations, and even the location of the entrance wasn't known. Eventually, an old stairway and entrance were located and the Crypt finally entered in 2020. What was found did nothing to calm fears about the risk of collapse so in late 2021 an extensive steel frame supporting 9 ceiling jacks was installed within the Crypt, and the Chancel then re-opened. So, what of the past year? In summary, not quite as calm as last year but with a very positive ending!

It is pleasing to report that the major repairs mentioned last year to several of the most ancient windows on the south side, plus extensive repairs to external cracks have all been completed – thanks to a fleet-footed application to the Covid Recovery Fund. Less pleasing is that concerns grew about the Crypt structure as surface measurements indicated settlement of the Chancel Floor, while in the opposite direction clearances were increasing above the jacks placed just under the Crypt Ceiling. This apparent contradiction led to two additional jacks being installed at the west end of the Crypt, making 11 jacks in all ready to “catch” the Chancel Floor if it ever gives way. Hopefully no more jacks will be needed, indeed the Crypt is now very cluttered as all of the coffins have remained untouched in their locations.

The other important item mentioned in last year's report was an obligatory 5 yearly survey of the entire building, though at that time the final report had not been received. From past experience we forewarned that calm nerves would be needed as these surveys on such an old building always result in a challenging read, and so it has turned out. While the survey report acknowledges that much good work is being done, for example, the extensive monitoring, the repairs to several of the most ancient windows and repairs to external cracks especially at the Chancel East End and Tower buttresses, nonetheless, without too much difficulty the Report listed:

- 26 Items for Urgent attention,
- another 48 to be completed in 12 months,
- 32 in 18 to 24 months,
- 17 more within 5 years,
- plus a further 12 listed as “desirable”.

Calm nerves needed indeed! Sadly, these 5 yearly reports are not required to provide a realistic route map for completing these tasks taking into account the size and resources, including human resources, of the parish.

In addition to the serious concerns about the Chancel Floor and Crypt Ceiling, other key areas include the stability of the (noticeably leaning) South Arcade, cracks around the base of the Tower (though these are mainly to the buttresses), and for the first time, the potential effects of climate change. Given that the

church has shallow foundations and, as for much of Croydon, rests on shrinkable clay, the heightened awareness of climate change relates to concerns about the effects of heavier rainfall when it does rain, and fiercer droughts when it doesn't. In the case of the church the situation is exacerbated by the water demands of large trees surrounding the building on the north and east sides. The one bright spot is that these movements are now captured within the movement monitoring programme.

As for the monitoring programme itself, this was described in some detail in last year's report. Suffice to say that extensive measurements have continued at intervals, both internally and externally, and of course within the Crypt. Unfortunately, recent mobility issues have meant that some of the more difficult to access readings have necessarily been missed. This important work really would benefit from the involvement of younger blood as access to some areas very much relies on agility and flexibility. Anyone with any interest in helping at all please speak to one of us, or with Percy. Once again, we wish to acknowledge in public our thanks to Graham Pledger, Diocese of Ely Structural Adviser, without whom we would be unable to continue this work; also to Percy Mark for his continued involvement in caring for this building.

This brings us to the year-end good news we mentioned earlier in our report. Since Covid struck, all ancient churches have been faced with a non-functioning National Lottery grant system, and this fact, coupled with the challenging findings of the 5-yearly building survey, led to an urgent on-site meeting being arranged with the Buildings At Risk team of Historic England. It is not heavily publicised, but HE does have a role as funders of last resort. Their visit was at the end of January, and the PCC put forward the best pitch it could muster. The fundamentals were: the nature and age of the building, difficult local ground conditions (shrinkable clay), the impact of large trees close to the building, the impacts of climate change begin felt with alternating very wet and drought conditions, and finally the more than nationally important Downing burials in the Crypt. We, of course, emphasised the direct connections to Downing Street in London including number 10, Downing College Cambridge, the very strong early links with Harvard University MA USA, the acquisition of New Amsterdam (New York) for the Crown etc. We laid out a vision of a repaired and restored Crypt and of a building whose future was secured through understanding the ground movements and then accommodating them. Also, and most importantly for this community, of having a building significantly upgraded to include a water supply, servery, toilet, records storage, heating and lighting. In short, the works! The HE team gave the impression of being supportive, and we are very pleased receive confirmation last month that HE are prepared to offer a Project Development Grant to fund ground and building structural investigations, including the impacts of trees, all hopefully leading for the first time to an overall strategy for stabilisation and repair. So, good news indeed! The PCC now has to work through the application process to agree with HE a scope of works including cost estimates.

Churchyards: Many will have noticed how sympathetically managed are the cut areas and for this we must again thank Michael Norie for his dedication to the task. A careful balance is being trodden between the needs of families maintaining graves, as against encouraging a more nature friendly approach. The PCC wishes to thank the Parish Council for continuing to contribute to the cost of churchyard maintenance. The churchyard is for the benefit of the whole community, whether for burials, ashes interment, or simply peaceful visiting. There are now two benches in the new churchyard, one of which is a commemorative Queen's Platinum Jubilee Memorial Bench. The Diocese of Ely & The Wildlife Trust conservation and biodiversity project is continuing. Thanks go especially to Judith, Maggie and Val for coordinating this work. Efforts are underway to move beyond the Bronze award already achieved.

Briefly on finances: after a break last year, plans are again underway for another Croydon Classic Vehicle Show on Sunday 8th September, we think the 13th in the series. For those who don't know, this is a big event with the last show yielding a total of over £6,000 shared between the Church and the Reading Room. Success again this year will be of great importance to both of these buildings which help to stitch our community together. Please respond and support in any way you can. More generally, we would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that as a Parish Church, All Saints' has to pay into the Diocese of Ely but receives no external funding from any organisation for daily running costs needed to keep the church open and functioning; neither from the Church of England, the Government, nor the Local Authority. All of these costs the PCC is required to find from local giving and events. Several Croydon households have joined the (national) Parish Giving Scheme which, with no fee at all, collects one off and regular giving payments on behalf of Croydon Church. This has become the key lifeline for keeping All Saints' open and functioning. All Saints' continues to function for regular services, baptisms,

marriages, funerals, burials and providing a quiet space, but even if your interest is simply its historical importance, then please do consider joining the Parish Giving Scheme with regular giving, however small. It is really easy to do, simply go to www.parishgiving.org.uk then find Croydon Church (postcode SG8 ODL) or use the unique parish code 140614137. Thank you.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit a report to the annual meeting, and thank everyone for your attention.

Malcolm Ralph and Carol McGeoch - Churchwardens

Tree Warden report to Croydon Parish Council 17 April 2024

The hot dry summer last year was not good for trees. Many tree planting programmes throughout the UK, including thousands of saplings planted at Wimpole, were lost. This underlines the necessity to not only plant trees in the right locations but also to provide aftercare with regular watering throughout the Summer months for at least a couple of years if not more. Sadly, we lost one of the crab apples planted in the new churchyard despite regular watering and a belief that the trees had established well. There may have been some damage to this tree in addition to the stress caused by drought.

However, the two cherry trees on Clopton Close continue to do well and we have a lovely new cherry tree in the new churchyard, courtesy of a grant from South Cambs.

The field maple planted in the new churchyard was damaged by the grass cutting last year but may yet survive – it has buds! There is also a healthy oak sapling in the new churchyard which is fortunately well positioned and may be allowed to grow to maturity without disturbing the burial sites.

We struggled to identify a site for a celebration Jubilee tree as there is such limited public space in the village. However, we will persevere. Sites for more ambitious tree planting may emerge in due course as part of any new build projects in the village, or private landowners granting permission.

Small private projects continue to contribute to the welfare of trees in the village, such as the hedge laying at Croydon Hill farm, which will strengthen the hedgerow, and includes field maples, blackthorn and hawthorns, providing healthier growth and lower level cover for mammals, alongside mature wild and bird cherry, thus improving biodiversity.

The Rowan tree planted in a garden opposite Clopton Close, partly as an experiment to monitor the success or otherwise of this species in this area, continues to flourish.

Update on identified tasks from last year:

Further village meeting to promote tree planting and welfare.

This was not achieved as a specific event, but the wardens were actively involved in preparing the exhibition on conservation and biodiversity in the village for the Car Show last September, and were present throughout the day of the show to speak to visitors. The exhibition remained in place in the church until mid-December and provided information about our trees and other conservation efforts.

The tree wardens are actively involved in working towards the Silver Award from the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire/Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust which is working in association with the Diocese of Ely, having already secured the Bronze Award. Collaboration with the Church Wardens is highly valued and is working well, as this is a great opportunity for joint learning and understanding of the benefits and concerns relating to trees around the church area, for example the potential damage to church foundations caused by the roots from the lime trees planted to the north of the old churchyard.

A further exhibition in August this year to coincide with a planned visit from a church history group will include information on efforts to promote conservation at the churchyards and this will help to form the basis of a permanent exhibition in the church.

We hope to organise a village meeting later this year, and/or a walk through the village to identify and record the tree species, as there is clearly interest in tree planting and preservation given the growing awareness of climate change and the important role played by trees, particularly providing carbon capture. Trees, whether alive or dead, are a haven for a multitude of species and therefore promote biodiversity throughout their life cycle.

Monitoring and recording tree health

We hope to survey the trees of the village to establish basic records on what trees do well here and whether there is any disease. Ash die back is increasing widespread and the fungal infection of Horse Chestnuts is also present.

It should be noted that dead and dying trees can be of great benefit to biodiversity; apart from the invertebrates, reptiles and fungi that will live well on dead wood, larger holes in trees can provide perfect nesting sites for raptors. We know there are tawny and barn owls nesting this year in and around the village.

A healthy ash tree has self-seeded by the fence in the new churchyard and this provides an excellent example of the best way to preserve the ash tree, as such indigenous self-seeding is considered to be the most hopeful way of producing disease resistant trees. However, the Church wardens are inclined to fell this tree as it may at some future point create a problem for the expansion of burials in the churchyard. This is an example of the conflict between different interpretations of optimal land management, a conflict which has become more serious given the concerns of climate change. The collaboration between the Diocese and the Wildlife Trust is precisely an attempt to recognise and resolve these conflicts. It is a nationwide initiative and we are all on a learning curve.

Encouraging future planting.

The area of land adjacent to the Solar Farm has been identified as a possible opportunity for more tree planting, including holding the owners of the Solar farm to their requirement to provide landscaping to conceal the solar panels and soften their visual impact. The tree wardens have raised this with local councillors and hope to make some progress this year.

There may be some scope for small tree planting around the Reading Room, and this is under discussion.

We will continue to encourage tree planting on private land and will update the data base which is already established.

Linking to the tree warden network

The wardens are connected by email and hope to extend involvement this year. Links with the local charity Cambridgeshire Past, Present and Future, which manages Wandlebury, have been made, and a tree identification talk was attended.

Aims for next year.

- Improve understanding of how to protect newly planted trees, and endeavour to involve villagers in watering new saplings for a longer period, especially over the first two summers and during drought.
- Expand membership of the established WhatsApp group for Trees and Biodiversity.
- Conduct a survey of local trees and update the Excel spreadsheet which has been set up.
- Involve the village residents in activities to promote a better understanding of the value of trees to the community.
- Contribute to exhibitions at the church promoting conservation and biodiversity.
- Continue to identify sites for planting and pursue grants for providing trees.
- Consider whether a living Christmas tree can be planted for festive decoration outside the Reading Room.

Maggie John
Judith Pillinger

Biodiversity net gain and planted tree management in Croydon churchyard

Maggie John and Judith Pillinger April 2024

Funding for grass cutting equipment – advice please

We are concerned that the current arrangements [arranged by the PCC with a financial contribution from the PC] for cutting the grass in the churchyard are not able to meet the recommendations of the Wildlife Trust/Diocesan conservation project which has been active in Croydon for a number of years. Whilst regular cuts are made, these have proved insufficient to manage the growth and the essential removal of cuttings either for maintenance of the flower meadows or access via mown paths, especially in the new churchyard. Removing grass cuttings to reduce fertility is necessary if we are to achieve the silver award in the scheme. Timing of cuts is currently not coordinated with grass and wildflower management. To increase the biodiversity and encourage wildflowers and associated wildlife, a flexible plan is needed which can take account of weather and other variables. If we are able to cut different areas of the new churchyard to promote different types of species growth as well as maintain the paths much more frequently it will make the whole area more accessible and enjoyable and will enable Croydon to bid for

the Wildlife Trust Silver Award (NB we currently have the Bronze level award, Arrington has the Silver level). In addition, we will be able to secure ongoing maintenance of the previous and recent SCDC funded tree planting by keeping the areas around the trees regularly maintained.

With these various aims in mind we, we have determined that there is an urgent need for a more focused managed programme of grass management, led by the tree wardens and the ad hoc village conservation group (with the support of the PCC). This plan is no substitute for the PCC/PC led existing cuts, but as an additional intervention it could be more attentive and responsive to the timescales and actions required by the Wildlife Trust scheme.

We have discussed this at length over our years of involvement in the scheme and we conclude the only way forward is to have a dedicated grass cutting facility on site at the churchyard. Such a machine would be used by an approved list of individuals on a rota to fulfil the grass cutting plan and essential removal of all cuttings to the compost heaps.

To facilitate the plan, the mower would need to be housed on site, preferably within the church although the Reading Room room may also be possible. We are seeking funds for a battery powered grass cutter, with estimated costs in the region of £350 to £500. We recognise potential issues with charging batteries and would ensure that no unattended charging takes place; a second battery would provide extended running time.

We are minded to apply to the Community Chest of SCDC but would appreciate advice whether such an application could/should come from the PC or the PCC - unless of course the PC is able to fund the equipment for the benefit of the village. However, we must stress that time is of the essence as the grass is growing rapidly.

Judith and Maggie

The Tree Wardens asked the Parish Council if it would consider applying to the Community Chest for the purchase of a village mower. Council agreed this was the best way forward, and the Clerk will look into this, with help from the wardens.

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Kindersley - verbal Report 2024

Potholes: 150% of the average rainfall has exacerbated the pothole problem. One more millimetre of rain will cause floods as the land is so sodden. Traffic is heavier, not just in volume but also in weight, and so more damage is being caused. Crews can only temporary fill the potholes until the weather is better, which has cost implications. The road surface from Croydon Hill to Hatley is very bad, and a resident's recent complaint regarding the drainage works on Croydon Hill is being dealt with. Please continue to report any potholes on the website.

<https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

Flooding on A1198: This is actually worse than before the remedial works were undertaken. Cllr Kindersley has had words with the contractors Milestone, who now think that there is an undiscovered blockage somewhere. Hopefully it will be found soon.

There were no questions for Cllr Kindersley who was thanked by the Chairman and left the meeting.

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report - April 2024

South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Littleton, 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!

Local Government Funding: Over the past few months residents have queried why we have difficulty with basic services such as pothole filling - particularly on social media. In 2023/24 local authority spending in England is £118bn. Of this £74 bn is spent on education, adult social care and children's social care. Over the last 14 years local councils have seen a 50% fall in their spending powers and from 2010-2022 central government grant has been cut by 40% in real terms; with an increase in Council tax by 30%. Funding for all services is 10% lower than it was in 2010; and for services such as potholes, roads, transport, Libraries, leisure centres etc the figure is a cut of 43%. As the demand for statutory services rises the amount of cash left for everything else reduces - Councils can't book an overdraft - unlike the Government!

Cambridge 2050: A Ministerial Statement from Michael Gove has landed about his plans for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire right at the end of March. It confirms the establishment of a decision-making Growth Company with no elected representation on it which is deeply concerning. It appears Council Leaders, the Mayor and an unclear number of others will be on an Advisory Council feeding into the Growth Company Board. The Growth Company will be a subsidiary of the Government's own housing body, Homes England - a model that has not existed so far and does reinforce the impression that this is

all about houses. There is still no indication at all about where all these new houses (which amount to the equivalent of 3 Cambridges!) will go and this is causing concern especially in those villages around the City.

South Cambs District Council 50th anniversary celebrations: South Cambs marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of district councils with a civic ceremony in March preceded by the planting of a tree by Deputy Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire Jeremy Newsum. It was an opportunity to pay thanks to the unwavering dedication and commitment of all those who have served on and worked for the council over the years as well as the continued support of our residents and stakeholders.

State of the District Review: A "State of the District" Review was published in January 2024 with lots of really interesting information and data about our area <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/0tlljrvr/state-of-the-district-south-cambridgeshire.pdf>

Local Plan for Greater Cambridge to 2041: The Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP) process has been delayed due to factors outside the control of the two councils. The Local Plan timetable (or Local Development Scheme) sets out the expected timings for the production of the documents which are intended to replace the 2018 Local Plans to become the planning policy framework for Greater Cambridge.

The latest timetable was agreed by the Councils in 2022. However, continuing uncertainties relating to water availability and transport strategy mean this timetable can no longer be met, and a revised timetable cannot be confirmed.

New Development at Cambourne: South Cambs approved the business plan for the development of 256 homes covering 9.4 hectares opposite the Council's offices. This development will be delivered by a partnership between the council and Hills Group. 40% of the new homes will be affordable with all of the rentable houses built to much enhanced energy efficiency standards akin to Passivhaus standards. That amounts to 70 affordable rented and 30 shared equity. The Council will be the landlord.

Planning Service: Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has secured £100,000 of funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) in the latest Digital Planning Improvement round. The funding will enhance GCSP's digital capabilities and development management software, facilitating smoother operations and better integration of planning data. These upgrades will make planning processes faster and more efficient, which will directly benefit residents and developers.

Empty Houses: An awareness campaign has been launched by South Cambs to bring empty properties back into use and help get families living in suitable homes and is urging private property owners to turn empty properties into homes through sale or rental.

How to get an empty property back into use? There are many reasons why a property could be empty. The Council works with Auction Houses, Genealogy and Probate companies to progress probate or trace owners and estate agents - the Council can be a keyholder if property owners live some distance away. The Cambs HIA can arrange low-level building works on a private paid-for basis. They have surveyors, approved builders and contractors who work for them and arrange site meetings, Building Control, Planning and can complete technical drawings and schedules of work.

The 'Doer Upper' option: It is popular for people to take on an empty property in need of TLC to make it their home. If completing building work yourself, maintenance and improvements are usually charged at the standard rate of 20% VAT. If you're thinking about or have recently purchased a property that has sat empty for two plus years, the Council's Empty Homes Officer can provide you with a letter free of charge to pay just 5% VAT on renovation work when using a registered builder. If you are a private homeowner and would like further help and support, please contact Anna Nightingale Empty Homes Officer on: nightingale@scambs.gov.uk

Support for Ukraine update: Grants totalling more than £13,000 have been awarded for activities to help Ukrainian guests settle into South Cambridgeshire and forge friendships. In addition, more than £102,000 has been given to support English tuition. The funding is part of a wider £500,000 package of support provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council since the Homes for Ukraine scheme began, including helping guests achieve independent accommodation, a furniture package scheme and a recently launched landlord incentive scheme. Funding comes from the Government tariff received for every guest who arrives in the area.

South Cambs Financial Accounts 2022/23: SCDC's 22/23 accounts have now been finalised and are available to view on the website. The government has introduced transitional arrangements for all councils' outstanding audits, and SCDC awaits a final decision from government about how 21/22 and 22/23 accounts will be audited (but it's likely a very 'light touch').

Zero Carbon Communities Grant: Our popular Zero Carbon Communities grant will open for applications on 2 April 2024. Projects will once again be invited under two themes: reducing carbon

emissions or locking up carbon, and community engagement around climate change. Grants of between £2000 and £15,000 are available to parish councils and community groups in South Cambridgeshire, with a total pot of £125,000 available. Projects funded previously have included community building retrofits, food waste and climate-friendly cooking education, and e-bike rental schemes, to name just a few.

Police and Crime Commissioner Elections, Thursday 2 May: An election for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner will take place across the district on Thursday 2 May. Voters will need to show photo ID when voting at the polling station. You can now apply online for a postal vote, or a proxy vote, if you know you are going to be away on the day. More information can be found on SCDC's website. If you have any questions or want to find out more, please email elections@scams.gov.uk

Secondary School Places: A greater percentage of Cambridgeshire students will be going to their first-choice secondary school this September. A total of 87.9 per cent have been offered a place at their first-choice school – up a little from 87.1 per cent last year. The proportion offered a place at their first, second or third preference school has also risen - from 95.4 per cent in 2023 to 95.8 per cent this year. The total number of places offered this year was fewer than last - 7,220 compared with 7,413.

Cambridgeshire County Council: The Council met on 19 March, and received reports on senior manager pay, pay policy, and gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Five motions were proposed.

1. To work with partners to ensure our Armed Forces Covenant Officer is properly resourced; and write to Government about support for veterans, Afghan refugees, and dependents of Commonwealth veterans (PASSED)
2. To ask the Government to disband the Greater Cambridge Partnership and transfer its functions to the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority but still let us keep the money (DEFEATED)
3. To oppose any new 'locally imposed forms of taxation', cost up lots of 'ambitious transformational strategic infrastructure interventions', and discuss with the Government how to pay for it.(DEFEATED)
4. To ask the Government to introduce a proportional voting system for Police & Crime Commissioners and Mayors, and work with partners to encourage greater understanding of our tiers of local government and increase young people's participation in local elections (PASSED)
5. To ask the Government to commit to making the benefits and opportunities created by growth in Greater Cambridge accessible to all residents of Cambridgeshire and to commit to essential infrastructure and services to deliver growth, establish ambitious targets for affordable housing, and invest in training and education (PASSED)

'High intensity users' of A&E services: Cambridgeshire County Council will host the 'High Intensity Users' team working with patients who frequently attend hospital A&E departments. Last year the NHS in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough spent an estimated total of £28 million on emergency care for 4,500 people who attended A&E departments between five and ten times a year. Many of these patients have complex needs, and identifying and supporting them early can save the NHS at least forty per cent of these costs.

EV charging cross-over pilot: A trial will take place across the county on a first-come first-served basis of EV car charging solutions that involve cables crossing the highway. We have encouraged council officers to be ambitious in this. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will need ten thousand public plug-in stations by 2030, as more and more residents without off-street parking and charging capacity will be wanting to make the switch to electric vehicles.

Flooding: The extraordinary rainfall over the last few months has seen an increase in flooding locally. Despite spending £280k on flood measures at Arrington on the A1198 flooding continues. Emergency tankering is not a sustainable solution and we understand another blockage downstream has been identified. Remedial works in East Hatley caused a near flood into a nearby property and again a long term solution is sought. Sewage floods in Orwell have been brought to the attention of the CEO of Anglian Water and so it continues. We can all help - especially landowners - by ensuring drains and gullies are kept clear.

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund: 27 capital projects have been funded including those from Bassingbourn and Orwell Parish Councils. The maximum award per application was £40,000; many of the applications were for refurbishment of community buildings. If you are interested in applying for the next round please get in touch.

East West Rail (EWR): Further engagement with landowners commenced in March. EWR are planning the first stage of their statutory consultation in the first half of this year. In advance of this first stage of statutory consultation, EWR are undertaking land referencing to identify landowners with an interest and/or rights over land and property that may potentially be affected by the proposals. As part of this,

they are issuing Land Interest Questionnaires which will gather up-to-date ownership information for land that may be required for the project, such as for construction, as well as land that may be impacted by the operation of the railway, such as noise. Queries regarding these questionnaires can be directed to: land@eastwestrail.co.uk.

Civil Parking Enforcement: Also known as getting a ticket. Patrols are split into two zones with a total of 331 town patrols covering 1170 street visits in South Cambridgeshire completed by the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEO) since 1st February 2024. Patrols have predominantly focussed on areas where parking is in the greatest demand, such as commuting and shopping areas. Gamlingay, Barrington and Arrington have had significant numbers of visits so far....

Congestion Charging: There has been significant debate on social media about the provision of bus services since Council Tax bills have landed with a very substantial percentage increase in the Mayoral Precept. The Mayoral Precept is levied by the Mayor/Combined Authority to subsidise some bus routes. This is because Stagecoach advised they were cancelling these services as they are not profitable.

We completely agree that it would be great to have bus services to get students (and everyone else!) back and forth to CRC/HRC and so on. And that was the idea behind the Cambridge Congestion Charge. Drivers would pay to use the city's roads; and the funds raised would pay for a dramatically enhanced bus service - a bus every hour to settlements like Gamlingay, the Mordens and all those places in between was what was envisaged.

However, the Congestion charge is dead (despite what you might be told in leaflets etc). So - without making any judgement - now all Cambridgeshire residents contribute to the subsidy of a number of bus routes that serve only a (relatively) few residents - whereas with the Congestion Charge all drivers would have funded a much greater level of bus service to a much greater number of residents.

New Road Railway Bridge Gamlingay: Significant deterioration in the Bridge has been reported as the east half of the south side approach has several longitudinal cracks approximately 25-30mm wide in places caused by extensive embankment loss due to burrowing activity of badgers. It is being monitored!

Your Councillors are always ready to help. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.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@scambs.gov.uk. You can also follow your councillors on Twitter: @Cllrbridget, @SebKindersley

County Councillor's Annual Report 2023/24 - Councillor Sebastian Kindersley County Council

The composition of the County Council (61 members) is now

Conservatives 22	Liberal Democrats 23
Labour 9	Independent 3
St Neots Independent 1	Non-aligned 3

The Joint Administration of Lib Dem, Labour and Independent councillors continues to run the council. The next County election is due in May 2025.

I continue as Chair of the County Council and my role includes Citizenship ceremonies, meeting VIPs visiting the County, attending a wide range of civic events and of course chairing Full Council meetings. I also sit on the Planning Committee and Constitution & Ethics Committee as well as being a substitute for a number of other Committees. I am appointed to the Fire Authority, where I chair the Scrutiny and Overview Committee; and I am CCC's Military Covenant Champion.

The County Council responsibilities are managed across these committees:

Responsibility	Committee
Highways	Highways and Transport
Education	Children and Young People
Social Care	Adults and Health
Libraries	Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion
Registration of births deaths and marriages	
Trading Standards	
Strategic Planning for Minerals and Waste (disposal)	Planning Environment and Green Investment
(Managing the County Estate, land and buildings)	Environment and Green Investment Assets and Procurement
(Ensuring we use taxpayers money wisely)	Strategy, Resources and Performance

During 2023/24 – and looking ahead

Strategy, Resources and Performance

The budget for 2024/25 has increased from a predicted £16m to more than £23m—largely due to increases in demand for services and inflationary pressure. Cambridgeshire is not alone. The Local Government Association currently reports that councils across the country face an ‘inflationary storm’ with a predicted £4Billion funding gap over the next two years.

A report from the Council’s Chief Executive Stephen Moir and Executive Director of Finance and Resources Michael Hudson says:

“In 2023-24, pressures on our budget have arisen principally due to several very high-cost children’s social care placements and a delay in receiving income from a newly constructed solar farm (which requires connection to the electricity grid). In addition, we are seeing that demand for bed-based care for older people is also rising, following a period of reduction in demand and then stability stretching back for some time, to the beginning of the pandemic.”

The report also pointed to wider national and international issues which are having an impact on the council’s pressures—such as interest rates which the Bank of England has said are likely to remain above 5% until 2026. This will affect all goods and services the council buys, the cost of borrowing, and pay award costs for council workers as well as for a large externally commissioned workforce which includes staff working in residential care for vulnerable adults and children.

The Council’s 2024/5 budget was discussed in the months up to December 2023, scrutinised at the beginning of 2024 and approved in February 2024.

Adults and Health

We have separated Adult Social Care Services from the shared service with Peterborough, which is enabling a closer focus on Cambridgeshire. In the East of England, the Primary Medical Care (PMC) function was delegated to Integrated Care Boards (ICB) effective from 1 July 2022. The responsibility for Dental, Pharmacy and Optometry services was delegated to ICBs with effect from 1 April 2023.

Cam&Pet Integrated Care System inherited a number of NHS Dental contracts that have underperformed, partly due to the pandemic but mainly because of the unrealistic pricing structure of this contract. We are aware of the enormous pressure on NHS and primary care budgets too.

Providers of adult social care are monitored regularly, to ensure care staff are properly engaged, care is appropriate and meets the required safety standards. The need for better Mental Health provision is recognised. Our Director of Public Health Jyoti Atri is standing down and Val Thomas, her Deputy, will step up until a new DPH is appointed. Budget summary is at the end of the report.

Children and Young People

Children’s Services, with staff previously shared with Peterborough have been teased apart and we have many new officers for Cambridgeshire, who are bringing energy and ideas to the service.

Cambridgeshire County Council will put £3million into the budget for 2024/25 to continue to provide holiday food vouchers for those on free school meals.

A further **£320k will go to children’s mental health**, which has worsened following the Covid pandemic. The funding will be used to employ trained specialists to work with schools to design and deliver programmes working with children and young people, teachers and parents with interventions that are known to manage anxiety.

An **additional £12.7m** will be allocated to demand and inflation pressures, including the number of complex cases and the increasing number of children in care placements in Cambridgeshire.

The County Councils Network (CCN) says that with increasing demand for care services, especially for vulnerable children, costs are outstripping resources. Nationally, £319 million of the projected £639 million overspend by county councils this year comes from children’s services. One in ten ‘well-managed’ councils were unsure if they would be able to balance their 2023/24 budget (a legal requirement). This figure is expected to rise to four in ten for 2024/25. The national overall budget deficit is expected to reach £4 billion up to 2026, even though councils are planning over £2billion of savings and cuts in order to avoid Section 114 notices being issued (the local government equivalent of bankruptcy).

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

The cost of provision for children with SEND has escalated and was expected to grow to over £90 M by 2025/26. However the government has awarded Cambridgeshire £49M, under the 'safety valve' process, which will be used to create 463 new special school places, with a further £11.3M in capital funding to support new SEND provision on mainstream school sites. Cambridgeshire has historically received less funding per child for education than other areas, whilst having a high proportion of SEND.

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee (COSMIC)

During 2023/24 this committee has overseen the Household Support Fund which supports people experiencing immediate financial hardship to pay for food, fuel bills or other essential items.

The Committee has approved an additional £150,000 to Cambridge Housing Society to deliver the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme, which supports Cambridgeshire residents facing financial difficulties. [Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The council has also allocated £400,000 to Citizens Advice to deliver income maximisation across Cambridgeshire. The Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund provided funding for refurbishment of community buildings. The council is proceeding with a series of pilot projects to bring decision-making closer to local communities.

The committee has also refreshed its Safe Accommodation Strategy for victims of domestic abuse for the next three years.

Libraries - are increasingly being recognised and supported as information hubs and meeting places.

Environment and Green Investment

The Council is seeking to reduce its carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. £1.831million of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding has been secured by the Council to support decarbonisation of CCC buildings and maintained schools for 2024/25.

Waste Operations – The Council is responsible for disposal of waste. We are monitoring cross-border Household Recycling Centre (HRC) access arrangements with neighbouring counties to avoid having to re-introduce bookings. If cross-border use is agreed, bookings will not be needed

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations 2013 DEFRA put out a consultation document to seek views on reforms to the regulations.

The Home Office issued a questionnaire about **Nitrous Oxide canisters**. Officers responded via the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers.

RECAP: Waste Collection Authorities (mainly District Councils) should have received their food waste capital funding payments by the end of March 2024. The WCAs are now starting to plan the implementation of the weekly food waste collection service and RECAP will be looking to progress this collectively and to discuss transfer and disposal actions with the County Waste Team and Thalia.

County Planning, Minerals & Waste (CPMW):

East West Rail (EWR): Further engagement with landowners commenced on 12 March 2024. EWR are issuing Land Interest Questionnaires which will gather up-to-date ownership information for land that may be required for the project, such as for construction, as well as land that may be impacted by the operation of the railway, such as noise. Formal Consultation is due to start sometime this year (as the target keeps moving).

Fens Reservoir: Anglian Water and Cambridge Water are to consult on proposals for two new strategic reservoirs for the East of England region. One reservoir is to be located in the Fens and statutory consultation will start in May 2024, and run for eight weeks.

Cambridge Water Wastewater Treatment Plant Relocation - The Planning Inspectorate (PINs) has been taking evidence from stakeholders at a series of hearings under the Development Consent Order programme, and is close to completion. **On 26 March 2024, new and updated traffic and transport documents were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. These are available to view through this link** [Updated Traffic and Transport Documents – Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Project \(cwwtpr.com\)](#) Examination is due to finish 17 April 2024.

Trees The Council persuaded National Highways to review the success of its tree-planting scheme along the new A14 route. They felled 400,000, replanted 800,000 but some 600,000 have died. Around 125,000 were to be replanted during 2023, many more of which seem to have survived.

Highways and Transport

The condition of Cambridgeshire’s roads and pavements remains a serious challenge and the lack of central government funding is a source of frustration.

Civil Parking Enforcement has been introduced in South Cambridgeshire, which should help villages tackle problem parking.

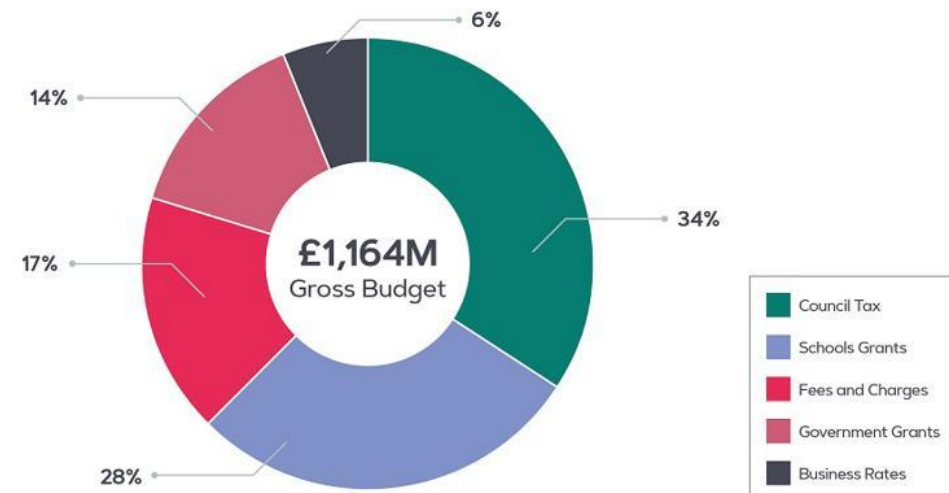
Greater Cambridge Partnership

Thirty new electric, zero emission **buses** are reducing pollution on Cambridgeshire roads.

County Council Budget for 2024/25 – a summary

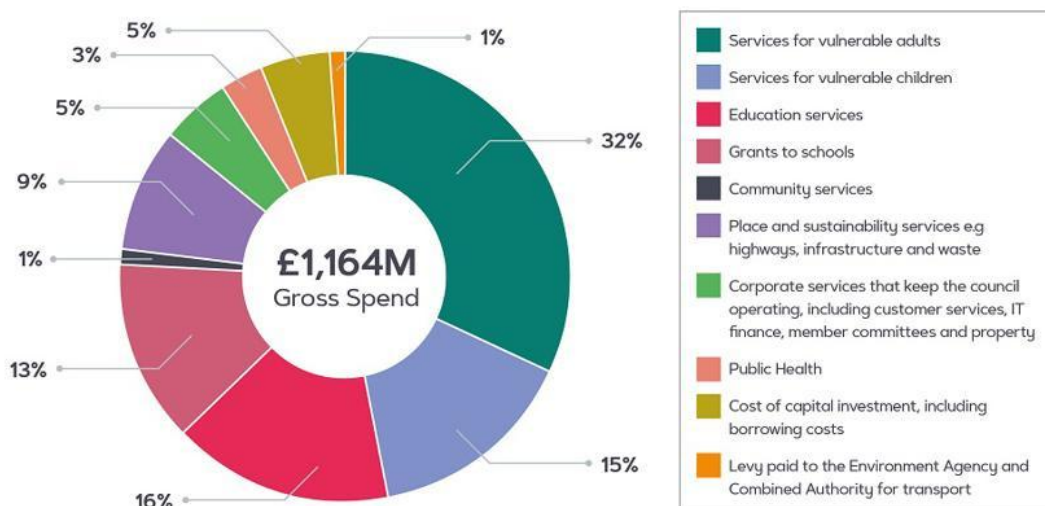
Income

(In black and white, Council Tax = 34%, the other segments follow clockwise)



This shows how the budget will be spent

(In black and white, Services for vulnerable adults = 32%, the other segments follow clockwise)



The budget includes (these amounts cross-cut the headings above):

- Invest £57 million to sustain children’s and adult social care services.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Put £1.3m into delivering more accessible libraries to support vulnerable communities.
- 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.
- Put 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 – from areas such as:
 - moving to LED streetlights which are set to deliver £1m in energy savings each year.
 - £1.5m across the next three years from rationalising the council's office accommodation.
 - Balanced budget for 2024/25 through a mix of savings, use of one-off reserves, and the generation of additional income including a council tax rise for the coming year to 4.99% comprising 2.99% Council Tax and 2% Adults social care.
- This would see band D properties in the county paying an additional £76 per year, although more than half (64%) of county lives in homes rated band C or below and would see rises of between £50 and £70 per year.

Chair of the Parish Council Report 2024 - Mr Garth Wheeler

Planning

The council has considered several applications this year and council made comments as appropriate.

East West Rail

The proposed new East West Rail link continues to be an area of concern in our area.

New Luton Flight Paths

Several parishioners have commented on the increased aircraft noise from the change in the flight paths for Luton Airport. This is the PIR (Post Implementation Review) period after which the CAA will consider the results.

Speedwatch

For some time, the PC has discussed with the community group the possibility of starting a Speed watch group. We still need volunteers to come forward to get this off the ground. If you are interested in helping out, please let me know. We are also investigating traffic calming measures around the corner by the War Memorial.

Precept

The Precept is a tax that Parish Councils charge their local electors to meet their budget requirements. Parish Councils do not receive any direct funding from central government so rely on their Precept. The Parish Council Precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments. The Council has budgeted £6755 for what it believes it will cost to manage the village for the next financial year (2024-2025).

This sum covers our costs which include for example, rental of the Reading Rooms, Clerk's salary and expenses, website and cemetery grass cutting.

Thanks

Many people contribute to the life of the parish and we are grateful for all your support.

This year has seen the new Community Café going from strength to strength and is appreciated by many. There is also a History Group which meets sporadically.

Thank you to all those who are on the maintenance rota for the AED.

Thanks to Di Walters and the Trustees for continuing to improve the building for the benefit of village. Additional thanks to Maggie and Judith for their efforts as tree wardens and Malcolm and the litter pickers.

Finally, thanks to all the Councillors and of course Marian for her tireless work as Clerk, for which we are all very grateful.

Financial Report for Croydon Parish Council April 2023 - March 2024

Receipts		Payments	
Precept	£5,905.00	Village coronation event	£150.00
Interest - NSI	£155.47	Reading Room rental - PC May	£162.50
Barclays compensation	£100.00	Reading Room rental - Café May	£214.50
VAT repayment	£209.53	Clerk - annual salary	£1,430.00
		Clerk - petty cash	£68.09
Total Receipts	£6,370.00	Clerk - IT allowance	£50.00
		Internal Auditor	£60.00
		Village PA system	£500.00
		CPRE membership	£36.00
Restricted Funds		Churchyard Maintenance Croydon PCC	£500.00
Community Benefit Fund		Insurance	£489.99
Balance 1 April 2023	£16,164.35	Slingsby extra length litter pickers	£191.98
NSI Interest	£155.47	Reading Room rental - Café October	£224.00
		Reading Room rental - PC October	£128.00
Balance 31 March 2024	£16,319.82	Sanders and Jay (website problem)	£120.00
		RBL wreath	£20.00
		Village Christmas tree	£60.00
		Subs to SLCC Association	£76.00
		Sanders and Jay (annual website payment)	£238.80
		Reading Room - internet and booking	£1,050.00
		Sub total	£5,769.86
		Restricted funds	
		No payments this financial year	£0.00
		Total	£5,769.86
Balances at 31 March 2024			
Investment Account	£19,813.70	Balance at 31 March 2023	£23,553.82
Bank Account	£4,340.26	add receipts	£6,370.00
less unrepresented cheques	£0.00	less payments	-£5,769.86
Total	£24,153.96	Total	£24,153.96

Copies of the accounts as shown above were distributed to the meeting. The Clerk explained the report to those present, and the circumstances surrounding the compensation from Barclays. The interest from the NSI account is allocated to the Community Benefit Fund, as was originally decided. All other expenditure is shown and there were no questions from the accounts.

The Community Benefit Fund currently stands at £16,319-82 with the NSI balance at £19,813-70. The difference of £3493-88 is from Council's current account and is in case of any unexpected expenditure.

Village Matters:

Defibrillator: The Clerk thanked the volunteers who monitor the defibrillator and it is expected that the battery in the unit will fail at some time this year. Please keep a look out for the red warning light and inform the Clerk immediately so that a replacement can be ordered and the unit taken "off-line".

Litter pick signs: Mr Buchanan's contact is no longer available, so the Clerk has located some possible signs for the litter pickers, which will fit onto a road cone. Mr Buchanan has road cones that can be used and the representative was in favour of these.

Lower Road reports: Council has still not heard anything regarding the outcome of the accident on Lower Road. Clerk will contact Highways for any clarification they can give.

Luton airport flight paths: The time for public comments has closed - the inspectors are considering the outcome.

East-West Rail: Any consultations that have previously been undertaken have been unofficial and by East-West Rail. The official consultations will be underway now.

Minor Highway Improvements: Council's bid for speed restrictions on the entry to Croydon from Arrington has been approved for consideration by a panel. The outcome should be known by May, or soon after.

Finance:

Electoral Register: One alteration received and circulated for Councillors' information.

Bank Statement: The balance at the end of March 2024 was £4340-26.

Cheques: Invoices for the Reading Room rental for both the Café and PC rental were presented, along with an invoice from WC Portables for the Car Show facilities.

Reading Room Café etc to April 2024 £216-00

Reading Room PC to March 2025 £224-00

WC Portables £306-00

All were in favour and the cheques were signed.

As there was no further business the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Date of next meetings: Annual Meeting Wednesday 16th April 2025 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm
Annual PC meeting Wednesday 15th May 2024 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

As there was no further business, the meeting closed at 8.48pm.

Signed

Date

Clerk was asked to record that, in line with GDPR, all those mentioned in reports have given their permission for their names to be published.