

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Report to South Trumpington Parish Meeting April 2019

Refugees

South Cambs has announced that it will be working with Cambridge City Council to provide homes for up to five Syrian Refugee families.

Councillors confirmed on 3rd April a commitment to offer a genuine humanitarian response to families requiring urgent medical treatment, who are survivors of violence and torture and who include women and children. This will include families who have been forced from their homes in Syria, Iran or Sudan.

It is not anticipated that the waiting time for families in the greatest need who are already on the Council's housing waiting list will change because of the decision. The Council will be able to decide which housing it offers to the programme. Therefore, the authority will ensure that these decisions have the least impact on existing levels of need within the district.

Investment plan

In common with all local Government, South Cambs has had its Westminster funding largely removed. In order to keep Council Tax bill increases to a minimum, it is important that we find more ways of generating income. (We already generate about £2m per year.)

The first deal of our newly adopted Investment Plan is to buy for £13m the long-term leasehold on a property on the Cambridge Science Park. This will generate returns of between 5% and 6.5%. The level of security that this investment offers means it meets the objectives of the Council's new investment strategy.

The building is listed as Grade A office space, which means it is among the highest-quality buildings on the market. Its location, Cambridge Science Park, is widely considered Europe's most successful research and development park. It is also well-served by public transport with the Guided Busway and Cambridge North railway station within a few minutes' walk.

The two-storey building is ranked as very good by BREEAM assessors, who look at the sustainability credentials of buildings, such as energy, materials, transport and waste.

This is the first of a proposed £100m worth of property investment that will supplement the lost central government funding over the next five years.

Moving the sewage works

An application for over £200 million to Government from South Cambs, Cambridge City and the County Council to move the existing sewage water works from North Cambridge has been successful. Moving this facility will free up a significant site for some thousands of houses.

The next big decision is where the new sewage water works will go. It will be in South Cambs and has to be close to the river and not in the floodplain, which greatly restricts the options. The plan is further complicated by the need to increase the amount of sludge from outside our area which the new facility will treat. It was this which made it eligible for the funding but it will involve significant lorry movement, which means that there has to be first-class infrastructure to support the new site.

Local plan

You may recall that the current Local Plan, which identifies where development is to go in future years, was finally adopted in October after being in inspection for over four years. During this time, about 4,000 houses were consented in unplanned-for locations. The government inspector requires us to now embark on a new joint local plan with Cambridge City and this is now getting underway. The first piece of work is to ask landowners to come forward and tell us about any land they are prepared to offer up for future development.

The consultation is to identify potential sites that can be technically assessed for housing and economic development, to meet the needs identified for the district, for inclusion in our next local plan. Anyone can put forward sites but it is usually landowners, developers, land promoters, businesses, local interest groups, parish councils, local property agents or neighbourhood forums which have prepared or are preparing neighbourhood plans.

Not all the sites that are submitted will be included in the plan. It will depend on the spatial strategy we decide on and the assessment of the sites based on several factors, including whether they are suitable, available, achievable and viable. The selected sites will then go through the local plan process and become part of the adopted policy when the plan is found sound and adopted.

Grants schemes realigned for maximum community benefit

At a District Council Cabinet meeting last week, it was agreed to close the Elite Athletes grant scheme and to use the £10,000 to help support other schemes promoting health and wellbeing across the district in order to positively impact on a wider number of South Cambs residents.

“My South Cambs” customer portal

The South Cambs Council customer portal went live earlier this year. Users can sign in using e-mail, facebook, Microsoft and Google. The system allows customers to submit questions, contact the Council about planning, benefits, waste collections, etc., as well as to report problems. The new portal can be accessed from the South Cambs Council homepage or on <https://mysouthcambs.scambs.gov.uk>.

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