

# Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

## MONTHLY REPORT FEBRUARY 2021

### Council budget

The District Council will set its budget for 2021/22 on Tuesday 23 February. The Finance & Assets Committee decided last month not to make any recommendations to the Council about the budget.

However, the papers did show that on current plans by 2023/24 the Council will have a budget shortfall of £4.6M on a total annual net expenditure of £12M. The Finance Manager 'strongly recommended that early consideration is made as to how savings in future years will be achieved'.

The Full Council will be asked to approve its budget on 23 February without the Finance & Assets Committee having seen the budget for the Council's Trading Company for 2021/22. This was delayed from the January Committee meeting and will not be available until after the Council sets its budget.

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### Parking enforcement

Following the Council's decision late last year to investigate options for enforcement of on-street parking, a report was presented to the Council's Finance & Assets Committee last month making two proposals:

- Use of Section 38 of the Policing & Crime Act 2017 with Council staff acting as Policing Support Volunteers empowered to issue parking tickets
- Introduction of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) in East Cambridgeshire, under which the police can delegate certain powers to trained and accredited persons, usually security staff and similar who have experience of public order-related duties.

Our colleague Cllr Charlotte Cane correctly pointed out that the second (CSAS) proposal was not within the remit of the committee. It was therefore referred to the Operational Services Committee, which *does* have a remit for community safety. However, it has nothing whatsoever to do with parking enforcement, as issuing parking tickets is not among the powers the police can delegate under the CSAS scheme. It is therefore in many respects a red herring.

The first (Section 38) proposal, which was agreed by a majority, would mean Council staff volunteering to become unpaid Policing Support Volunteers, with the power to issue parking tickets. However it would *not* mean that the Council would be able to enforce on-street parking, as these volunteers would be operating as police volunteers, working under the direction of the Chief Constable and answerable to him. Indeed, in the event of wrongful activity by

any volunteer, the Chief Constable would be the 'joint tortfeasor', equally liable for their actions. The volunteers would be completely outside Council control.

All of the above is a rather strained set of arrangements to avoid doing what all but eleven English councils outside London do, which is to take on the parking enforcement role from the police and employ their own staff to do so. And even among those eleven, our neighbours in South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, and Fenland are moving towards 'civil parking enforcement' and leaving East Cambridgeshire increasingly isolated.

- South Cambridgeshire is exploring civil parking enforcement within the context of the Greater Cambridge Partnership with Cambridge.
- Huntingdonshire's Cabinet is receiving a paper on 11 February recommending the start of a two-year project to introduce civil parking enforcement there.
- Fenland has successfully applied for a £400,000 grant from the Combined Authority to introduce civil parking enforcement across the district.

The last of those three cases is particularly interesting because Fenland has made it clear that a condition of introducing civil parking enforcement is that it should not result in car parking charges in council car parks. The Conservative council in East Cambridgeshire has always claimed that civil parking enforcement would not be possible without introducing car parking charges—but if Fenland can do it, why can't we?

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## Planning application update

### Garden Close Sutton

The District Council issued a Tree Preservation Order on 15 December to protect two individual trees and three groups of trees on the site, along with several strips of hedgerow. These mature trees not only have amenity value, but are also included in Sutton's Neighbourhood Plan which requires that development of this site should 'retain existing mature trees and hedgerows'.

The developers have written to the council formally objecting to the protection of these trees. We have written to residents in Lawn Lane, Garden Close, Pippin Close, and Oates Lane encouraging them to write to the Trees Officer [kevin.drane@eastcambs.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.drane@eastcambs.gov.uk) supporting the Tree Preservation Order. The Order will now need to be decided by the council's Planning Committee.

### Brick Lane Mepal

The planning application for the site at Brick Lane Mepal missed the February meeting of the Planning Committee and the earliest it will be taken to the Committee will now be Wednesday 3 March.

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## **Elean Business Park**

Once again drivers have been 'drifting' round the inner roundabout at the Business Park. We have been in contact with the district council who have power to issue a Community Protection Notice on the landowner and the police who have the power to issue short term dispersal orders as they did last summer. The police are making a bid for extra resources to tackle the problem.

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## **Station Road Sutton drain**

We are aware of the drain which is leaving untreated sewage on the highway. Anglia Water have been advised, but their current priority is pumping water from properties across the county, and responding to families in places such as Hemingford Grey who have not had fully functioning toilets since Christmas Eve.

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## **Signage at Crown Lane Sutton**

In better news, we are pleased that following Lorna's representations when a number of drivers tried to access Witcham Toll via the path that runs from the bottom of Station Road to the A1421 Haddenham Road, a new 'Unsuitable for motor vehicles' sign has been put up by the Local Highways Officer at the end of the highway. East Cambridgeshire District Council will sort out a new street name for Crown Lane with the 'dead end' sign on it. And the highways officer will also renew the obliterated Black Fen Waterway Trail sign at the bottom of Station Road when her new budget year starts in April.

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## **Taxis, private hire vehicles, and COVID safety**

Taxi and private hire drivers in East Cambridgeshire can now access training and funding to make their vehicles Covid-safe. A new county-wide scheme provides video training, and a subsidy for fitting a quality standard screen in the vehicle. A sticker in the vehicle will show which drivers have been trained. It is hoped that this scheme will be expanded to voluntary car schemes in the very near future.

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## **Meet your councillors**

We are continuing to offer online Meet Your Councillors events to replace our face to face ones in the Community Room at Sutton School. The next ones will take place on Tuesday 9 February and Tuesday 9 March from 6:30 to 7:30PM. Email [mark@markinskip.org.uk](mailto:mark@markinskip.org.uk) to book a slot.

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**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward