

# Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

## MONTHLY REPORT FEBRUARY 2022

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### District council budget

Chaos reigned at the meeting of the council's Finance & Assets Committee on Monday 24 January, where the budget proposals for the coming year were on the agenda. These included a number of spending proposals, along with a proposal for a council tax rise (£5 a year at Band D, with corresponding increases at other council tax bands). This rise was in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy which was approved by the council in its budget last year, and which included a £5 a year rise for this year and every following year in the strategy.

However, the Leader of the Council moved an amendment at the meeting to delete all the budget recommendations in their entirety, and refer the decision on the budget to the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 22 February, with no recommendation at all from the committee. We therefore have absolutely no idea what the Conservative administration will propose in their budget—and neither do the public.

The Leader of the Council did however say that 'unless things changed' she would be expecting another council tax freeze. But if that is the default expectation of the council's administration, why was it not the proposal taken to committee? Are they seeking to evade scrutiny? Or are they consciously disregarding the professional advice of their officers?

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### Garden Close Sutton appeal

No sooner had a Planning Inspector dismissed Abbey's appeal against refusal of its 'reserved matters' application for the details of their Garden Close development, than a new application was submitted to the council.

The new application is for 51 homes, not 53 as in their previous application. The housing mix is also different. With thanks to a local resident who has diligently done the number crunching and map analysis, we note that the applicant has

- kept the number of flats at eight
- increased the number of bungalows from eight to fifteen
- increased the number of chalet homes from eight to eleven, and
- reduced the number of two-storey houses from 29 to 17.

That leaves only fifteen single-storey dwellings out of 51—not the 'predominantly low density single-storey dwellings' in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Furthermore, Abbey's proposed bungalows are higher than the existing single-storey homes in the surrounding areas, and the chalets are higher still. While the policy in the Neighbourhood Plan was for more two-bedroom homes and properties for downsizing into, the chalets in Abbey's plans are actually large four-bedroom luxury homes.

For these and other reasons, we will be objecting to this application, as we objected to its predecessor, and for some of the same reasons.

- A number of residents received confusing letters from the council shortly after the dismissal of the planning appeal, saying that an application for Garden Close had been approved. In fact this referred to the original outline planning application approved by the Planning Committee in 2018.

The approval was granted subject to agreement of conditions. These conditions have only recently been agreed, which triggered the automatic production of the letters to consultees and residents who had commented on the application. Lorna has contacted the Planning Department and asked whether they can make the reasons for these automatic letters clearer, to avoid confusion in future.

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## Elean Business Park

As in Lorna's County Councillor report for this month, we met with the police, district council, and others recently to seek to resolve the anti-social driving issue at the Elean Business Park. We are continuing to liaise with the police and County Council about the potential for a solution to this long-running issue.

We also took the opportunity to ask questions of the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. These were submitted for a roundtable meeting, which was abandoned due to technical problems with the police network, but were answered between that date and the rescheduled meeting which Mark attended and again raised the issues at the business park. The questions and answers were as follows.

- 1. What priority is the PCC giving to the increasing problem of anti-social driving or 'drifting', including on the public highway? This is now occurring more and more often—nightly over the Christmas and New Year break—with no police response. Work was begun last year on an application for a county-wide injunction, but this seems to have been abandoned. We are led to believe that the police have received equipment and training, but it appears not to be being implemented.**

Road safety is an important local priority included within the Police and Crime Plan. An example of where the Commissioner is supporting

additional patrols can be seen in the highly visible 'morning after' roadside checks carried out over Christmas as part of a campaign to educate drivers and catch those who refuse to heed the warnings. This additional support is part of the countywide Vision Zero Partnership's ambition to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the county's roads.

I understand Janine Hagger updated you on the current situation regarding injunctions and Inspector Shane Fasey has provided the below update:

From a Police perspective, we are aware and trying to understand the concerns being raised in the community, to assess the impact this is having on the lives of the residents and the risks involved. We will continue to work with you and Cllr Inskip on this matter. We hope to bring more innovation to the table when looking at a solution to this long-standing issue, which remains more than a Police problem to solve.

Police have been engaging those involved in the activity and issuing warning letters / enforcement where appropriate – this will continue, but of course activity cannot solely be towards this one area.

**2. What assessment does the PCC have of the average waiting time for the 101 number to be answered? Residents using this service to report the anti-social driving referred to in the previous question tell us of protracted waits, which will reduce report numbers as residents either hang up or decide not to try to report incidents in future.**

The Commissioner wants to ensure that the service the public receive from the Constabulary is professional, efficient and effective. He has previously spoken to the Chief Constable regarding the 101 service and will continue to press for a force is as accessible to the public as possible.

We urge residents to continue to report their concerns to gain intel[ligence] regarding community concerns. Residents can report concerns using the 'report your concern' facility, which allows the informant to add their postcode and select 'issues' from the drop-down menu and use the free text section to give more details. This is an important facility as every month Inspector Shane Fasey reviews the 'hits' for East Cambs and use[s] this data to help inform him on where to direct resources.

Where the issue is pressing and requires attendance, if there is a life at risk or crime in action members of the public are reminded to call 999. If the issue is not such, then 101 or the online chat function can be used.

The Commissioner understands that people can become frustrated when there are sometimes what feel like unacceptable delays. Calls are answered as soon as possible.

More call handlers have been recruited however training takes time—your feedback is valuable in helping us to improve the service.

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### **Railway track bed right of way**

Mark has had a very positive response from Sutton and surrounding villages to his request for evidence of longstanding use of the old railway track bed between Sutton and Haddenham in the 1980s and 1990s. This could help build the case for designation of this route as a right of way.

As Mark explains in his blog, the landowners deposited a statement in 2002, followed by a declaration in 2009 to try to protect the land from establishment of a right of way. This means that the normal twenty years over which rights of way can be established must be counted back from 2002, to August 1982.

Mark is continuing to encourage people to come forward with evidence of regular walking along the track bed between 1982 and 2002.

<https://markinskip.mycouncillor.org.uk/2022/01/15/did-you-walk-between-sutton-and-haddenham-in-the-1980s-or-1990s/>

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### **Covid Additional Restrictions Grant Round 8**

The eighth round of Covid support grants for local businesses has been announced. The closing date for applications is 5:00PM on Friday 11 February or earlier if all funding is awarded by this date. Information about the criteria is at <https://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/content/additional-restrictions-grant-scheme-round-8>

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### **Meet your councillors**

We will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 8 February 2022
- Tuesday 8 March 2022

Please contact Mark at [mark@markinskip.org.uk](mailto:mark@markinskip.org.uk) to book your timeslot.

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**Cllr Lorna Dupré**

**Cllr Mark Inskip**

District Councillors for the Sutton ward