

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT JANUARY 2023

Firstly, a happy 2023 to all our parish councils and residents of Sutton, Mepal, Wentworth and Witcham.

Special council meeting

The special meeting on Thursday 15 December to consider the Council's response to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's *Making Connections* 2022 took place as planned. Having sought legal advice from the County Council, Lorna declared an interest and left the meeting, because as a County Councillor she may—if the proposals go ahead in anything like their current form—be required to vote on them at the County Council, and did not want to predetermine how she might vote there.

The District Council's response, voted through by the Administration, is at <https://www.eastcamb.gov.uk/meetings/special-council-15122022>

An amendment from the Liberal Democrat group, below, was defeated.

Members are requested to ~~agree~~ **instruct officers to amend** the **draft** submission to the GCP attached as Appendix 1 to this report **to reflect:**

1. That this Council has declared a Climate Emergency and that in the year to March 2022, carbon emissions from transport in Cambridgeshire were 1,597.5 million tonnes CO₂e—23 per cent of the total carbon emissions in the county, and cars and taxis contribute over half of the greenhouse gas emissions from domestic transport.
2. The need to provide car drivers with attractive public transport alternatives.
3. That many residents cannot drive and need public transport to access employment, services and leisure activities.
4. The significant congestion within Cambridge and on the routes into Cambridge, including the A10 and B1102/A1303.
5. The urgent need for significant improvements to buses, given their continual decline since 1986 and the recent sudden acceleration of the decline.
6. Support for well-resourced demand responsive transport from door to a scheduled bus or train service and back, and increasing the hours needed to meet the scheduled buses.
7. Support for extended hours and increased frequency for public transport provision.
8. Support for the extra routes from Park & Ride sites, eg direct buses to Addenbrookes and railway stations.

9. The need for rail improvements and fare reductions and integration of various modes of public transport.
 10. Provision of 'PlusBus' tickets – allowing travellers to pay a small supplement on their train fare to cover buses from home to train and from train to Cambridgeshire destination and back.
 11. Provision of travel hubs along rural bus routes and key bus corridors.
 12. Provision for 'school student tickets' ensuring that rural school students pay no more than Cambridge school students for travel to school or sixth form college.
 13. The funding challenges, given that there are indications that some combined authority board members oppose funding through a Mayoral precept and the Government refused the combined authority's recent bus improvement funding bid on grounds of lack of commitment to road pricing, active travel and bus priority schemes and Cambridgeshire's high overall growth.
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Meeting cancellations

Three of the five district council meetings scheduled for this month have been cancelled: Planning on 4 January, Operational Services on 16 January, and Licensing on 18 January. This leaves only Finance & Assets on 23 January, and Audit on 30 January.

Local Plan update

Last year we reported that the district council had carried out a Single Issue Review of its current (2015) Local Plan. The reason for this was to seek to wipe clean the huge backlog in unbuilt homes since the start of the Local Plan period in 2011. The council's proposal was that the number of homes expected to be built between 2011 and 2022 should be adjusted to be the number of homes actually built in that period, with no backlog to carry forward.

We understand that the Planning Inspector examining the Single Issue Review has not seen eye to eye with the Council on this, so correspondence is therefore ongoing. There will need to be a formal consultation period on whatever proposal results from that communication, and ultimately the Council will need to consider the final recommendations and decide what to do with them.

Neighbourhood Plans

Mepal is continuing to work on its first Neighbourhood Plan, Sutton is reviewing its Plan, and Witcham has now formally applied for declaration of the parish as a Neighbourhood Area in advance of the development of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning application updates

Land adjacent 43 Mepal Road, Sutton 22/00507/RMM

The Linden / Vistry Phase 2 development at Mepal Road was approved by the Planning Committee on Wednesday 7 December.

Garden Close Sutton 22/00057/RMM

Yet another application has been submitted for the reserved matters for Abbey's proposed development behind Garden Close. The housing mix has been changed yet again—with an additional property, and 21 bungalows rather than 15, five chalets rather than twelve, and 21 houses rather than 19. The overall density is therefore increased, and the plot sizes still defiant of the Council's own guidance. Other issues of concern remain unchanged, and we will be opposing this latest iteration robustly.

Elean Business Park 22/00580/RMM

The detailed application for the development of a data centre and offices, infrastructure, parking and landscaping, was approved by officers on Tuesday 6 December.

Anti-social driving

Once again over the Christmas and New Year holiday residents were plagued by regular anti-social driving late into the night and even past 4:00AM. Lorna once again contacted the police and the district council anti-social behaviour team about this, and this has been passed to the Chief Inspector.

We hope that once the Elean Business Park development is completed, this may deter the perpetrators, but in the meantime we are pursuing the police energetically for action.

Voter identification

The Government has now passed legislation requiring that from and including the local council elections in May, all voters voting at polling stations must present photo identification in order to be allowed to vote.

Many people do not have the required forms of ID such as passports, driving licences, or senior citizens' (though not young people's) bus passes, or may forget to bring them on the day and then decide not to come back to vote.

Councils will be required to provide a voter certification document to anyone who does not have the required ID. But the Government has not made clear the arrangements for councils to do so, and many voters will not apply for such a document, or may have trouble using the online process for doing so.

The inevitable consequence will be that hundreds of thousands of voters nationally—or maybe even millions—will lose their right to vote.

This might be justifiable if electoral identity fraud was an enormous national issue, but it is not. In 2017 and 2018 there was just one conviction in each year.

Concerns have been widely expressed that this change in law will particularly disenfranchise young people, black and ethnic minority residents, low income households, and those with demanding lifestyles.

The Local Government Association and the Association of Electoral Administrators have said there is insufficient time to implement the requirement without depriving many electors of their right to vote in the elections in May 2023, and that the timetable for implementation should therefore be put back.

It is also believed that many councils will find it difficult to staff polling stations if the role of polling clerks becomes one of policing and preventing rather than welcoming and facilitating. Other requirements will include demanding that people with face coverings remove them for identity confirmation purposes, and to set aside private space and gender appropriate staff for this.

Even if the proposals were merited, which in our view they are not, they risk depriving large numbers of residents of their vote.

Other changes to election law will include requiring people with postal ballots to update their data more frequently—every three years instead of every five.

Meet your councillors

- Monday 9 January, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 6 February, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 6 March, 6:30-7:30PM

All in the Community Room at Sutton School. Between surgeries, residents can continue to contact us by email, Facebook, or phone.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

Cllr Mark Inskip

District Councillors for the Sutton ward