

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2023

Sutton Post Office

One Stop has decided at a national level that it no longer wishes to maintain a post office branch in its High Street Sutton store. Post Office Limited advises that from a date in March which is yet to be announced, customers will still be able to pay bills, drop off prepaid parcels, withdraw cash from the cash machine, and buy stamps over the counter.

Post Office Limited will be advertising for expressions of interest from other local retailers in providing a full post office branch in the village.

Lorna has written to Post Office Limited to ask them to confirm which services will no longer be available from the One Stop from next March; and to One Stop to ask them to affirm their commitment to continuing to maintain a presence in the High Street even without the footfall that the post office function has brought them. Along with the GP surgery and the pharmacy, the One Stop is part of the 'golden triangle' which holds the centre of the village together.

Priors Field GP practice

Lorna is continuing to work with the Patient Participation Group on the future of GP services in Sutton. The NHS Integrated Care Board should be making decisions in the next couple of months about how to continue to provide these services for the long term.

Sutton Fire Station

Sutton is one of three Cambridgeshire fire stations could shut by 2025, if new plans are approved.

The proposals involve the potential closure of Manea, Kimbolton and Sutton stations, which Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service describe as 'low risk stations'. Nineteen on-call firefighters would be relocated to Ely and St Neots stations to make them seven-day crewed.

The plans will be discussed at a meeting of the Fire Authority on Wednesday 20 December, followed by a six-month period of in-person and online public engagement will follow. Lorna is meeting the Chair of the Fire Authority and the Deputy Chief Executive of the Fire & Rescue Service this month.

Garden Close Sutton

The planning application for the detail of the Garden Close development was expected to go to the December meeting of the Planning Committee. It will now not be considered until after the appeal by the applicants against refusal of their previous application has been decided.

Mepal Neighbourhood Plan

Mepal's Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Version) is now out to public consultation. The document can be viewed and downloaded at <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/mepal-neighbourhood-plan> where there is also information about how to comment.

A paper copy of the draft Plan is available for inspection at East Cambridgeshire District Council's customer service centre during normal opening times. Details of the forthcoming independent examination will be made available via the above link in due course.

Comments can be made in writing on or before Friday 15 December

- by email to planningpolicy@eastcambs.gov.uk or
 - by post to Strategic Planning Team, East Cambridgeshire District Council, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely CB7 4EE
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Local Plan environment chapter

The district council has decided to start work on a new 'environment chapter' for its now very outdated Local Plan. This would at least fill some of the obvious gaps in the council's planning framework. Consideration has begun of what the contents of this chapter might be, and also what it would exclude.

Following a local public vote on which animal residents would most want to save, the council will also be producing a supplementary planning document on hedgehogs.

East Cambs Street Scene

Questions continue to be asked over the finances of the Council's waste collection and street cleaning company, which is still overspending and not meeting its key performance indicators.

At the Council's Operational Services Committee meeting last month, it emerged that the accounts were not being reviewed in the form laid down by the Memorandum of Agreement; and that the October Management Accounts would not be considered by the Company Board until January.

Concerns were expressed that the report to the Committee did not give reassurance that the overspending could be resolved by the year end, and at the apparent lack of urgency to resolve the situation.

A strategic review of the waste and recycling service is being established; Mark is a member of the review group.

Hydrotreated vegetable oil

Some months ago the Council announced that it would be moving to the use of hydrotreated vegetable oil to fuel its waste collection vehicles. It then said this would be too expensive due to the current cost of the oil.

Mark noted that the waste fleet was the single biggest contributor to the Council's carbon footprint. He proposed that as there had been a net underspend of £33,000 on fuel by East Cambs Street Scene in the first six months of the financial year, and as a further underspend was likely for the remainder of the year, this underspend could be used to run the fleet on hydrotreated vegetable oil for the rest of the year, even at the higher price. This proposal was defeated by six votes to five.

Rough sleeping

East Cambridgeshire carried out its estimate of rough sleeping in the district overnight between Thursday 23 and Friday 24 November.

The Government definition of a rough sleeper is as follows:

'People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").'

The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or Travellers.

Domestic abuse policies

The Council has approved new policies on Supporting Residents Experiencing Domestic Abuse, and Employee Domestic Abuse.

Changes to postal and proxy voting

New postal and proxy vote regulations have come into effect as a result of the Elections Act 2022.

Electors wishing to vote by post will now need to reapply for their postal vote arrangement every three years instead of every five. The number of people a person can act as proxy for will be limited to four, of which no more than two can be 'domestic' electors (ie not overseas or service electors).

A National Insurance Number (or other relevant data) will now be required on applications for postal or proxy votes, but it will now be possible to apply online for these.

Coronation oaks

The Council has been giving away 75 English oak trees to communities, parish councils and schools to mark the coronation of King Charles III and his 75th birthday last month.

The Council will provide up to six oaks per applicant, with two stakes per tree and four ties per tree. Schools applying will receive a selection of fiction and non-fiction tree-related books. The trees will need to be collected by the successful applicants at the end of January.

More information at <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/content/coronation-oaks-communities>

Meet your councillors

Our next surgeries will take place on

- Monday 8 January, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 5 February, 6:30-7:30PM

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

Cllr Lorna Dupré

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District Councillors for the Sutton ward