

District Councillor report to Parish Council December 2024

Four days work for five days' pay consultation

At the beginning of November, the government decided to lift the council's Best Value Notice, which had been in place since November 2023 due to concerns that residents were not receiving sufficient value for money under the four-day working week.

16% of employees take on additional paid work on their day off, raising questions about the effectiveness of the four-day week in promoting staff wellbeing.

We understand that a public consultation on the four-day working week will be held in January 2025, two years after the trial began. When the consultation is open, we encourage all residents to share their views on this important issue. Are you comfortable with your council having an extra day off each week at your expense? Is it right that a nurse works five full days and one of his or hers biggest bills will be Council Tax which will be subsidising council staff to have a day off every week. I'd much rather this money be spent on frontline services or a reduction in Council Tax.

Marleigh Phase 3 – additional 91 dwellings

Phase 3 of the Marleigh development on Newmarket Road will continue plans for 1,300 new homes, with the Marshall car dealership relocating across the road.

However, in an eleventh-hour attempt to squeeze in more homes, a separate application to add 91 extra dwellings to the Marleigh development was submitted and approved by the Joint Development Control Committee.

This move takes the total number of homes up to 1,391 – which I argued would break South Cambridgeshire's density rules. As a whole, the outline application envisaged there being 40 dwellings per hectare or below, with the additional 91 houses we are 42 dwellings per hectare

There were also concerns whether the application complies with affordable housing requirements. The initial outline application had committed to 30% affordable housing which falls below the 40% ordinarily required at SCDC but this was granted on viability grounds (it is worth noting all of these viability calculations were done on the basis of there being 1300 houses). The developer had said that they would offer 40% affordable housing but only on the additional 91 houses which were being squeezed into the same space that had initially be agreed at outline stage.

I objected to the application, arguing the extra 91 homes were "piggybacking" on the existing development to skimp on developer contributions which would usually be "double or triple" this amount offered.

Quotes from my speech at Planning Committee:

"In the past I have always supported this application as part of the Local Plan. However, I do object to the way in which this phase of the development has been brought forward, with the addition of 91 dwellings over and above the outline application granted. This is not a good way to conduct business."

"As a Council, we have always projected 1300 dwellings on this site as part of the outline application. The viability for this site has been done on this premise and decisions made on affordable housing and all the infrastructure as a result of there being 1300 dwellings."

I finished the meeting by saying:

"I'd like councillors to ask themselves, is it fair on residents who have already bought properties on the Marleigh site on the premise of there being 1300 dwellings, when there will now be 1391 dwellings – meaning their space will be far more highly populated than they had envisaged?"

The Committee later raised concerns that there were not enough parking spaces, with many socially rented apartments ending up without a parking space.

Perhaps there would be more room for parking if developer greed had not sneaked in 91 extra homes under residents' noses.

Respect Orders

The introduction of Respect Orders will grant the police and local councils the authority to bar repeat offenders from town centres or prohibit them from drinking in public places like high streets and parks. These powers will first be tested in pilot schemes to ensure their effectiveness before being rolled out nationwide. Offenders may also be

required to engage in rehabilitative programs, such as drug or alcohol treatment or anger management courses, to address the root causes of their actions. Non-compliance with a Respect Order will be considered a criminal offence. Police will have the authority to arrest individuals caught violating the terms of the Order. In addition to potential prison sentences of up to two years, criminal courts will have the discretion to impose unlimited fines, community service, or curfews as penalties for violating a Respect Order. I am sceptical that this is the right approach and it will be interesting to see how the trials proceed. My view is that having a higher police presence is top of the residents' priority in our ward.

Prioritising Veterans

I was pleased to see the Housing Minister, Matthew Pennycook MP, has introduced new regulations in Parliament that will ensure all former members of the regular armed forces are exempt from local connection tests for social housing imposed by councils in England. This change applies to councils that currently use local connection or residency tests to determine eligibility for social housing. I will be supporting the implementation of this locally and will be enquiring what support from council officer in the housing team can be given.

Guide on tree planting for farmers and foresters

The Forestry Commission has launched a new expert guide on tree planting for farmers and foresters. The *Tree Species Guide for UK Agroforestry Systems* provides detailed information on 33 tree and shrub species suitable for planting in UK agroforestry systems. This resource will assist farmers in selecting the most appropriate tree species based on their farm's specific conditions and needs.

Planting trees on agricultural land can offer numerous benefits, such as enhancing soil protection, storing carbon, diversifying farm products (including timber, fruits, and nuts), and providing shade and shelter for livestock. By choosing the right trees for the right locations, farmers can improve their resilience to climate change, diversify their business, and reduce reliance on volatile agricultural markets.

Please do use this on your websites across the Fen Ditton and Fulbourn ward and pass on to any interested parties.

Ukraine Permission Extension

It has been announced that the Ukraine Permission Extension (UPE) scheme will open for applications on February 4, 2025. Full guidance is available on the Government website. The UPE scheme allows Ukrainian nationals, who arrived under various visa schemes, to apply for an 18-month extension to their visa, provided they apply within 28 days of their current visa expiring.

The Homes for Ukraine team will be sending out communications to all hosts and guests tomorrow to ensure they are informed of this update and the support available to assist with the process. Additionally, a new webpage has been published on the SCDC website, providing key information, and linking to the Government website for further details.

The Homes for Ukraine team is also gathering visa end dates for guests to ensure they can track and contact both guests and hosts when it's time to submit a UPE application. If you have any questions regarding the UPE scheme, please reach out to: Ben.Thackray@scambs.gov.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on graham.cone@councillor.online or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable)

Councillor Graham Cone