

**COTTENHAM**  
**ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
10<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**Reports Pack**

## Annual Report 2018

### Some results

Planning issues - speculative developer applications, the Village Hall and Nursery and our draft Neighbourhood Plan - absorbed a lot of our attention during the year while dog-poo, potholes and traffic continue to annoy many of us.

Our draft Neighbourhood Plan, as many of you know, has been revised to account for the speculative planning decisions and research into Cottenham's true long-term housing need. Although not the first in South Cambridgeshire, it is complex and the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) provided help in the form of grants and technical assistance.

Developer funds from Racecourse View helped pay for the newly installed altar rails at All Saints Church, and will help fund works at the Dissenters' Cemetery and the Community Centre. We also made smaller grants to other local qualifying groups.

We continue to be more business-like and transparent. Our published agendas clearly show what we will be discussing at our Council and Committee meetings, almost all of which are open to the public. The related reports pack and meeting minutes are also available on our website and often highlighted on FaceBook. Nevertheless getting everything through to everyone remains a challenge.

Sarah Berenger stood down as a Councillor following her tragic loss. We thank both Sarah and Mike for their support over the years, noting her pivotal role in getting the Skatepark project up and running. With no request for an election, we welcomed Tom Dewey as a co-opted member. Additionally Chris Richards stood down during the year and Brian Smith was co-opted.

### Our Committees

Our five Committees meet regularly in public:

- Planning Committee advises South Cambridgeshire District Council on planning issues, making representations on-line or in-person at Planning Committee meetings or Inquiries. We remind residents of the need to pre-notify tree work in the Conservation area or apply for development permission for a Listed Building or in the Conservation area, and worry about those who post unpermitted advertising or just neglect their property.
- Community & Leisure Facilities Committee includes a number of co-opted representatives of Sports Clubs or key users, who review maintenance issues and development projects related to our Open Spaces, Memorials, Play, Recreation and Sports facilities and the Village Hall. This year saw us provide mobile goal posts, plant bluebells at the WARG field, finish clearing the ditch behind Tenison Manor and organise the Christmas Carols on the Green.
- Finance Legal & Administration Committee reviews our finance and governance. Our Internal Auditor continues to be very complimentary of our transparent governance.
- Highways Committee monitors our bridleways, cycle-paths, drains, highways, pavements and traffic; trying to persuade our District and County Councils to fix potholes and clear drains. Highways projects take an age. Nevertheless, we are now seeing some improved pavements and additional pedestrian crossings. The Committee also looks after the road closure for the Remembrance Sunday parade.
- Standards considers the fortunately rare complaints against the Council or Councillors

## **It's not all about Committees**

We have several smaller, issue-focused informal Working Groups - Burial Grounds – which has managed to obtain developer contributions towards expansions and improvements, Drainage & Flooding which has developed an Emergency Flood Plan and been gifted flood mitigation kit by the Environment agency, Human Resources, Neighbourhood Plan, Pedestrian Safety and Village Hall. Our Play Area Inspectors and Trees Officer advise us, and our Groundsmen keep all our Open Spaces in order and helps us save money. They all work alongside our Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer, Assistant Clerk, Caretaker and several contractors.

Some Councillors represent us on local charities, the Village College, Sustainable Cottenham and in the Emergency Co-ordination team.

We appreciate the contribution of our partners – Cottenham United Sports & Social Club, Kids Club, Ladybirds, the Cricket and Football Clubs, aerobics etc. who all provide a social service as well as contributing to our finances. Cottenham Day Centre found a new home last summer, in anticipation of the construction of planned new facilities in the Village Hall and “Drop-in Day Centre”.

And we do try to help you enjoy yourselves through communal events we support like the Fen Edge Festival, Feast Parade and Carols on the Green last year.

## **Key projects**

A frustration of planning life is that the District Council can, apparently arbitrarily, approve large-scale housing developments in the open countryside yet resist the re-development of our Village Hall, whose site is virtually surrounded by housing. Hopefully our revised approach based on two lower-profile buildings will be more acceptable and we can soon begin the detailed technical design before the project becomes too expensive.

We have also begun an exercise including both GP practices, to understand better what facilities are needed and affordable in the new Medical Centre.

The major speculative developments continue to absorb our time and effort, with some cost:

- Bellway Homes now has full planning permission to build up to 50 homes on a site in Oakington Road over the next few years; off-site drainage could become a serious issue.
- Gladman Developments, after a lot of resistance from the Parish Council, obtained outline permission, for up to 200 homes and up to 70 residential places with care on a site in Rampton Road. There are still several steps before they can obtain full planning permission.
- The Persimmon application, approved on the same day, is now more advanced but has yet to get full permission for its site layout and housing mix.
- The County Council application refused in March remains under appeal with the Inspector.

There will be substantial funding from any of these projects that go ahead in the coming years; small compensation – especially for those residents most affected – but the cash will be useful if and when it arrives, especially as it will allow us to reduce the supplementary precept.

There are also some smaller projects that we hope to tackle in the coming months and years as we work through the information we gained from the Neighbourhood Plan survey, on community facilities and highways improvements. Look out for more detailed plans for all-weather facilities at the Recreation Ground.

## Our finances

Our £206,000 “basic” precept was augmented by the £118,000 “supplementary” precept for the Village Hall / Nursery project; now included in the “Capital Fund”. S106 developer contributions were lower.

Our outgoings increased, mostly due to unexpected legal costs. We also funded some projects from reserves, like the altar rails and pavilion path and made allowances for some which are committed but not yet paid for.

Overall, our cash reserves increased from a little over £580,000 to over £600,000 despite making several large grants, investing in facility improvements and initial work on the new Village Hall and Nursery.

## Simplified Extract from Unaudited Preliminary 2017-2018 Accounts

<b>Income</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Precept	£324,289	£206,939
Recreation Ground Income	£36,401	£39,107
Donations & Grants	£0	£0
Project Grants	£5,602	£0
Other income (inc. s106 receipts)	£8,669	£45,511
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£374,961</b>	<b>£291,557</b>
<b>Expense</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Office and admin	£73,785	£71,738
Professional services	£26,779	£6,618
Maintenance services	£35,378	£30,635
Donations & Grants	£15,448	£9,795
Facilities costs	£67,329	£39,553
Project costs	£47,868	£99,719
Finance charges	£6,215	£6,238
Accruals for committed projects (see below)	£78,604	
<b>Total expense</b>	<b>£351,406</b>	<b>£264,296</b>
<b>Cash</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
Current year increase (decrease) in reserves	£23,556	£27,261
Previous Surplus plus reserves	£583,406	£556,145
	<b>£606,962</b>	<b>£583,406</b>
<b>Net Short-term assets</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2018</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</b>
Current cash assets (reserves)	£606,962	£583,406
Allocations (approx.):		
General Reserve	£100,000	£100,000
Capital Fund	£400,000	£0
Loan Fund / Other reserve	£28,390	£294,640
S106 Community Facilities	£0	£33,489
S106 Open Space	£71,345	£134,913
S106 Public Art	£4,364	£20,364
Neighbourhood Plan grant	£2,862	
<b>Net short-term assets</b>	<b>£606,962</b>	<b>£583,406</b>
<b>Net Long-term assets (excluding land)</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2018</b>	<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2017</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,865,757</b>	<b>£1,859,757</b>
<b>Key elements:</b>		
• Village Hall	£428,000	£428,000
• Ladybirds	£499,000	£499,000
• Sports Pavilion	£640,000	£640,000
• SkatePark	£75,000	£75,000
The following accruals have been formally committed against specific projects:		
Community Centre	£13,000	from s106 Community Facilities fund
Dissenters' Cemetery	£20,604	from s106 Open Space fund
Land purchase	£15,000	from s106 Open Space fund
Pavement project	£30,000	from Other reserve
<b>Total</b>	<b>£78,604</b>	

## **Some disappointments**

Sadly, we have a small number of selfish residents who speed, dog owners who fail to clean up their dog's mess or fly-post their events in the Conservation Area, and fly-tippers in the countryside.

We also have a County Council which is unable to keep our roads in good repair; a District Council with a chaotic planning system and less-than-ideal waste management service; and a Police service which is rarely present when needed.

While South Cambridgeshire still lacks the protection of a valid Local Plan, Parish Councils have had to work against the odds to resist unsustainable developments while improving the designs and maximising developer contributions from those that are let through.

Traffic continues to plague many residents and may get much worse before it can be improved. Efforts to relocate some business from the village centre will complement the upgrading of the A10 and, maybe, we will reach a "zero pot-hole" day if we all keep reporting them to the County Council.

Our request to Royal Mail to consider adding a post-box on the High Street fell on deaf ears but Audrey's petition did make it to Parliament with the help of our MP.

Some heritage assets are suffering from neglect; we are pursuing the worst with the District Council.

## **Taking control**

Keeping a village vibrant with a good mix of ages and generations requires a balance between conservation and development and a range of facilities, housing sizes and prices. Modest growth can help; excessive growth risks using up all available for housing that is unaffordable by our own youth and unsuitable for the elderly and less mobile.

The emerging draft Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision and practical ways in which some of these challenges can be resolved. Regeneration of the village centre may create opportunities for improved business, medical and shopping facilities while making it safer by reducing HGV movements. The new Village Hall and Nursery will increase employment and reduce residents' need to travel out of the village while Cottenham CLT Limited's ambition to build some locally affordable homes will help plug a gap in Cottenham's housing ladder.

Hard copies of the Plan are in Cottenham Library or the Parish Council Office and on-line under "Neighbourhood Plan" at [www.cottenhampc.org.uk](http://www.cottenhampc.org.uk). Do send any comments to [cottenhamnp@gmail.com](mailto:cottenhamnp@gmail.com) Alongside the NP is the Traffic & Transport strategy which will, once developed with your help, provide a blueprint for improvements over the next decade.

## **Conclusion**

Cottenham Parish Council first met in 1895. Cottenham residents – young and old – still contribute to the community through churches, clubs, societies or individually. A special mention once again to Audrey Brownlow, who continued to inspire support in the campaign for the replacement post-box.

To end, we thank our staff, contractors and partners for keeping us in touch with your problems so we can help you. Sometimes that means identifying or chasing someone in the District or County Councils. And thanks to you, once again, for trusting us.

## **FINANCE, LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (FLAC)**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/17 – 31/3/18**

The Finance, Legal and Administration Committee (FLAC) have generally met monthly during the course of the year. Highlights of areas considered and reviewed by FLAC during the year have:

1. reviewed policies including those for Freedom of Information legislation, equal opportunities policy, IT security and IT usage.
2. reviewed the register of Parish Council assets and insurance cover for cover for assets and potential public liability. The security arrangements relating to assets have also been reviewed.
3. drafted the Parish Council annual budget for income and expenditure for the Full Parish Council to review and adopt for 18/19.
4. used monthly management accounts to track expenditure against budgets set and providing regular updates to the monthly Full Parish Council meetings. There has also been a monthly review of income and expenditure to ensure that this has been recorded accurately and appropriately authorised.
5. reviewed grant applications received for compliance with grant application requirements and made recommendations to Full Parish Council meetings.
6. undertaken a review of the proposed extension of the licence for the Parish Council office, making recommendations to the Full Parish Council.

Additionally FLAC are developing various policies and working practices to allow the Parish Council, when dealing with individuals, to comply with the GDPRs being introduced in 18/19 financial year.

Finally independent auditors (Heelis and Lodge) have undertaken the annual review of the Parish Councils financial processes and record keeping. The report was very positive, the only suggestion is that the Parish Council use the Audit plan sheet when considering the appointment of an auditor next year.

## **COMMUNITY & LEISURE FACILITIES COMMITTEE (CALF) ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/17 – 31/3/18**

The Connections bus Project continues to do great work in Cottenham. The weekly bus offers a space for fun activities, discussion and support from trained staff for the teenagers of Cottenham. The bus sees on average 25 young people a week. CALF also funded a babysitting course earlier in the year where 15 young people from the village college received certificates; the course included a paediatric first aid qualification.

Dog fouling is an ongoing issue throughout the village. CPC staff and other volunteers have been highlighting areas with pink spray to prevent people from stepping in poo! We have also used posters from a 'We're watching you' campaign to encourage dog owners to clear up after their dogs.

CPC has approved the purchase of a defibrillator to reside in the phone box opposite Cost Cutters. This will enable any member of the public to save a life were someone to have a heart attack nearby.

The public noticeboards on the Village Green and Broad Lane/High St junction have had some long overdue maintenance work. These serve as public boards that local groups can use.

CPC stalls at the Feast Parade in October and FEF in June enabled engagement with lots of villagers to promote and discuss projects in the village. The Village Hall replacement being a key project. Considerable work has been done by Cllr Morris and a working party to work to create a business plan and design a space that fulfils the needs of the village including better disabled access and large hall spaces with lots of storage.

Council staff arranged a fantastic event at the WARG field where villagers and Councillors got together to plant 1000 bluebells for people to come and enjoy. A bench has been put in place with a plaque to remind people of who the land was gifted by.

A recent tree survey has been conducted for the Green and Recreation Ground. CPC will use this survey as a basis for decisions going forward once the birds are no longer nesting.

We continue to have our monthly health and safety survey led by Cllrs Nicholas and Mudd to ensure all of our play equipment is well maintained and issues are highlighted and resolved quickly. Great improvements have been made to the slide mound allowing the grass to grow and hold. It is important children use the steps to ensure their safety.

Congratulations is due to both Colts and CUFC in being successful in receiving grant funding towards mobile football goals. The balance was found by CPC. The goals are lightweight, allowing teams to carry them more easily and so be flexible with training areas.

The quality and layout of pitches are a constant level of discussion during CALF meetings. There is an enormous pressure, particularly since the expansion of Colts football and girls' teams, for pitch usage and generally, teams are very cooperative and understanding. Some re-seeding will be at the end of the season. This work is vital in order to maintain the quality of pitches for 2018/19 season for both football and rugby. It has been agreed that some verti-draining in September in order to keep pitches as well drained as possible.

Going forward, work has begun to help broaden the discussions at CALF by inviting members from other community groups within the village. There may be a possibility of restructuring the committee or format of the meetings to allow us to include and involve a wider range of groups.

## **HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/17 – 31/3/18**

The Highways Committee has met 6 times during the year. Although roads and footpaths are the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council, the Parish Council undertook a number of minor improvement projects around the village:

- **Lambs Lane/Victory Way/Stevens Close** – Junction improvements including safer crossing points.
- **Beach Road** – give way feature with crossing point and traffic calming.
- **High Street Zebra Crossing** - near to Green.
- **Lighting studs** – worked with Rampton Parish Council to install lighting studs on the cycle/foot path between Rampton and Cottenham in collaboration with.
- **Long Drove** – advisory signs installed “Single track road with passing places”.

Following this, we are considering speed reduction measures and installation of a zebra crossing near to the Post Office.

#### **Also in 2017/18:**

- Worked with the British Legion to ensure the remembrance parade runs smoothly, including organisation of road closures purchase of road signs
- **Coolidge Gardens** – resurfacing - we kept pressure on CCC after the project was moved to the next financial year twice.
- **HCVs** – we appreciate the concerns about HCV traffic through Cottenham and have met regularly with local hauliers and businesses to minimise the impact on our village.
- **Traffic and Transport Working Group** - working with residents to explore ways of tackling concerns about traffic and public transport provision that were raised during the Parish Council’s Neighbourhood Plan consultation. The group has re-activated Community Speedwatch to help educate drivers and make our village safer.

## **PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 1/4/17 – 31/3/18**

The Planning Committee was established by Resolution of Cottenham Parish Council (CPC), and the Terms of Reference were approved on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014 by item 14/213 of the Full Council Minutes, and amended on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2016 by item 16/143 of the Full Council Minutes.

The areas of responsibility the Planning Committee have is by delegated authority to:

- (a) Develop a 4 year strategic framework, reviewed at least annually, for desirable improvements within the village landscape and infrastructure
- (b) Make representations to the appropriate planning authority on applications for planning permission
- (c) Make representations to the appropriate authority on applications for tree orders
- (d) Make representations in respect of appeals against the refusal of planning applications
- (e) Identify and make representations to the relevant authority in respect of enforcement action or any other matters considered to be breaches of planning regulations
- (f) Consider and make representations to the appropriate authorities on any planning related matter or document that may affect the Parish from a planning perspective
- (g) Review possible and planned future developments and advise the Highways Committee, Parish Council and other relevant authorities
- (h) Monitor conditions imposed on approved planning applications for compliance, reporting deviations to the relevant authority

**Number of meetings held:** 24 (2016/17 = 24)

**Number of applications received:** 115 (2016/17 = 115)

**Number of applications CPC approved:** 70 (2016/17 = 61)

**Number of applications CPC rejected:** 41 (2016/17 = 38)

**Number of applications CPC made no comment:** 3 (2016/17 = 4)

**Number of residents attending meetings:** 50.

**Number of tree orders received:** 26 (2016/17 = 18)

**Number of Consultations:** 5 – NALC (Housing White Paper), Local Validation Guidance, Right to Challenge, Neighbourhood Planning Guidance and SCDC Local Plan.

**Enforcement visits:** 8

## County Councillor's Report for Cottenham Annual Parish Meeting

It has been a year dominated by roads. Latterly, following the repeated freeze-thaw winter and the very wet and unseasonal start to spring, potholes around the country have been particularly bad, and councils across the country are struggling to repair the backlog. Cambridgeshire County Council is investing £90million to arrest deterioration of carriageways, and the government provides a specific pothole action fund. I got our MPs to write to the Department for Transport, querying the cost-effectiveness of repeated patching rather than permanent repair. A minister wrote back agreeing with me that doing the job once and well is far preferable to doing it over and over again. The County Council is shifting its approach from cure to prevention, and the new Highways Operational Standards are changing from "intervention criteria" to a risk-based approach instead. In other words, if the road has started breaking up it is better to seal the cracks to stop the water getting beneath the surface than repair the resulting potholes months or years later.

Speeding and volume of traffic worry all of us, but they are proving difficult to tackle. Fast action stopped trucks serving Northstowe coming through Rampton, but the bunds at the Cottenham Gun Club still have some way to climb. Andy Preston was well received at a Traffic & Transport Working Group meeting exploring safer crossings and effective ways of taming vehicles in general. "Vertical features" (as the highways engineers call them) are the most effective method of controlling speed – but as we know they can be hugely controversial. Speedwatch works well, but takes the time of a group of volunteers. (I am one of those who have restarted the group in Cottenham recently.) Mobile Vehicle Activated Signs – that flash the speed to oncoming drivers, but are moved from location to location every three or four weeks – are more effective than fixed ones, which tend to be ignored after a while.

The A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme is hugely disruptive, but the end result will be to take plenty of traffic currently diverting through our villages back to the main road. The computer-generated "fly-through" available on youtube is well worth watching to give an impression of what the A14 and local access road will look like when the job is finished - still on target for completion in 2020.

Two of the new Mayor's top three transport projects are dualling the A10 (which will take much of the through traffic off the B1049), and to extend the M11 to the A47 at the Guyhirn roundabout. If the study expected to report by the end of this year confirms initial indications that the business case is positive then this could provide the long-awaited Willingham bypass. That would take plenty of traffic, especially HCVs, currently using the Willingham-Rampton-Cottenham-Histon route, out of our villages.

Cottenham Parish Council made a financial contribution towards the fantastic lighting studs on the cyclepath from Rampton to Cottenham, though all the work was done by Rampton, and full marks to those who actually made it happen. I, for one, am a very grateful cyclist now comfortable using that cycleway in the dark. I had been working with the developers of Northstowe on a new cycleway from Cottenham to the Oakington Busway stop and the developers of Waterbeach on a new cycleway from Cottenham to Waterbeach railway station.

Many thanks to the parish clerk and parish councillors, especially the outgoing ones, and welcome to the incoming parish councillors. I look forward to continuing to work together with you and the new district councillors in the years ahead.

**Tim Wotherspoon**

## **District Councillor's Report for Cottenham Annual Parish Meeting**

As ever the municipal year gets underway with the Annual Meeting of Council, which is where the appointments are made to the various committees. I'm pleased that your three District Councillors were all appointed cabinet positions within the council, with Lynda as the Housing portfolio holder, Tim as cabinet member looking after Northstowe, Strategic Planning and Transport, and I continued as cabinet member for Finance & Staffing.

### **Northstowe**

Northstowe is keeping us as busy as ever, as we are now welcoming more and more new residents to this new town. The first of these new pioneers arrived last year and were present at a formal opening ceremony in May. Plans are well advanced for the Secondary School in Phase 2, and although Oakington will be outside the catchment area for the secondary school, we will be benefiting from 2 other s106 commitments from phase 2 which are the Northstowe to Girton Cycle route improvements, which will pass through Oakington, and the Dry Drayton Road Attenuation ponds. Closure of the Airfield Road is now inevitable, with the date of closure expected to be sometime in May. Regular Northstowe Parish Forum events take place, chaired by Tim Wotherspoon, and these are well attended and reported on by the Chair of the PC through the Parish Council meetings and the Village Journal. The focus of these meetings has always been very much towards the existing communities of Longstanton and Oakington, but I have noticed a definite shift now towards the needs of the new Northstowe residents, and this will become more the norm with more and more people moving in. There are now pre-application discussions taking place between Homes England and the District Council about Phase 3 of this development, which is almost entirely within the current parish of Oakington and Westwick, with phase 3b being entirely in Longstanton to the north of the development. It is anticipated that an outline planning application covering phase 3 will be submitted in early 2019.

### **Finance**

As ever, the council's finances are very tight, with further reductions in government grant to deal with this year. When I became a councillor, we were in receipt of around £7.8 million of government grant per annum, but each year it has been cut and cut to the point where now it has reduced to zero.

The council have always anticipated this, and to mitigate the impact we have introduced a number of schemes to increase our income from other sources. Pre-application planning fees, trade waste, and our business hub all contribute to our income, but by far and away the most successful initiative has been Ermine Street Housing. Ermine Street was set up to provide market rental housing to the section of the community that don't qualify for social housing, and yet aren't able to get on the housing ladder by buying their own home. Ermine Street Housing are being promoted as an Ethical Landlord, providing low costs, flexible tenancies and the same care and attention we give to our social housing tenants. And in the process it is generating £1.4 million of income this year, which is expected to rise to £1.7 million next year.

Over £5 million has been saved over the last 5 years, and the budget for 2018/19 shows there is a further £450,000 to be found, rising to £1.2 million by 2022/23. This will be achieved by a combination of further efficiencies within the council, including shared services, and increasing our income from commercial activities.

Our collection rates continue to be some of the best in the country with 98.4% of housing rent, 99.4% of council tax, and 99.5% of business rates being collected over the year.

## **Shared Services**

One of our efficiency drives is to enter into a number of 'shared service' arrangements. A good example is our Waste and Recycling service, which is now being shared with Cambridge City Council and has saved around £700,000 in annual revenue. This is a tremendous achievement given our teams empty nearly 6 million bins a year. Other services already being shared are the Home Improvement Agency, Payroll, Building Control, Legal Services, and ICT. These are being shared with a combination of Cambridge City Council and Hunts District Council. The Planning service are also about to be shared with the City Council, which will help co-ordinate not only planning application determinations but also strategic planning through the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

## **Housing**

The Council has so far built 50 new homes and another 68 are either in build or have budget approval. Feasibility studies are being carried on a further 6 schemes which would provide over 100 new homes. With no underpinning legislation published by the Government for Starter Homes an opportunity has been seized to agree Heads of Terms between SCambs and Homes England [formerly the Homes & Communities Agency] for a 'Northstowe' version of this type of housing. Changes mean that the 1400 starter home units on Northstowe Phase 2 will be better suited to local needs but most importantly will in the longer term provide a very significant source of funding for the Council's house building programme. SCambs is one of the eleven councils selected by Government as Right to Build Vanguard Authorities. The Council has 819 applicants on its self build register all keen to become self or custom builders. SCambs will sell plots of land it owns having first obtained outline planning permission. 11 of 100 identified plots are being progressed. A sale has been agreed on the first plot, a further 6 are in being marketed and the remaining 5 are in the planning process. Estimated receipts for these are £1.825m and this money will be used to match fund Right to Buy receipts to build new council homes. The Council is also talking to both SME builders and volume developers to increase the availability of land available for this. SCambs is working closely with the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority to accelerate housing delivery particularly on key worker housing to benefit nurses and teachers. Funding has been approved or is being considered for schemes that will provide in excess of 1,500 homes. The Council has also secured funding from the Greater Cambridge Partnership [formerly The City Deal] for a modular homes pilot. Application has been made for temporary planning permission to erect a unit on land adjacent to South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne where, subject to planning consent, it will be available for research and tours for a period of up to 12 months. To help maintain its excellent record of homelessness prevention and minimal use of bed and breakfast accommodation SCambs has introduced its own Private Sector Leasing Scheme. Interest from private landlords has been positive with 9 now signed up and 20 more properties being inspected for suitability.

## **Planning**

The council's planning service continues to be a real challenge as the number of planning applications greatly exceeds the number of people we are able to recruit to deal with them. Add to this the challenges with the new local plan and it all adds up to a department which is really stretched. South Cambs are working hard to produce a new Local Plan (the new name for the document setting out all our planning policies) to take over from the previous LDF, which was adopted back in 2007. Part of this process involves the new plan undergoing an Examination In Public, which is carried out by a Planning Inspector. This examination was progressing well until March 2015, when the Inspector conducting our examination called for additional work to be done to ensure we have taken into account house prices and affordability when assessing the number of new homes needed.

Since then we have had a number of other requests for further work to be done by the inspector, and with each request comes the need to conduct further public consultations, which all adds to the

delays. However, we have finally reached a point where all the work is now complete and we just await the final report from the inspector to tell us if the plan is sound, in planning terms, and ready for adoption. The delays have caused some problems in the district, and locally Cottenham has been subject to large additional housing developments which have been allowed due to the council not having a 5 year land supply. It is hoped that once the Local Plan is adopted, this loophole will be closed, although it is possible for this situation to arise again should there be another downturn in housebuilding. Despite the planning service being at capacity, we've managed to improve our performance of determining planning applications. Back in 2016 we are only determining 67% of (non-major) planning applications within the 8 week target, but we've managed to improve on this and are now determining 87% of non-major applications within target, which puts us among the highest performing authorities in the country. (Major applications are currently running at 94% within the 13 week target).

### **Boundary Review**

The Local Government Boundary Commission is responsible for ensuring appropriate local government representation at both Parish, District and County levels. They have a set of quite complex rules which they apply to local authorities, such as how many electors per councillor there are, how big each ward is, where the boundaries are, and how many councillors there are in a council. Due to the growth of some of our wards (particularly Histon and Impington), we have broken one of the rules relating to the number of electors per councillor, and this has prompted the boundary Commission to undertake a full review of all the wards in our district. At the same time, we were required to look at the number of councillors we had, which at 57 is rather on the high side. As a result, the council has agreed to reduce the number of councillors down to 45, which of course means many of the wards will change by having fewer councillors looking after them. In addition to this the ward boundaries will also have to change to ensure the council remains within the Boundary Commissions rules on numbers of electors per councillor. The result locally is that the Cottenham ward will change from being a 3 member ward, covering Cottenham, Rampton, Oakington & Westwick, to a 2 member ward covering just Cottenham and Rampton. Oakington will become part of a new 2 member ward which will comprise Oakington & Westwick, Longstanton, and Northstowe. Of course as soon as Northstowe begins to grow, it will undoubtedly trigger another boundary review (as the ratio of electors to members will be no longer meet the criteria) and things will all change again. This is one of the prices we have to pay for living in a growth area. In tandem with these changes the council have also resolved to change the election arrangements. Up to now we have always elected our council in thirds. That is, each year, for 3 years, a third of our councillors are up for election, with no district elections in the fourth year. From 2018, when the changes will come into effect, the council will have all out elections, every 4 years.

### **Community chest**

The hugely successful Community chest scheme has now been replenished with over £50,000 of funding for 2018/19 and is open for applications again. We've done really well from this scheme locally since its inception, with 15 schemes having gained a total of around £15,000 funding. I'm pleased to see the parish is out of the blocks quicker than Usain Bolt this year with an application in for £1,000 for the flower planters the EAG hope to place around the village. Awards are given on a first come first served basis, and when the budget is spent, then that's it until next year.

### **Devolution**

The government have been promoting the idea of devolution for some time now, and as a result we now have the creation of a new combined Authority, together with a directly elected mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Combined Authority have been allocated specific pots of money for various things, including £70m for housing within the city of Cambridge and a further £100m for housing in the areas of Cambridgeshire where affordability is most acute, and nowhere is

it more acute than South Cambridgeshire. The money will be used to accelerate housing delivery in developments that have already been allocated in the local plan, but are stalled due to either viability issues, or infrastructure needs.

### **New initiatives**

The council has this year introduced a number of new initiatives. One such scheme is the idea of providing path and street sweeping equipment for parish councils and voluntary groups to borrow for use round the parish. The idea is that South Cambs will drop the equipment off on a Friday evening, and then pick it up again the following Monday morning. Following on from the hugely successful Community Chest scheme we have now introduced a Green Energy fund. This will provide grants for parishes and community groups of up to £3,000 for green energy schemes such as LED lighting, building insulation, solar panels and the such like. It will be run along the same lines as the Community Chest scheme, in that it is allocated on a first come first served basis, and the annual budget is £56,000 which when it is used, applicants will have to wait for the next financial year. In addition to this we have also introduced a Green Energy loan scheme, allowing Parishes voluntary groups and individual householders and businesses the opportunity to apply for a loan of up to £10,000 for similar Green Energy Schemes. Loans will be provided interest free except for businesses where the interest will be 6%. We have also introduced an apprenticeship scheme and aim to recruit 11 new apprentices each year for the next 3 years.

I hope this report gives you a flavour of the work the District Council has been undertaking over the last 12 months, and I would like to pay particular tribute to the help and support we have received from all 3 Parish Councils over the last 12 months, and the hard work and help given by the respective Parish Clerks.

**Simon Edwards**