

How **YOUR** Council is
spending **YOUR** money.
News of Council Meetings
and events to come in
YOUR village in a
Quarterly Newsletter

The POST⁶¹



Letter from the Chair

James Bathmaker

Welcome to the first edition of Parish Post in 2019. This is my last missive as chairman of the Parish Council.

East West Rail

As some background and context- the National Infrastructure Commission has defined a strategy to accommodate 2 million more people between Oxford and Cambridge over the next 25-30 years. As part of this, a railway line is seen as key to connecting these existing and new communities together. A follow up report by 5th Edition (reported in the Royston Crow in December 2017) proposed a range of options to house this population, ranging from 2 new cities of 1 million people each to 2000 new villages of 1000 people each. South Cambs District Council have recommended the southern route (via Bassingbourn) as their preference for the rail route. This will mean crossing the A1198 at some point between Wimpole and Whaddon with a new town being built around the Bassingbourn/Kneesworth area. The rail route requires 87,000 houses to become financially viable, with an expectation that 125-130,000 will be the number built along the Cambs to Bedford route. Figures being bandied around suggest 30,000 houses at Bassingbourn. To give a sense of scale- Stevenage has 34,898 households (2011 figures).

The Clunch Pit

I think the 650 or so people who are members of Litlington Live on Facebook have seen the debate/argument (delete as appropriate) regarding fencing at the Clunch. To clear this up - the land surrounding the pit is owned by Highfield Farm and they are able to enclose as they wish. There are grazing rights so sheep can be used as organic lawnmowers, the rights of way have been left clearly marked out. The fencing and other enclosures will (hopefully!) ensure no repeat of off road motorbikes using the Clunch as a racetrack and keep people and animals safe. On behalf of the Parish Council we'd like to thank Mr Parker for all the work he and his team have put into this work over the past couple of years.

Road concerns

There are 3 threads of work being led by the PC:

First up: the Vehicle Activated Sign: Many thanks to those residents who have agreed to help manage the sign by changing the battery and moving its location (once the required brackets are installed). The sign has been in operation for 4 months and seems to be having a positive effect; analysis of the first dataset suggests a reduction in cars exceeding 35 MPH of about 30%.

Parking: Bassingbourn Road residents will be pleased to know that SCDC are working to create more parking spaces for the mews houses opposite Home Farm barns towards New Close. This should offer sufficient additional parking so people can park close to their houses without having to park on the road and lessen the risk of cars being damaged by vandals.

Finally: Speed Limits: The Parish Council have been working to try and get a reduction in the Bassingbourn Road speed limit following complaints from residents and horse riders. We expect to make progress on this over the coming few months. Many people will have followed the A505 development that was being led by Herts County Council to introduce roundabouts at Odsey and nearer the Horse and Groom along with closure of some of the central turnings expected to cost

c£5m. This has now been kicked down the road except for closing the west bound right turn from Litlington as this has the worst safety record. Given the number of serious accidents at Odsey this writer isn't so sure.

A message from Kumar and Jay Balani

Kumar and Jay would like to thank Litlington residents for their support over the past 31 years. Whilst they intend to take a well-earned retirement, they will be staying in the village and look forward to continuing to support the shop and post office. They ask Litlingtonites to support Mr Dilshan and Suja who will be running the village shop and post office going forward. (See elsewhere in this issue for a 'goodbye' from Kumar and a 'hello' from Dilshan!).

The above is Jamie's last 'letter from the chair' as he has now decided to stand down from the chair of the Parish Council after several years of hard work. I am sure the village joins the rest of the Parish Council in thanking him for his energy and commitment towards making the village a better and safe place to enjoy life! We are hoping to 'persuade' him to continue to contribute his experience as a member of the Parish Council.... A new chair will be elected in due course.

In addition, there is now a vacancy on the Parish Council for a new member to be co-opted. This is an opportunity to make a real contribution towards maintaining and improving life in the village. If you would like to help, please contact any of the councillors listed on p.8 for an informal chat about how it all works, and what you might be able to contribute. It is not hard work, and can even be quite fun!

Now on to other news...

Heron Self Help Scheme

This is a volunteer scheme for Cambridgeshire residents, offering emergency transport to the doctor, hospital etc. The scheme is administered in Litlington by Hilary Sharp. The user pays 30p per mile to the driver and CCC contributes the balance to bring the total mileage allowance to 44p. Insurance cover is provided.

The Heron scheme is well-used by the village, and urgently needs additional volunteer drivers. There is no commitment to a regular day: volunteer drivers are rung on a rota basis and are free to accept or decline a job depending on their availability. So all a driver is contributing - to a very worthwhile scheme that makes a real difference to local people attending hospitals and doctors' surgeries - is their own time. If you can help, please contact Hilary Sharp (01763 852272).

Litlington Village Christmas Tree and Lights

Some of you may have seen the working party on the village green last December struggling to fit a 20-foot high tree with a trunk diameter of 12 inches into a metal sleeve of diameter 10 inches! December! It wasn't easy (or particularly safe!) and we have come up with what we feel is a much better idea: we plan to plant a Norway Spruce in the centre of the village green, so the 'Litlington Christmas Tree' is there for us to decorate every year. Planting will be handled professionally, probably in late autumn to allow the tree time to bed in during the winter.

It's not too early in fact to ask if anyone would like to help with the set-up and decoration of the tree this year: we are always grateful for help in any aspect relating to the day, from help with refreshments, delivering flyers, or at the event itself. Many hands make lights work... (usually)! Please contact any of the parish councillors.

Also, and better late than never, we'd like to thank whoever strung the gift parcels on the trees on the green last year. We're not too sure who did it but it helped produce a truly festive atmosphere and was a great gesture. And of course if you'd like to do it again this year we'd be delighted!

Mobile library

The Mobile Library visits Litlington (Church Street) on the 1st Tuesday of every month, 2.00pm-2.15pm. It carries up to 3,000 items of stock including fiction, non-fiction, large print, audiobooks and children's books. It has a lift for wheelchair users or those who find stairs difficult. It has access to all the books in Cambridgeshire and you can request items to collect from it on the next visit.

Manor Farm paddock and the sheep

It's good to see sheep grazing again in the paddock on Church Street. Remember that the farmer needs a lot of space to get a trailer both into, and out of, the gateway into the paddock from Church Street, and he would be very grateful if drivers could refrain from parking within the two white marks painted on the kerb in Church Street. Many thanks to all those who already cooperate – it is much appreciated.

Staying Healthy as You Grow Older

The NHS has recently produced a very helpful guide aimed primarily at people aged around 70 or older. It covers such things as looking after your body, keeping safe at home, vaccinations and medication, winter precautions – in other words, how to look after yourself. While the process of ageing cannot be stopped, the advice provided may help keep you fit and independent. You can find the guide by googling 'Practical Guide to Healthy Ageing – NHS England' or by calling 030 0123 1002.

'Farewell' from Kumar and Jay Balani...

All good things must come to an end! As we bid goodbye to this lovely shop and our incredible customers, the memories of the last 31-plus years are flooding back to us. From my very first bad joke to my latest gaffe, Jay has been straight man to my Les Dawson comedy act. So I thank you sincerely for putting up with me ... and Jay would thank you for indulging her husband's irrepressible banter. We have immensely enjoyed our long tenure here, and you guys have been really awesome in supporting us. Please continue to do so with new owners Dilshan and Suja, a very young and charming couple who have a four-year-old son, and are highly experienced traders. We can assure you that this shop will be transformed in the coming weeks and they will provide you with a tremendous shopping experience. They will not only continue to provide all the services and products as before, but will also add new lines. Soon you will have a coffee machine!

... and 'Hello' from Dilshan and Suja

My name is Dilshan (nicknamed the new Delboy by Kumar, commonly called Arkwright). My wife is Suja, and we have a four-year-old son. We realised we were moving into an adorable village during the few visits to the shop when we saw the constant laughter and banter amongst not only the villagers but with Kumar and Jay. We intend to maintain not only the services already in place but intend to introduce new services like a coffee machine and 'food to go' in the coming weeks. We have already increased the range of some products and introduced pre-packaged fruit, veg but also increased the range of our beers, wines and spirits. We intend to grow the business so it sustains over a long period and at all times ensuring that the needs of our villagers are met. It will really help if you could let us know if you want me to stock certain items that are not stocked at the moment. Rest assured we will always listen to you and do our best to meet your requirements. Let us hope the transition from Arkwright to Delboy is smooth!

and from The Crown

The Crown is a traditional village local which having had a period of transition is now building & shall continue to go from strength to strength as you, the villagers, continue to support your local. Offering a classic selection of drinks, with an IPA mainstay and a changing guest ale (apx monthly) there is a drink to suit. Our menu is also about to undergo a revamp with a selection of dishes that we hope will be for all tastes, Whilst complementing our traditional Sunday Roast (from £10.95). We are also proud to boast an array of regular entertainment from music to charity events and more, such as the upcoming Champions League Final Party on 1st June, come see us to find out more. Hopefully, we will get to see you again soon at The Crown.

Footpaths

Now we finally seem to have some decent weather many people will be tempted to spend more time outdoors and walking around the village. We are lucky to have some interesting and varied countryside close at hand, but it's important to know exactly where you are allowed to walk, and where you shouldn't. Landowners and farmers can be rightly upset if walkers trespass on their private land, especially if crops are flattened or damaged, ground-nesting birds are disturbed, or livestock is chased or worried: a dog chasing a pregnant ewe can cause it to miscarry.

The footpaths recognised by Cambridgeshire County Council as public rights of way are marked as bold grey lines with footpath numbers, on their map, reproduced opposite. A clearer, colour version of this map can be downloaded from:

<https://my.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/myCambridgeshire.aspx?MapSource=CCC/AllMaps&Layers=row,row-TROs&tab=maps>

Use the blue drop-down menu 'Take me to' at the left side to highlight 'Litlington'.

This map shows all the paths in the parish that are public rights of way. In addition, there are a number of 'permissive paths', especially south of the Stret, where public access is allowed by permission of the landowner: these are clearly marked by signs at the start of the path. It is worth noting that this access can be withdrawn at the landowner's discretion if this privilege is abused. Any other paths are essentially on private land and landowner's rights should be respected.

In return, landowners have obligations to keep public paths clear and maintained in good order, and the council is also required to maintain clear signage of all paths. If you do find anything amiss with a public footpath please contact the PC footpath officer.

In the shop you can pick up – free! – a very informative pamphlet 'Litlington Parish Paths', which as well as showing the public rights of way also contains a lot of interesting information on the village's history, geology and wildlife.

Dogs on cross-field footpaths

David Sharp

Please could you keep all dogs on a lead or AT HEEL to comply with the law when you walk on footpaths which cross fields? You and your dogs have the right to walk the footpaths but it is trespass to go on the fields. Many people do not realise that crops are damaged by dogs roaming the fields.

On private tracks i.e. the one from the top of Cockhall Lane to The Stret, dogs should be on a lead and dog faeces should be collected. It is unpleasant for fellow walkers to walk into dog "poo".

Thank you to all the dog owners who act responsibly and abide by the rules!

Editor's note: a new dog-poo bin is shortly to be installed at the start of the footpath across Church Field, by the footpath sign opposite the top gate to the churchyard.

The Clunch Pit

The pit was a designated County Wildlife Site for rare chalk grassland. We still have remnants of that grassland and it is best protected by careful seasonal sheep grazing at an appropriate stocking rate. In previous consultations with landscape advisers hedge planting was not considered appropriate as it would detract from the chalk grassland and open landscape views. Given the need for sheep grazing carefully sited fencing was suggested as a way forward.

Other valuable habitats at the pit include the extensive scrub which should be managed to maintain diverse age structure to maximise the potential biodiversity it can support and prevent over encroachment into remnant chalk grassland rich patches, and at the top of the pit the areas of wild thyme that are in danger from both ground slip, rabbit burrowing and shade.

These remnants are important as we look to help our wildlife recover and move across our landscapes, and particularly to enable climate change resilience. Look out for more on the clunch pit in a forthcoming issue!

The key issues faced by Cambridgeshire County Council: reduced funding; increasing costs and increasing demand

This year has seen a continuation and intensification of the debate on how to continue to provide the services residents have come to expect but in a context of severe financial pressures. Central government has continued to reduce its revenue grant to local authorities; locally that is from £86 million in 2013-14 to nil for the coming 2019-20 year. Councils have some but not much flexibility to increase tax levels (see below, para. 6). The demand for services is increasing as the elderly population and the under-fives increase and services are costing more.

Council Tax

For several years the government has capped the levels by which local councils can increase tax. It was usually 2% but last year the government allowed upper tier councils with social care responsibilities to increase council tax by 2% on top of the normal 2% permitted increase. Cambridgeshire CC decided to accept the 2% social care increase but decided on no increase in the basic council tax.

For the coming year 2019-20, the Council has voted for the 2% increase for adult social care plus 2.99% which can be used for other services. The cost to a Band D household of every 1% increase is 23p per week. The 4.99% increase will cost £1.15 per week. Over 60% of households in Cambridgeshire are in the lower bands A-C.

The Council's Chief Finance Officer has informed councillors that the savings needed over the next five years amount to £69 million (in a gross budget of £573 million).

Services for older people

More and more people are living longer and, in the main, healthier lives. When they do become dependent, the cost to the Council is very considerable. The Council's aim is to enable more people to live longer at home and be supported there rather than going into sheltered accommodation. The policy of 'Transformation' is based on a significant reduction in personnel together with higher expectations on the voluntary sector and an assumption of a willingness on the part of beneficiaries to accept new ways of being supported. While there is obviously merit in trying to find new ways of providing services, there can be no disguising the fact that provision will get worse for some and this is a matter of great concern, both locally and nationally.

Transport and Highways

- a. Bus services continue to cause concern for their frequency and reliability.
- b. Road maintenance and footpath repair are an increasing source of complaint from residents.

Education

All Cambridgeshire secondary schools are now 'academies' which means that the Council has no jurisdiction over them. The proportion of Cambridgeshire secondary school pupils attending schools rated as 'good' or 'outstanding' has increased since last year. National research findings confirm that becoming an academy does not of itself raise standards.

Central government grant to Cambridgeshire improved in 15-16, was maintained for 16-17, 17-18 and 18-19. A 'National Funding Formula' published in September 2017 was a small move in the right direction. But costs in schools have increased at a higher rate. Independent researchers confirm that, in real terms, funds available to schools have been cut by 8% since 2010. The government has maintained its provision of free school meals for all infant school pupils irrespective of financial need. The Pupil Premium (allocated to children whose families qualify for free school meals) has been protected at £935 for secondary and £1,300 for primary pupils. This is spent on 'narrowing the gap' in academic attainment between the well-off and the poor and appears to be having a positive effect. Major reductions in the services for young people, particularly those benefiting from the Children's Centres, are included in the CCC Business Plan.

Combined Authority

Since May 2017 there has been a 'Combined Authority' for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with James Palmer (Con.) as Mayor. The combined authority comprises Peterborough City Council (a unitary authority), the district councils of Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambs, South Cambs and Cambridge City, and the County Council. The Mayor has a Cabinet comprising the Council Leaders from all the constituent councils, i.e. five Conservatives, one Labour and one Lib Dem, and there is also a scrutiny panel. The Mayor has been focusing on getting grants particularly for transport improvement. The government has also allocated the CA money towards housing developments. The original 'Devolution Deal' provides an extra £20 million per year for the next 30 years and this is to be used for a wide range of infrastructure projects across the combined areas. The office of mayor and staff, originally costed at £800k per year, has now risen to nearly £6 million. The salary of the Mayor has risen to over £80k. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of this new development. Some people are already saying that the introduction of a Combined Authority makes it unnecessary to have County and District Councils as well and perhaps one of the layers of local government could be pruned to save costs. Some critics of the Mayor point to the fact that nearly all his transport improvement schemes are based in the part of the county where he lives.

The future for local government services and the implication for communities

a. It is now becoming increasingly clear that the structure and funding of local government as we have known it for many years is changing. The Local Government Association, a cross-party organisation, is sounding the alarm-bells. Lord Porter, the LGA Chairman (Con) said in March 2019: 'Even if we scale back all our discretionary services, we will not be able to fill the funding gap facing children's services, adult social care and homelessness, nor meet the rising demand for these statutory services.'

In recent months the truth of that statement has become increasingly apparent. Our neighbouring County (Northamptonshire) has collapsed financially. Cambs CC imposed a 1.2% salary cut on its employees last Christmas. The growing expectation is that services will be 'transformed' and local groups - parish councils, voluntary groups – will come to the rescue of those people in the greatest need.

b. The County Council is working hard on making savings in its procedures and in increasing income. For example, it has set itself up as a property company and is trying to sell off some of its land holdings for housing. It is also planning to move its HQ offices out of Shire Hall in Cambridge to a new building in Alconbury Weald. This will enable the existing impressive building in Cambridge to be leased, possibly as a luxury hotel. The new building will be much smaller than the current Shire Hall and more staff will be located in some of the existing council properties.

Neighbourhood Watch

The aim of Neighbourhood Watch is to bring neighbours together to create strong, friendly, active communities where crime and antisocial behaviour are less likely to happen. The vision of Neighbourhood Watch is for a caring society that is focused on trust and respect in which people are safe from crime and enjoy a good quality of life. Neighbourhood Watch is about making sure that no one has to feel afraid, vulnerable or isolated in the place where they live.

The Neighbourhood Watch team is below:

<i>Name</i>	<i>tel</i>	<i>Area covered</i>
David Sharp	852425	South St, Malting Lane, Middle St
Dushy Chetty	852994	Royston Rd, Cherry Tree Close, Cockhall Close/Lane, Anvil Ave, Church St to shop
James Bathmaker	852435	Bassingbourn Rd, New Close
Jenny Wootton	852182	Silver St, Meeting Lane, Chapel Close, Abbotts Close
volunteer needed		Church St (shop - Old Vicarage), Abington Rd, St. Catherines Court

Your Councillors are always ready to help. If you have any questions about these - or indeed any other - matters, please do not hesitate to contact South Cambs District Councillor Nigel Cathcart (01763 243637 / e: cllr.cathcart@scambs.gov.uk) or County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley (01767 651982 / e: skindersley@hotmail.com) or write to him at The Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA).

Your Parish Councillors

Geoff Barlow	01763 852841	Sass Pledger	01763 853615
James Bathmaker	01763 852435	David Sharp	01763 852425
Stephen Gray	07931 706375	Linda Williams	01763 852809
Nick Jones	01763 852037	Lisa Wiltshire	01763 852551

9th Councillor: currently vacant
 Chair: currently vacant

Other Useful Numbers (01763- codes unless otherwise stated)

Clerk to the Council	Sally Walmesley	852137
Church Warden	Sue Jenkins	852974
The Chapel (Secretary)	Gwen Biles	852533
Village Hall Booking Clerk	Linda Williams	852809
Recreation Centre Bookings	Heather Williams	07885 774775
Toy Library (Secretary)	Lorraine Baker	852414
Pre-school	Yvonne Rolfe / Debbie Windsor	07984 935193
L.J.'s (7 to 10yrs Youth Club)	Cathy Smith	853997
L.J.'s Plus (10 to 13yrs Youth Club)	Jonathan Burgess	853365
Badminton Club (Treasurer)	Vera Webster	241022
Football Club (Secretary)	James Evans	07834 813854
Bowls Club	Ann Cannadine	853205
Gardening Club	Sue Davies	852852
Evergreens	Pamela Sharp	852425
Post Office / Shop	Dilshan Johnpillai	852221
Bassingbourn Primary School		242460
Steeple Morden School		852474
Bassingbourn Village College		242344
Bassingbourn Surgery		290555
Ashwell Surgery		01462 417377
Royston Library		243292
Police, Cambridge H.Q.		101

If any of the above details are inaccurate, please advise the editor.

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