

Annual Report to Parish Council April 2023

I have been a District Councillor since 2015, first representing Fulbourn and then from 2018 the Fen Ditton and Fulbourn ward which covers eight villages Fen Ditton, Fulbourn, Great Wilbraham, Horningsea, Little Wilbraham, Six Mile Bottom, Stow cum Quy and Teversham.

At South Cambridgeshire District Council my role is as an opposition councillor and deputy leader of the Conservative group and deputy chair of Scrutiny.

As District Councillor I always try to be approachable and listen to residents' concerns. I have been involved in several local issues that residents have brought to my attention. These issues have ranged from concerns around local repair works, speeding, maintenance such as grass cutting, youth projects, streetlamps, lobbying for cycleways and answering questions on welfare and taxation. Specifically, within the ward I have made representations and worked with officers and developers on a whole range of issues such as the congestion charging and cycle greenways.

The biggest issue lately for residents to get in touch with me about is the congestion charge the reasons I have opposed this is as follows:

- Small businesses (many people will not use businesses within the Congestion Charge Zone)
- Employees (teachers, nurses, Drs, cleaners) who are often on shifts.
- Traders in vans (plumbers, electricians, decorators who would be paying £10 to enter the Congestion Charge Zone)
- People who live in the Congestion Charge Zone would have to pay to leave their property, even when exiting the zone.
- Traffic caused by people circumventing the Congestion Charge Zone, causing traffic around the outlying villages (Fulbourn and Teversham would suffer hugely being half-in and half-out of the zone).
- Has parking on the outside of the zone been considered? With change of behaviour, you will have people driving to the edge of the zone (Fen Ditton, Teversham, and Fulbourn), parking on streets then getting a bus or cycling from their car to avoid paying the Congestion Charge.
- The report indicates that those on low pay would potentially get a discount but having studied the full proposals of what has been put forward; it doesn't say who would qualify for a reduced rate. I have asked this at Full Council and been left none the wiser by the Liberal Democrat Administration. Many of the correspondence I have had are from those on lower earnings who are worried about the effect this is going to have on them. We don't know if reductions will apply to someone on benefits or someone who earns "x" amount per year, or how this will be administered (it is my view that any form of welfare or earnings exemption would be very costly to administer in staffing costs).
- Will there really be enough buses and a stable service with the proposals put forward? It is my view that many people will still slip through the net in terms of being able to catch a bus that fits their work and social life habits.
- Addenbrookes Hospital and Papworth Hospital are within the Congestion Charge Zone. This means people visiting relatives, patients and staff, will be paying to get to Addenbrookes Hospital via car (on top of parking charges already in place).
- Will the Park and Rides have the capacity to deal with the modal shift that is predicted within the report? I still think this is questionable.

- There are no exemptions for low emissions vehicles. I have been contacted by residents that have invested in electric vehicles at a higher cost, who are not very happy that they will still have to pay the same as a non-efficient diesel / petrol vehicle.
- Mopeds and motorbikes would also have to pay the £5 Congestion Zone fee, (expect your takeaway costs to go up).
- Lorries would be charged £50 to enter or exit the city per day. If you are a business that requires a stock delivery each week or a pub that needs kegs delivered, this will be a large burden upon these businesses and inevitably the costs would be passed onto the consumer.
- The Congestion Charge runs from 7am-7pm. If you are a cleaner that starts work at 6am to get a premises ready for opening and finish work at midday, it is likely that the bus service will still not be available at 4/5am when you need to leave and you will be charged on the way out of the zone.
- Change of habits for hauliers. Due to the Congestion Charge Zone being 7am -7pm, I would guess that lorry drivers will try and work outside of these hours to avoid the charge where possible, meaning more heavy goods vehicles at unsociable times of the day. Where lorries are delivering to villages outside of the zone, I would expect those lorries to now drive around the zone and through our villages to avoid the charge.
- We are not London with an Underground or Manchester with a Tram system, we do not have bus hubs and the GCP has sat on the money from Central Government for Cycle Greenways for years and have done very little so I have had many correspondence regarding alternatives to congestion charging like not dropping the CAM Metro scheme that had already had a lot of money spent on it, bus franchising, Uber style bus services like those that are being trialled in Huntingdon etc.

I have been proud to be involved with the Ukrainian refugee re-settlement program as Vice Chair of Scrutiny and Local Member. I am proud of the Government who has provided funding for this scheme insuring local councils have the resources they need to deliver vital services for Ukrainian refugees. South Cambs can be very proud of the effort within this district achieving the following:

- 995 visa applications by Ukrainians (Gov data 28/02/23).
- 894 visas granted in South Cambridgeshire (Gov data 28/02/23).
- 408 hosts have received 787 Ukrainian guests into their homes.
- 914 DBS checks have been completed.
- 405 welfare visits have been made.
- 516 home checks have been completed.
- 747 payments (totalling £261,450) have been made to guests upon arrival.
- 3,353 thank you payments (totalling £980,000) have been made to hosts.
- 232 hosts are currently housing 475 guests (as of 10 March 2023).

SCDC's role covered the following areas:

- Accommodation checks – to check host accommodation was suitable.
- DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) **checks** – carried out on hosts and all people over 18 living with them. This was to ensure there was not a clear reason why a guest should not be placed with the host's family.
- Welfare checks – to ensure Ukrainian guests were settled and safe once living together.
- Payments – an initial one-off payment to guests upon arrival, and monthly 'thank

you' payments to hosts.

- Data processing – to manage and process data, including daily interaction with Government databases, to ensure the smooth running of the scheme.
- Community related activities – to ensure needs of guests and hosts are considered and met using tariff funding.
- Rematching and homelessness cases – responsibility for emerging homelessness cases arising from the Homes for Ukraine Scheme if host/guest relations break down. This includes rematching to a new host where necessary.
- Communications – to keep guests, hosts, councillors, parish, and town councils, community support groups and the wider community informed and updated.

I would love to see South Cambridgeshire to continue to be one of the best places to live in the UK with huge employment opportunities and rural villages where people want to live close to a vibrant city. Our area has, in some way, become a victim of its own success as it is a hugely desirable place to live and it has a high number of large employers such as Addenbrooke's Hospital and all the businesses on the Biomedical Campus, the various science parks, companies like Arm and people like to live close to where they work.

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