

Cllrs Lorna Dupré and Mark Inskip

MONTHLY REPORT JUNE 2024

FULL COUNCIL

The Annual Council meeting took place on Thursday 23 May, and elected the Cllr Mark Goldsack as Chair and Cllr David Brown as Vice Chair of the Council.

Three motions were debated.

- A motion calling for the prevention of abuse and intimidation of public officials was proposed and seconded cross-party and agreed unanimously.
- A motion setting out plans for an accessibility audit of play areas, and a strategy to make them more inclusive. was proposed by Cllr Chika Akinwale (Ely North) and was also approved unanimously. Parish councils will be invited to include in the audit at no charge any play areas for which they are responsible.
- A motion from Cllr Charlotte Cane, seconded by Mark, calling for the two-child cap on benefits to be scrapped, was defeated with eleven votes in favour, twelve against and three abstentions.

A motion was also proposed, seconded (by Lorna) and agreed to end the requirement—unique in local government, as far as we know—for questions from councillors at committee meetings to be submitted in writing in advance. The motion also established the right for lead members of the council's committees to receive regular briefings from officers.

We welcomed the appointment of an Independent lay person to join the Audit Committee, but our political group has not nominated anyone to the committee because it still does not follow the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy guidelines.

There were two questions from the public, raising concerns about homelessness in the district and about street sweeping.

Lorna asked a question to the Leader of the Council about why she had voted against the proposed bus improvements, and the funding for them, at the Combined Authority. These improvements include plans for a service from Sutton to the guided busway at Longstanton, something Mark and Lorna have been calling for since 2016! The Leader responded that she did not support the increase in the Mayor's precept to pay for bus services, and that buses were not the answer to East Cambridgeshire's transport problems.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REFERENDUMS

Mepal referendum

The referendum on Mepal's first neighbourhood plan will take place on Thursday 13 June.

Sutton referendum

The referendum on Sutton's replacement neighbourhood plan will take place on Thursday 4 July—the same day as the General Election.

Mark has written about the replacement plan for Sutton and explained the important difference that such plans can make to local communities.

<https://markinskip.mycouncillor.org.uk/2024/05/27/replacement-sutton-neighbourhood-plan-referendum/#page-content>

UPDATE ON KEY LOCAL FACILITIES

Priors Field GP surgery

Negotiations are continuing between the NHS and the owner of the building, with a view to the NHS purchasing the premises to secure its future. The Patient Participation Group is working hard to ensure that our local community receives its fair share of NHS resources, and is also working with the practice to investigate why thirty per cent of face to face appointments are missed.

Post Offices

Mepal Post Office branch and shop are closing temporarily for a refurbishment until Thursday 29 August 2024. Meanwhile Post Office Limited has announced that its Sutton branch in the One Stop is due to close on Thursday 27 June at 5:30PM. The One Stop national management no longer wishes to host the facility at its Sutton store. Instead the Post Office will be opening a reduced service called Drop & Collect in the One Stop, starting on Saturday 6 July at 9:00AM.

The Post Office says: "Drop & Collect will offer services from a handheld device, allowing customers to maintain access to bill payments and prepaid parcel services from the current branch location." The services available will be parcel collect and return (prepaid only), bill payments, and mobile top-up services. These will be open Monday to Sunday 7:00AM to 10:00PM.

For services other than this very limited offer, residents are advised to travel to Witchford or Ely.

Meanwhile in the longer term, the Post Office did advertise the opportunity to run a Post Office branch from another retail outlet in Sutton. Not surprisingly, given the experiences of sub-postmasters, this appears not to have resulted in any applications. Lorna is exploring options.

Fire station

It now appears that a decision on whether to close or retain Sutton's fire station may not now be taken until the summer of next year.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Council has signed up to the Ask for ANI codeword scheme to enable victims of domestic abuse to discreetly ask for immediate help. Unfortunately, there tends to be an uplift in domestic violence during major football tournaments such as the upcoming Euros. Council staff have been trained to recognise the scheme and offer help. More information about domestic violence at <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/crime/domestic-violence>

DOG BREEDER PROSECUTED

The council has prosecuted a woman from Wardy Hill for illegal dog breeding. She was handed a six-month suspended sentence, required to pay some of the council's costs, and banned from keeping animals for ten years. She was found to have forty-four dogs in terrible conditions, even without drinking water.

Anyone who is looking to purchase a puppy is advised to carry out appropriate checks to ensure that the breeder is licensed. The public register for East Cambridgeshire is available on the council's website.

<https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/licensing/animal-welfare-licence-holders>

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

Our next surgeries will take place on

- Monday 1 July, 6:30-7:30PM
- Monday 5 August, 6:30-7:30PM

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

Lorna also hopes to be at the Sutton Timebank coffee morning on Tuesday 11 June 10:00-11:00 and Nellie's on Friday 28 June 12:30-1:30PM.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

Cllr Mark Inskip

District Councillors for the Sutton ward