

Answer to Question from Councillor Bunty Waters, which was on the agenda for the meeting of Council on 30 March 2023, but there had been insufficient time to answer:

Question: What is this council doing to ensure the residents of South Cambs can adequately celebrate the King's coronation?

Answer (which was sent to Councillor Bunty Waters on 12 April 2023):

In the January 2023 parish e-bulletin (sent to all SCDC Cllrs as well as all parish councils) we provided all parish councils with event advice – namely encouraging any parishes intending holding events to contact our Safety Advisory Group (SAG) no later than 21 April so that the SAG can provide advice. We also provided all parishes with a short PowerPoint presentation that suggested a number of points for them to consider, when planning an event.

In answer to your question As a follow-up to the abovementioned January 2023 parish e-bulletin, we also sent all parish councils a letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (dated 26 January 2023) which provided further guidance on topics including street parties, The Coronation Big Lunch on 7 May, The Big Help Out and National Lottery funding.

In the upcoming March 2023 parish e-bulletin, we will be providing all parish councils with specific advice relating to collecting and disposing of waste and recycling that originates from Coronation events.

Traditionally in South Cambridgeshire, it is commonplace for events to mark a national occasion like this to be held in many different villages, rather than at a single, central location in South Cambridgeshire. Once again, the Council is taking on a supporting role, particularly to those parish councils who are organising events, to help with the smooth running of events.

The Community Chest grant scheme is open as usual, so welcomes applications that meet the standard Community Chest criteria. Grants of up to £2,000 are available. Please see the guidance Community Chest Grants - South Cambs District Council (scambs.gov.uk) or if you have any further questions please contact community.chest@scambs.gov.uk and they will be happy to assist.

Answer to Question from Councillor Mark Howell, which was on the agenda for the meeting of Council on 30 March 2023, but there had been insufficient time to answer:

Question: Will the Leader explain any repercussions there may be following the County Council's error in relation to the Council Tax Bills?

Answer (which was sent to Councillor Howell on 3 May 2023):

On the evening of 27th February, our Revenues Team received notification from the County Council that they had advised us of the incorrect precept figures in their formal notification letter.

The Revenues Team had, by this time, already produced the annual billing calculation for all the 71,000 Council Tax accounts and had created the files to enable the bills to be printed. Effectively, the notification from the County Council meant that every bill would have been incorrect and needed to be recalculated before being issued.

Due to the complexities of annual billing and the requirements of the software, this was not a straightforward task. Such a re-bill at this stage in the process had not previously been done and the Revenues Team immediately set to working with the software providers and printers to establish a solution. Work was done that week and the following two weekends to ensure processes were implemented to reverse the first calculations and create new, correct, bills. Without the commitment and skill of the Revenues Team, the impact would certainly have been a delay in the bills being issued, and without doubt would have had a significant impact on cash flow and collection rates for the authority. By their professional approach to this significant issue the team managed to keep the costs to staffing time, and revised ICT/printing support.

The bills were all issued on time to meet the legal requirements, ensuring that our residents were not directly impacted.

We continue to work with the County Council with regards to any additional costs incurred in the expectation that they will be re-imbursing the Council for these.

I think it is worth noting that this was a result of human error and I completely understand that mistakes happen. We resolved the issue through strong partnership working and I am confident that lessons have been learned.