

Melbourn Parish Council October 2021 - District and County Councillors Report

Flooding

We were very concerned to receive two reports of household flooding following the very heavy rainfall last week. In both cases, the drains had been thoroughly cleaned out in the spring. We have been working with both households, Highways which has ordered more drain cleaning, and the County Flood team which gathers information for preventive action.

Anglian Water meeting

We are meeting Anglian Water very shortly to discuss system capacity in our area and to understand key problem areas and what can be done.

Watercourse reinstatement grants

The County Council is offering grants from a pot of money set up to ensure watercourses across the county are properly maintained. Applications may be made by established community flood groups and parish councils where a watercourse needs to be reinstated, and the riparian owner either cannot be identified or genuinely cannot afford the works to reinstate their watercourse.

A riparian owner is anyone who owns a property where there is a watercourse within or adjacent to the boundaries of their property. A watercourse includes a river, stream or ditch. A riparian owner is also responsible for watercourses or culverted watercourses passing through their land. The Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee has set criteria against which applications will be considered. It is expected that the work to bring the watercourse back up to standard would be one-off in nature, with them being regularly maintained thereafter.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/riparian-watercourse-grant>

Tree planting: Queen's Canopy

This scheme will see thousands of trees planted between now and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee next summer. Individuals, schools, businesses, community groups, councils are all being encouraged to plant trees where appropriate to do so.

The County Council's website includes advice on this, and the national Queen's Green Canopy website will soon include a map on which residents can mark the trees they have planted as part of the scheme. In Cambridgeshire, the initiative is backed by the Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire Julie Spence. The County Council will be identifying some land in its ownership on which to plant trees.

- <https://queensgreencanopy.org>
- <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energyand-environment/improving-the-natural-environment/trees-andwoodland/queens-green-canopy-project>

Greater Cambridge Local Plan – First Proposals and consultation

The preferred options have now been through the committee processes of both Cambridge City and South Cambs councils. The month of September was busy indeed. Officers are now making the final changes that were suggested through the processes and given the green light by SCDC Cabinet last week Friday. We are still working toward starting the public consultation on 1st November 2021,

running until 13 December. We've asked SCDC to come to the Melbourn Hub on November 13, 10-1, for an information event.

[Greater Cambridge Local Plan \(greatercambridgeplanning.org\)](http://greatercambridgeplanning.org)

Thakeham

Thakeham have been in the national news quite a bit over the past few weeks for their high profile lobbying. Still nothing at all has been submitted to South Cambs District Council. The Local Plan First Proposals set out an evidence-based framework for sustainable development and affordable housing, which we believe offers the best protection against irresponsible development.

Covid case rise

Covid cases in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are now higher than at any point during the pandemic. The key point of transition is schools, from where Covid has spread to parents, grandparents and the community. This in turn has made a significant impact on staff absences in all sorts of settings, including public transport (including bus and train drivers) and health services – most visibly, hospitals and GP surgeries but also behind the scenes services.

The Cambs/Pet Director of Public Health has as you probably know reintroduced mask wearing and social distancing in schools and is now in discussion with regional and national colleagues regarding greater resource needed, among other things for speeding up vaccination roll-out in secondary schools. Some additional support is already available via mass vaccination centres in Cambs and Pet, where 12-15

Covid support available

The County Council is writing to everyone on the local shielding list to ensure they are aware of this. They will also receive a letter from the Government. The Countywide coordination hub, which has supported thousands of people since the start of the pandemic, will continue to operate, alongside a network of support hubs across the county, with anyone in need of help urged to get in touch.

- <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/covid-19-coordination-hub-your-community-needs-you>

The Government has extended the financial payments available to help people self-isolate, until the end of next March. These payments support people who will lose income as a result of having to self-isolate and will struggle to pay their bills or buy food and essentials.

- <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronaviruscovid-19-support-to-self-isolate>

A Household Support Fund (originally the Winter Support Grant) is now up and running - more information here:

[Free school meals - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

HGV driver shortages

The shortage of HGV drivers means the County Council is facing challenges in both home to school transport and school catering. These difficulties are being managed but are adding still more pressure for staff on top of Covid.

'My Maps' and public information

A great deal of public information is available around publicly owned property and demography.

For property, please go to the County Council home page and click 'Maps' at the top of the home page. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For demographic information, please see Cambridgeshire Insights, and explore the various filters. <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk>

Home adaptations for the elderly

Following our report last month, we've had a couple of calls from residents about this service, including how confusing it can be to locate the right person to talk to. The number to call is 0345 045 5202. Susan is more than happy to be contacted directly with any questions for anything that is unclear. Unfortunately, as with so many public services now, and especially in health and social care, there's a very long waiting list. But it's important to get the ball rolling if you have concerns.

Rail User Group Nov 30

The Meldreth Shepreth Foxton Rail User Group will be meeting Nov 30, 7:30PM, via Teams – link will be shared. We are lobbying Govia Thameslink for a restoration of the half-hourly service in December. Like other sectors they are suffering from high vacancy rates, which need to improve further in order to restore services.

Oil Club

A reminder as we move toward winter that our local bulk buying household heating oil club is still up and running. We work with a local supplier to get best prices on the day. There's no joining fee and no requirement for repeat orders. An annual rebate is received each year and donated to a community group – this year's donation went to Home-Start Royston and South Cambs.

Our supplier is Jeremy Cole, Agricole Oil: Tel 01954 719452 or 07860 904 045, jeremy@agricole.co.uk, www.agricole.co.uk

County Council's New Shire Hall, Alconbury

A project of the previous administration, Construction of the 'New Shire Hall' building HQ for Cambs County Council is complete and a phased return to work plan and September committee meetings have taken place there. Based at Alconbury Weald off the A1 toward Peterborough, there are no viable public transport connections from most parts of the county. It remains to be seen whether the impressive cycle parking facilities there will be put to use.

The most surprising feature of New Shire Hall is that it contains no space large enough to hold a meeting of Full Council. Therefore, the County Council will be forced to hire a suitable venue for each of its Council meetings. The next meeting on November 9 takes place at Burgess Hall, St Ives.

New Shire Hall stands directly adjacent to the 'iMET' vocational training centre, a £10 million project launched in 2018, which has now collapsed and is closed, due to lack of public transport access.

#BeKind Campaign – Being aware and supporting all who work at our GP practices:

GP practices are under enormous and unsustainable pressure, like so many aspects of health and social care. The Cambs and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group has launched a campaign simply called, 'Be Kind.'

They write: "Over the last 18 months our practices adapted at pace, in many cases overnight, to new ways of working and they have continued to work tirelessly to offer online, telephone and face-to-face appointments throughout the pandemic, alongside supporting our Care Homes, patients in the community and delivering the lifesaving COVID-19 vaccination programme

The demand we are seeing on Primary Care is unprecedented and unsustainable. Demand that is increasing month on month and is expected to continue to increase further as we head into a difficult winter. Recruiting and retaining GPs and other healthcare professionals remains a significant challenge. We now have fewer GPs and healthcare professionals looking after more patients with more complex needs. BMA figures suggest practices have seen a **22% increase in patients** and **4.5% decrease in full time equivalent GPs** since 2015. Understandably many of our highly valued workforce are becoming increasingly demoralised.

Primary Care have been on the receiving end of increasing negative, and at times misleading, media coverage coupled with abusive and threatening behaviour from patients in recent months."

County Council's Peer Review – what the Local Government Association says we're doing well and need to do better

A Peer Review was requested upon the formation of a new CCC Joint Administration in May. The full report and action plan can be read here and makes interesting reading:

https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/briefings-and-reports/local-government-association-peer-challenge-report?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Key points – many of these have implications for services at the most local level.

- Good start for the new Joint Administration with clear intent to collaborate across the Cambs system.
- Good response to Covid – agile working and much learning for new ways of working.
- Staff feel well supported.
- Poor financial stewardship in recent years with lack of strategic plan; including significant loss of income arising from failure to raise council tax to maximum allowed, and £64 million budget gap in the medium term.
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) overspend is significant and accumulating; contingency plan is needed if Govt doesn't come to the rescue. Currently cumulative deficit of £28 million growing at £11 million per year.
- Shared services with Peterborough: many positives but a need for review.
- Member behaviour needs improving, and training is required. Specific mention of 'Farmgate;' recent member behaviour toward the Monitoring officer; and understanding of the role of constructive opposition. The Peer Review personally witnessed the July Council meeting.
- Need to review 'This Land.'
- Embrace the opportunity to reset, clarify and rebuild the different roles for the Combined Authority, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, Cambridgeshire County Council, and District and Town and Parish Councils in working for our communities.