

Melbourn Parish Council Oct 2022 District and County Councillor Report

This month our report contains a lot of information on public transport and travel, as we seem to be in a period of great transition. We also seem to have a glut of public consultations on - we've included the ones we felt were most important.

Buses and the future of Melbourn services

Buses and community transport are the responsibility of the Mayor and the Combined Authority where the head of transport has said in response to concerns sent their way: 'Thank you for writing and expressing the undoubted concerns of residents about the proposed withdrawal of bus services... I share their concerns and the mayor has expressed his anger at the way Stagecoach has behaved. The transport team are now seeking to recover the situation. New tenders for every withdrawn service have been published and circulated and we should be able to work through the tenders and put together a revised network and timetables, which we intend to commence on Sunday 30 October, the day after Stagecoach's last day of operation on the withdrawn routes. Of course, we cannot guarantee to restore every link – it depends on what tenders we receive, and we are bound by the 1985 Transport Act.'

While the Royston Crow has published news about the route covered by the 915, we still await an announcement from the Combined Authority – expected imminently.

Please bear in mind that any 'solutions' funded by the Combined Authority bus subsidy look to the end of this financial year only and are not a long-term solution, so more work for the long term will be needed.

Meanwhile the 17 bus run by A2B continues to run between Royston-Melbourn-Meldreth on a once-per-day basis, and is fully subsidized by the Combined Authority until the end of the financial year.

The Cam Vale Bus User Group met earlier this month to hear from users of the 17 and 915 – it is clear that the two together form an important link service, but if there is a future opportunity to tweak and improve routes, that should be taken.

Melbourn Greenway

Many residents dropped in at the Melbourn Hub on 17 October to have a look at detailed drawings for the Greater Cambridge Partnership's 'Melbourn Greenway,' a scheme intended to improve walking, cycling, non-electric scootering and mobility scootering, and horse riding, between Cambridge and Royston.

Many people will be long familiar with this project, which has been in the works for many years. While it has been consulted on previously, this event was intended to seek reactions to the current stage of work, which includes proposals to lower speed limits between Cambridge Road to Royston Road, and redesign segments of road and path. Some of these were welcomed and some drew criticism. There was lots of useful feedback and Greater Cambridge Partnership officers said they came away with a helpful steer on a various things.

The officers also said they were struck by everydayness of Royston in the lives of Melbourn people – that eyes are not necessarily focused on Cambridge as a first point of reference. Practical trips by mobility scooter become possible with safe off-road paths, including to GPs in Royston; this was

particularly picked up. Indeed, Greenways are not just about cycling, but getting around safely, locally, without a car.

Flood Risk

We will be meeting County and District officers concerned with flood risk issues, next week 31 October. It's really unfortunate that last week's deluge caused more problems for homes already with a history of flooding, and others that had never before experienced problems.

Potholes – unacceptably long waits

We'd like to thank everyone who goes through the trouble of reporting pot holes on the Cambs Reporting Site – often on multiple successive occasions with much frustration and no results. Please, do contact us directly if you've reported something and it's not been tended to, and we'll do our best to help action.

E-Scooters – not legal other than VOI scooter trial in Cambridge

It may not be common knowledge that E-scooters are not legal to use outside of private property, in spite of the fact that they are available to purchase from commercial retailers. The only local exception is the 'VOI' brand scooters in Cambridge.

Nevertheless there is increasing use of e-scooters on local roads, and much concern about potential accidents. This will be one of the issues brought to the police public meeting.

Police in the community

As mentioned recently, we have a total of three Police Community Support Officers covering the whole of South Cambridgeshire.

The Police do hold a quarterly public on-line meeting though this is very poorly publicized. The next one is Nov 1st, joining details:

[Cambridgeshire Constabulary Events | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/cambridgeshire-constabulary-14356769797)
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/cambridgeshire-constabulary-14356769797>

In addition, on the basis of our Practical Solutions Group in which we work with the police on local problem solving, the Police have offered to attend an in-person public information meeting public questions. This will be held at Melbourn Hub, 2 November 7:30PM

EV charging provision

Questions continue to arise regarding EV charging provision, for residential properties without on-site parking and access to home charging. In a vacuum of national EV charging planning, this is not something that can be comprehensively tackled by the district or county councils.

South Cambs with its housing remit is looking at options for providing a limited amount of communal EV charging on suitable communal property in its ownership, as well as further information on charging solutions, for example the development of an app that tells you the nearest location for private property rented EV charging. It will be trialling communal charging points at Meldreth and

Willingham Sheltered Housing car parks. The Greater Cambridge Partnership is looking at increasing grid capacity for South Cambs, especially the south of the district.

Meanwhile, we have asked Highways about the rights of property owners without private off-road parking to connect a charging cable submerged across the pavement. The answer: 'The Department for Transport is considering guidance but we haven't had an indication of when this might come. Private householders can apply to put cables under footways through what is called a section 50 licence – example here. [Home - Gul-e | No Driveway? No Problem!](#)

NHS workforce

One of Susan's roles at the County Council as 'Health and Wellbeing Board' chair is to work with the Cambridgeshire NHS, now that government health and care reforms have officially kicked in with the requirement for the NHS and local government to work together in the new 'Integrated Care System.' This provides a chance to better understand some of pressures at play for the NHS locally; number one being the recruitment of new staff. Of the key factors at play are affordable housing and good public transport – in common with so many organizations struggling to find the staff they need.

'Making Connections' consultation – Future bus services, more walking and cycling links, and a Cambridge City Access congestion charge

The Greater Cambridge Partnership has launched the 'Making Connections' 2022 consultation, running for 10 weeks until 23 December 2022. This is about a completely different way of running bus services, more active travel links and a congestion charge for Cambridge. We are being asked to share this information as widely as possible, and to encourage everyone to respond. Points of local detail are vital and in their best form these can only be provided by local residents based on their everyday travel needs.

The proposals are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change how we travel in Greater Cambridge and the wider area, relieving pressure on the road network and responding to air quality, cost of living and climate crises; and also, creating workable public transport and active travel links in more rural areas where currently, costly private vehicle transport is the only way to get to jobs, education and other essential daily travel needs.

There are numerous points to be made for our local area, and key specifics on particular public transport and active travel connections. We will be submitting a response from the villages we represent based on any feedback received, in mid-December.

The survey, plus information about the proposals, including maps, frequently asked questions, dates of public meetings etc can be found at: <http://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/mc-2022>

Residents and those travelling to the area are asked for their thoughts on the three parts of the proposal:

Transforming the bus network

From mid-2023, GCP is proposing to transform the bus network through new routes, additional services, cheaper fares and longer operating hours. Please check the proposals and add your comments: are these satisfactory or is there a better way?

Investing in other sustainable travel schemes

Alongside the bus network, GCP is proposing to invest in new sustainable travel schemes, such as better walking and cycling links. Again, input is needed.

Creating a Sustainable Travel Zone

GCP is proposing the introduction of a Sustainable Travel Zone which includes a road user charge. Vehicles would be charged for driving within the zone between 7am and 7pm on weekdays, and money raised would fund improvements to the bus network and other sustainable travel schemes. The Zone would be fully operational in 2027/28 but only after the bus improvements are introduced. Again, your input please.

None of these parts could work without the others and the fundamental premise is that attractive alternatives to driving must exist prior to the introduction of a congestion charge – which once in place would provide the revenue to run the scheme long-term. The initial set-up outlay would be funded by the Greater Cambridge Partnership, itself funded by central government on a time-limited basis.

South Cambs trials plant-powered bin lorries

In our latest step towards decarbonisation, South Cambs has conducted a trial with eight bin lorries using biofuels, cutting their net carbon emissions by 90%. During the past two months, Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City Councils, ran the eight vehicles on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) instead of diesel.

The Councils are transitioning their fleet of around 50 bin lorries to electric and alternative fuel vehicles to reduce net carbon emissions. Currently, a significant proportion of the waste service's, and therefore the councils', carbon emissions originate from diesel bin lorries. Two fully electric bin lorries are already being used in the city of Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire and a solar farm is planned at the service depot to be able to charge more of them in future.

Once a sustainable fuel source is secured, the Councils could purchase further vehicles which could be powered by HVO. This would be an interim solution ahead of more electric or hydrogen trucks joining the fleet as and when they become available from manufacturers, and in-line with the depot charging facilities becoming operational.

Local NHS survey on accessing health and care services

Health and care services have been under severe strain over the past few years, as many will know from personal experience. Please, if you can spare a few minutes, could you look at this survey on your own experience accessing the services you need, and how things might be improved? The 'Integrated Care Partnership' is our local NHS.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5YGGF3P>

Major projects

It's always unwise to write about Government announcements because – you know – U turns – but the Chancellor's 'mini' budget at the end of September included the statement that Cambridge South Station and A428 Black Cat dualling are on list of infrastructure projects to be "accelerated as fast as possible". So that's welcome news. Also was the inclusion of East West Rail but of course

parts of it are already up and running or in build phase. It's just 'our' section that remains unplanned. EWR Co advises that the results of the public consultation 'may' be released before Christmas.

Inflation – what are the consequences?

Inflation is very much on our minds at home of course, but also at Cambridgeshire County Council. For the current financial year the total service budgets are £456 million (net) for revenue and £164 million in the capital fund (with a total programme of over £1 billion). In setting budget in February, we did provide for significant budget growth which allowed for inflation costs of £9.991 million, demand growth £9.615 million, Pressures (e.g. increased non-inflation costs or reduced income) £16.236 million and investments of £7.253 million. All this was funded by this year's council tax increase, savings, and Government funding.

In June, the Council allocated additional resources to meet expected inflationary pressures in the current year. These are mainly due to energy prices and to some of the Council's large contracts which are linked to national inflation figures. The Council also created a reserve to meet unexpected inflationary pressures. Apart from pay inflation, the Council therefore expects to be able to meet the costs of inflation in its revenue budgets this financial year.

Even so, the Council is currently forecasting a small (£2.368 million or 0.5 per cent) overspend for 2022/23, mainly due to the effects of the expected level of public sector pay inflation for this year, which exceeds the estimates used in budgeting.

But what of next year and beyond?

Inflation remains a significant concern in looking ahead to setting the Council's medium-term financial plan for the next five years. When the Council set its Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2022 it did include a budget gap. Budget planning is still ongoing, but the budget gap for the coming year 2023/24 is now looking considerably higher than £17.396 million – currently projected at £29 million. This will again need to be filled by council tax, savings, and any Government funding awarded between now and February 2023.

Changes in energy prices affect the Council beyond costs such as simply heating buildings or running street lights. The Council is engaged in a number of energy projects, including retrofitting its own buildings with clean energy, building solar farms, installing solar panels on park and ride sites, and the flagship community heating project at Swaffham Prior. The business cases for all these projects change very significantly as a result of changing expectations for the costs of the oil and gas they are replacing. So this places very considerable pressure on us.