

January 2023 Melbourn Parish Council – District and County Councillor report

Question for my health visitor about my baby or child

Parents of young children with a health visitor question can get in touch with the Cambridgeshire Healthy Child Programme any time, via phone or text:

- Call 0300 0295050
- Text 07520 649887

The Healthy Child programme is still catching up post-Covid but all children are being seen, albeit sometimes a bit late.

Much practical information is available here: <https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/what-we-do/children-young-people-health-services-cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-0-19-healthy-child-programme>

Anglian Water

We will report back after our meeting with AW on 16 January, in which we have collate detailed questions on infrastructure concerns and water quality monitoring in the River Mel.

Grants available: riparian owners and ditch maintenance

The County Council is offering a 'riparian grant' to help with maintenance of privately owned watercourses, that would benefit adjoining networks for overall community drainage benefit.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/community-flood-action-programme/watercourse-maintenance-grant>

Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund

Village halls in England can now apply for central government grants to improve and modernise their facilities through the [Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Fund](#). Village halls interested in applying for this national scheme can request grants from £7,500 to £75,000, and up to a maximum of 20 per cent of eligible project costs. Capital grants will be allocated to support infrastructure improvements, the refurbishment of facilities, such as kitchens and toilets, and measures to improve energy efficiency. The application window was announced by central govt on Dec 20 and will close on 20 January 2023. Successful applicants being able to draw on the funding from April 2023. We have shared this with members of the village hall committee.

Police on-line community meetings

Police now holding quarterly on-line community meeting. These are a good opportunity to raise any local case work. Next one is 7 Feb:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/cambridgeshire-constabulary-14356769797>

Potholes

Potholes have worsened dramatically following the December freeze and continuing wet weather, unsurprisingly given the effects of freezing temperatures and water on long neglected infrastructure resulting from decades of

underfunding and a policy of ‘managed decline.’ Last summer’s drought has had an additional impact on soil beneath road structures, causing further problems.

Your councillors have been working closely with our Local Highways Officer to log potholes for action and we would encourage everyone to please check on the ‘Cambridgeshire Report a Fault’ webpage (just google those words to find it) to find out whether potholes you are concerned about have already been logged. If not, please do log the pothole and note the reference number. If there is a problem with the reporting page do let me know. Please note that currently, when the subcontractors go out to fill potholes, they can only address what has been logged on the system, though the council is looking at whether this can be changed.

Believe it or not, for Cambridgeshire as a whole, this year has seen a reduction in the numbers of potholes, despite further real term budget cuts from Government. Over the past year the council has adopted the use of new scanning technologies to identify surface defects so it can intervene earlier and also have larger area patching systems – but it still needs sufficient people and funding in place. Our Local Highways Officer, who reads the log and creates the work list, manages a ‘patch’ consisting of 22 villages.

The RAC has a good write-up on what has become a national emergency: <https://media.rac.co.uk/pressreleases/rac-pothole-related-breakdowns-leap-during-last-three-months-of-2022-3227597>

Government settlement to Local Authorities

Just before Christmas the Government issued its ‘provisional local government finance settlement’—the annual indication to councils of the money they will have available for local services next year. The Government proposes that Cambridgeshire County Council’s ‘core spending power’ (the overall revenue funding available for council services) should increase by 9.5 per cent. Unfortunately however that is less than the current rate of inflation, so overall it will buy less. Half of the 9.5 per cent is from the council’s power to raise council tax—in other words, the Government expects local tax payers to shoulder a lot of the extra costs.

For the District Council the settlement is somewhat better than expected. New Homes Bonus stays and SCDC will get more than we thought from the Rural Settlement Grant as well as from Business Rates. Council tax is likely to be increased by £5 for a band D house (equivalent to 3.5%) which represents a reduction in income with inflation running above 10%. Council house rent will also need to increase by the maximum of 7% in order for us to continue delivering the new council house building programme though housing benefit does increase in line with inflation so 40% of tenants will not be affected by the increase.

The Police & Crime Commissioner advises that with the current cost-of-living pressures impacting on people's incomes “asking you to contribute more to police funding is not something I want to do.” but proceeds to do so in any case because “inflation applies to policing as well – with police vehicles, fuel and training all costing more than they did this time last year” thus proposing a 19p weekly increase (for Band A properties), 29p for Band D properties.

Business planning for the next financial year continues.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan

The First Proposals for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan were published in 2021. Following a full consultation on these proposals, the planning authority has been moving towards producing a draft Local Plan this year. A report with an update on the development strategy has just been published by the Joint Director of Planning, and this will be considered by the District Council’s Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 12 January and by Cabinet on 6 February.

This report confirms the development strategy from the First Proposals, with its focus on delivering the required housing and infrastructure in a sustainable manner, and on environmental protection, particular with regard to water supply. It confirms key strategic sites in Northeast Cambridge, East Cambridge and near the Biomedical Campus.

As required by the National Planning Policy Framework, the report includes an objective assessment of development needs for the plan period. This has identified an increase in the expected number of jobs of around 8000 over the First Proposals, principally due to the unexpected resilience of our local economy throughout the pandemic, with a corresponding increase in the housing requirement.

Residents who would like more information about the Greater Cambridge Local Plan Development Strategy Update are invited to [join a Zoom webinar](#) about the topic on **Wednesday 18 January at 12pm**. The webinar will be recorded and made available online, so those not able to attend can watch it back at their convenience.

Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation

Two years ago, the Council signed up to complete its Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation (DAHA). The accreditation was not limited to Housing Services but covered the whole organisation and involved a thorough review of policies and procedures for staff and customers. More importantly, the accreditation was part of the Council's goal to change the culture around domestic abuse and embed a survivor led approach. This included training for staff and members, publicity and awareness campaigns and the introduction of Domestic Abuse Support Champions within teams. At the start of December, the Council was officially assessed against the DAHA standards, and has been officially accredited.

Useful resources to share are located here:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/housing/housing-advice/domestic-abuse-advice-and-information/>

Disability home adaptation grants

Cambs Home Improvement Agency (HIA) has a range of grants available to people with disabilities to help adapt homes. This may be particularly relevant to those who are elderly, vulnerable or have family members with disabilities as well as friends or neighbours.

The Disabled Facilities Grant is a mandatory Government grant aimed at people with disabilities and older people on low incomes or low-income benefits, which helps towards the costs of making changes to their home to allow them to continue living there safely and comfortably. Each year Cambs HIA enables around 300 older people and people with disabilities to adapt their homes. Although some work such as ramps, stairlifts, specialist toilets, automated door entry systems and level access showers require an Occupational Therapist's referral, other work such as new boilers, roofing repairs, new doors and windows do not. The agency can help homeowners or those in housing association properties make a wide variety of adaptations and repairs.

HIA can also help self-funders who are unable to organise and oversee the work themselves. All info is here: www.cambshia.org – or ring the council direct on **01954 713330** or email hia@cambshia.org

Recycling batteries

Effective immediately residents can leave out their batteries weekly on top of their green, black or blue bins.

Please note that to make collections more efficient we now ask that residents place a small tied plastic bag containing the batteries loosely on top of their bin, rather than tying it to the bin handle.

Greater Cambridge Partnership - Making Connections Consultation

The Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 consultation closed on 23 December. Around 23,000 responses were received, and the Greater Cambridge Partnership expects to publish a final report on the consultation outcomes and next steps for consideration by its Board in June 2023. Significant work in the coming weeks to take on board the consultation responses will then inform that report. From our area, the Cam Vale Bus User Group, Community Rail Partnership and A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign lodged responses focusing on ways in which bus services, access to rail and cycle/walking links could be improved.

Transport work on the Combined Authority

Buses continue to be a hot topic across Cambridgeshire. The Combined Authority is the transport authority responsible for passenger transport across our area, working within a legislative framework and a deregulated bus system. The Combined Authority Board agreed a draft Bus Strategy now out for consultation till 22 February:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/public-to-have-their-say-on-draft-strategy-for-a-better-regional-bus-network/>

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough was one of a majority of local transport authorities to be given no funding by Government for its Bus Service Improvement Plan. The Combined Authority is working with partners to prepare a revised Plan reflecting the priorities of the emerging LTCP and the draft Bus Strategy.

Bus franchising is the Mayor's preferred solution for bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. Under this model the local transport authority takes control of the public transport network, specifying and contracting bus services, as opposed to the deregulated free-for-all in place since 1986. Work is ongoing to refresh the outline business case for franchising. This will explore all potential funding options and assess the benefits of franchising against the current system. The business case will also review other issues including geography, contracting, depots, vehicles, and branding. The majority of bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough are run commercially by private operators, and the Combined Authority has no control over these.

The Combined Authority currently subsidises 73 services across its area. Full support for eighteen services and partial support for a further five began in October 2022 after Stagecoach withdrew from these services. There is an option to extend the contracts for these by one year from the end of March, and final decisions on these will be taken in February or March following the setting of the Combined Authority's budget and taking account of the draft Bus Strategy. Contracts for a further six of the 73 services expire at the end of March 2023 and a procurement process has begun to retender these. The Combined Authority will set its budget for 2023/24, including bus support, at its Board meeting on 25 January. to be available from March.

King Charles III coronation street parties

Cambridgeshire County Council has published guidance for local groups seeking to organise street parties and highways events to mark the coronation of King Charles III in May 2023. All street party applications must be received by the County Council at least eight weeks in advance (Friday 10 March 2023) via the Council's website. Highway Events applications must be submitted at least twelve weeks in advance (Friday 10 February 2023). More information about the process can be found at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roadsand-pathways/highway-events/coronation-events>