

Melbourn Parish Council July 2023 – County and District Councillor Report

‘Old Pond’ expression of interest, Anglian Water funding, and next steps:

We will be meeting County and District officers next month to discuss opportunities for pursuing this restoration project at the corner of Back Lane/High St, for the purpose of alleviating silt build-up in Highways surface water drains.

20MPH follow-up

The County LHI and 20MPH team will inspect the implementation of this scheme for completeness.

Melbourn Primary School road markings

We have made an urgent request for refreshed road markings outside of Melbourn Primary School to be implemented during the summer holidays.

Royston Recycling Centre

As previously reported, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire County Councils are working hard to formalize an arrangement for South Cambs residents to continue using the Royston Recycling Centre, which is owned and operated by Herts CC. A Cambs County Council meeting on 13 July approved ‘the principle of exploring and implementing a reciprocal access and cost sharing arrangements with Hertfordshire County Council...to not disadvantage Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire residents from using the nearest recycling centre to their homes in the Thriplow and Royston areas.’

This is a long way of saying we hope the Royston tip will remain available to Cambridgeshire residents in the long term.

Cambs County Council financial position:

Cambridgeshire County Council ended the past financial year (2022/23) with a overspend of just 0.2 per cent of its annual budget.

Despite growing inflation on all the goods and services the council buys, the council kept its overspend to just £728,000, a figure it had been predicting with some accuracy for the second half of the year.

The council set its 2022/3 budget in February 2022 at a time of great uncertainty, and during the year which followed inflation reached record highs, meaning that in-year the council had to manage more than £43M of additional pressures.

The final position shows that increases in some areas such as high levels of inflation in home to school transport, lower than expected income in some areas due to a slow recovery from COVID, and the impact of a national shortage (and consequent spiralling costs) of placements for children with very specialist mental health needs had largely been mitigated by underspends elsewhere.

The central issue remains however that Cambridgeshire County Council is woefully underfunded by central government, leaving residents of this county severely disadvantaged.

Cambridgeshire is a growing county, but despite this our funding formula remains fixed to population figures from more than ten years ago. In effect, while more Cambridgeshire residents are

contributing to national taxes, our settlement has not been updated to supporting the area's direct local needs, leaving the council with problems to fix that will need many years of detailed work, not just short-term patching. The leaders of all four political groups on the county council wrote again to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up earlier this year, putting the case for change and a funding settlement which truly meets Cambridgeshire's local needs, but received no acknowledgement.

Cross-party appeal to Levelling up Secretary – fair funding for Cambridgeshire

The leaders of all four political groups on the County Council wrote again to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up earlier this year, putting the case for change and a funding settlement which truly meets Cambridgeshire's local needs, but received no acknowledgement.

Earlier this month there was an historic national cross-party and cross-sector consensus of district and county councils, housebuilders, housing associations, charities and planners expressed in a joint letter and in a Ministerial Roundtable with the Minister for Housing, urging the government to not proceed with the proposed changes to the way in which affordable housing and vital infrastructure is paid for. The current planning system is not perfect, but it places an obligation on developers to provide upfront funding towards GP surgeries, schools, transport links and affordable housing alongside any new development.

Everyone, including housebuilders and housing associations, agree that existing and new communities need access to these services early in the development process. However, the proposed changes mean that developers would only pay this contribution once the first houses are built and sold, therefore leaving all the burden and financial risk on cash-strapped district and county councils. There is deep concern about the impacts on provision of vital transport infrastructure and affordable housing in our area.

Cambridgeshire NHS survey for the Royston area

Royston is within the Cambridgeshire NHS footprint, with all of its GP practices falling into South Cambridgeshire primary care networks. Much of the NHS and primary care estate in Royston is no longer new, prompting necessary thought and consideration of what next.

Please have a look at complete the survey, by Aug 11, if you can. The Integrated Care System, our local NHS, is considering best ways of delivering various levels of health care in the future, which also needs to take the current estate into consideration.

Let's talk Royston: <https://www.cpics.org.uk/lets-talk-royston>

Meldreth Station: announcement on nationwide station ticket office closures

The rail industry has announced a short consultation on closure of ticket offices – from July 5-26, allowing little time for meaningful public response. This comes at a time when ridership is struggling to recover to pre-Covid levels, which for Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Stations has meant the loss of the half-hourly off-peak service.

<https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/publicconsultation>

Please note that the proposal is not to close station premises - waiting rooms, toilets, etc – at Meldreth or any other station, but rather to deploy staff currently selling tickets behind the counter to a different set of responsibilities on site, and at the same hours that ticket offices are currently open. So, staff would be present to assist passengers with any manner of help needed, including buying tickets from the machine, and future trip planning. One of the reasons for the proposal is

that generally more tickets are sold from machines and the call on behind the counter ticket sales is dropping.

However, the Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group is concerned about any diminishing of confidence in using the railway, especially for anyone who doesn't use automated machines, or doesn't have access to a smart phone or the internet for travel planning. The Rail User Group will be asking for a clear, convincing picture as to how those people will be genuinely served and supported, especially given that station staff will not have access to computers for journey planning.

Meldreth Station offers a personal and warm welcome, encouraging train ridership – and human presence is cherished.

Ticket office closures will be considered on a station-by-station basis, so it is definitely worth having your say on this issue.

The watchdog group Transport Focus is asking for feedback here: <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/train-station-ticket.../>

The Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group will be submitting a formal response to the consultation. If you have a view that you would like to be included, please comment below or contact railusergroup@gmail.com

A10 cycle/walk/scoot path vegetation maintenance grant

A new maintenance grant from Melbourn Science Park's Melbourn Community grant scheme will enable better vegetation cutback along the A10 path between Melbourn and Trumpington. This follows an earlier private business grant for the same purpose, from a tenant at Melbourn Science Park. Cambridgeshire Highways cuts the verges and does spot work where it can, but more is needed to keep the path in best condition. The grant was awarded in April; with nesting season nearly over, a late summer hard cutback is now being planned. The grant is held by the A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign and deployed in liaison with Cambridgeshire Highways. If you'd like to be involved in the Campaign, please get in touch.