

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2022

STRATEGY & RESOURCES

Cost of living crisis

The County Council has been working with partners including District Councils and the Fire Authority on the help that needs to be made available to local residents facing huge cost of living challenges in the months ahead.

Advice and information on a single page

The Council is collating helpful information and advice on a single webpage. This includes information about schemes the Council is running or administering, as well as schemes run by others. More information will be added as it becomes available.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities-localism/support-with-the-cost-of-living>

Household Support Fund

The Council is reminding residents of the household support fund to increase uptake from eligible people of pensionable age. The Council is producing a leaflet on this fund for distribution through faith and community groups and at foodbanks.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund#support-for-pensioners-who-are-struggling-financially-0-0>

Council budget gap widens

Galloping inflation is a problem for households and businesses, but also for the Council. It has significantly widened the Council's budget gap, as well as leaving more residents in need of serious financial help from the Council as energy bills soar and the cost of living continues to rise.

Staffing review

I was part of the Staffing & Appeals Committee meeting which interviewed for some of the senior posts within the Council following the Chief Executive's restructure. We will be going to external advertisement for a number of key posts:

- Executive Director: Place and Sustainability
 - Executive Director: Finance and Resources
 - Service Director: Legal and Governance
 - Service Director: Policy and Communities
 - Assistant Director: Communities, Employment and Skills
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ADULTS & HEALTH

NHS dentistry shortage

Nine in 10 NHS dental practices across the UK are not accepting new adult patients for treatment under the health service. In a third of the UK's more than 200 council areas, no dentists are taking on adult NHS patients. Eight in 10 NHS practices are not taking on children. Of 45 dental practices in Cambridgeshire with NHS contracts, not a single one was taking on new adult patients.

The figures reveal an NHS dental system which is fundamentally broken, with people forced to spend hundreds or even thousands of pounds on private dental care and some even resorting to DIY dentistry.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION

Warm hubs

Cambridgeshire ACRE is working with East and South Cambridgeshire District Councils on the provision of a network of 'warm hubs' to enable people to stay safe and warm over what is likely to be a very challenging winter of fuel and food poverty for many.

Local communities are being encouraged by Cambridgeshire ACRE to consider how they could be part of such a network, and setup support and ongoing support and advice will also be available. Interested organisations are being invited to complete an expression of interest form online and return it to Cambridgeshire ACRE. Two briefing events for parish councils and community organisations are being held by Cambridgeshire ACRE on Monday 5 and Wednesday 7 September.

Little Downham post office facilities

Following a discussion at the Little Downham Book Café about the number of times on which the pop up post office facilities in the village had been closed for extended periods, I contacted the Area Management Team responsible for Soham Post Office who provide outreach services in the area.

They have discussed these concerns and highlighted internally the importance of providing a reliable service to the communities they serve. The corporate affairs team says it is confident customers in Little Downham will see an improvement, but have asked to be contacted in the event of any further issues.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Fens reservoir consultation to launch in autumn

Consultation on proposals for a new reservoir in the Fens will launch in autumn, when the water companies' preferred site will be announced. The project aims

to provide significant additional resilience for public water supply, agriculture and the environment across Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.
<https://wre.org.uk/project/future-fens-the-south-lincolnshire-and-fenland-reservoirs/>

Climate challenges

The exceptionally hot, dry weather this summer has presented challenges to the fire service in Cambridgeshire. July saw the two busiest days ever for local crews, and August placed similar demands on the service.

More information about outdoor fire safety
at www.cambsfire.gov.uk/community-safety/outdoor-safety/

Meanwhile water companies are asking residents to use water wisely and reuse wherever possible to help keep taps running this summer. A drought was declared in East Anglia, and restrictions on irrigation put in place on the Ely Ouse system, but (to date) no hosepipe bans for domestic residents.

www.anglianwater.co.uk/help-and-advice/save-water/water-saving-tips/

The drying of the earth due to the weather conditions led to fractures in a number of water mains in Sutton and other villages, including the one leading to the water tower in Haddenham, resulting in several days of reduced water availability for Sutton residents.

Decarbonising community buildings

Cambridgeshire ACRE has been considering how it can support the county's 280+ community-run buildings to reduce carbon emissions, improve resilience to climate impacts and encourage and enhance the natural environment.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is proposing to focus its regular 'coffee morning' events on this subject; work with and promote exemplar buildings; ensure those running community buildings are aware of all possible funding streams; and asking those who have led such projects to offer mentoring support to others.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Greater Cambridge 'Public Transport & City Access' consultation

The Greater Cambridge Partnership Assembly is being asked to consider proposals for a consultation on improved public transport and active travel into and around Cambridge, with a Sustainable Travel Zone including a road user charging scheme. The consultation proposals will then be considered by the Greater Cambridge Partnership Executive Board on 28 September.

The Partnership has been considering for some years how to improve poor public transport provision and also solve car traffic congestion and pollution in

Cambridge. This is important, when even the inadequate bus services we have are under threat from uncertain central government funding, but also difficult.

We need a plan that reduces carbon emissions, improves air quality, and makes Cambridgeshire's roads safer and less congested, while at the same time providing affordable, reliable, and convenient options for travel. However, I am not convinced that these proposals achieve that or offer the right balance for East Cambridgeshire residents. My colleagues and I will be working with local people and with politicians in Greater Cambridge to draw up ideas we think will serve East Cambridgeshire residents better.

Meanwhile, we strongly encourage East Cambridgeshire residents to read the proposals and respond to the consultation when it opens.

Three Pickerels footpath

The footpath at the Three Pickerels has been unlawfully blocked since the end of July. County Council Rights of Way and Enforcement officers have visited the site and spoken with those responsible. They have been given five weeks to make enough progress to safely provide a temporary footpath. The Council's legal team is drafting a formal letter advising them of the Council's expectations. The Parish Council has been advised and expressed support for this course of action.

Mepal old alignment

The County Council intends to clear away all the surface dressing stone from the old alignment. The first part of this process has been completed with around 4000 tons of stone transported for use on the public rights of way network. The second phase will involve using the remaining material on highways works elsewhere—this will begin at the end of September. Once that has been completed, all the other associated rubbish will be cleared away and disposed of, and any trees and bushes that require attention will also be attended to.

Cambridgeshire Highways will not be using this facility for material storage as it has in the past, and therefore within a few months local residents will have a much more pleasant network to use.

Local Highways Improvement reporting

The County Council will shortly be launching a public web page showing progress on current Local Highways Improvement schemes. This will enable parish councils and residents to track their local LHI projects online.

Cycle stands at The Glebe Sutton

I met on site with the parish council clerk about the way in which the new cycle stands at The Glebe have been installed, and followed up concerns with the relevant County Council officer.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

Interim staff are beginning to be appointed to various roles in the Combined Authority, and improvement work continues. The timetable for setting the Combined Authority's budget is being established, and the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which I chair, has been given an informal briefing ahead of its more formal scrutiny of the budget.

Work is being done by the Combined Authority to address further education 'cold spots' including Ely and Soham, where need outstrips provision. The Skills Committee is recommending that the Board allocate a budget for this, and start off a capital project to fill the gaps. The report to the Skills Committee says: "The vision of the programme is to invest in two new 'flagship' local FE centres, that will 'Future-proof' FE provision, be net-zero and state-of-the-art in providing green skills and wider curricula that meets local employer demand. Investment in FE infrastructure, raises aspirations, improves education standards and the skills levels among local communities."

MEET YOUR COUNCILLOR

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will be holding our first face to face surgery in some time, on Wednesday 21 September from 6:30 to 7:30PM.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall on Friday 30 September from 10:00 to 11:00AM
- **Witchford:** arrangements to be advised.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division