

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT JUNE 2023

FULL COUNCIL

The Annual Council meeting on Tuesday 16 May agreed three motions from councillors, amended and passed a fourth, and voted down a fifth.

- Cllr Firouz Thompson proposed a motion to seek to ensure availability of childcare in new developments, after learning that many new developments were being built with covenants on them preventing use of domestic properties by childminders.
- Cllr Bryony Goodliffe proposed a motion to recognise the experience of care leavers ('care experienced people') as equivalent to a 'protected characteristic' which councils have a duty in law to consider when making decisions.
- Cllr Ros Hathorn proposed joint working to develop an action plan for better information about Cambridgeshire's cycle networks.
- Cllr Alan Sharp proposed a motion about highways maintenance, which was amended to require a draft action plan to be considered by the Highways & Transport Committee in July.
- Cllr Steve Count proposed a motion, which was defeated, seeking to review the council's decision in March on the Cambourne to Cambridge busway route.

The Full Council also agreed a new People Strategy. This aims to align the council's workforce to achieve the council's ambitions over the next five years. It focuses on four themes: attracting, appreciating, supporting and developing the council's staff.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Priors Field

Malling Health have been settling in well to their temporary contract at Priors Field in Sutton, and feedback from patients has been excellent.

NHS Cambridgeshire is continuing to explore options for a new permanent GP building in Sutton, and I am continuing to work with the Patient Participation Group on this.

NHS Cambridgeshire has also launched an 'after action review' of the situation that arose at Priors Field. This will be used for the NHS to identify issues that arose, and learning to take forward.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Accountability agreement

COSMIC has approved an Accountability Agreement, which is a new requirement for any organisation receiving more than £1M a year from the Government's Department for Education. This sets out a limited number of priority aims, targets and key performance indicators for Cambridgeshire Skills in delivering high quality adult education.

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund

This fund consists of £1.5M left over from the previous administration's £5M Communities Capital Fund. £1M will be made available for community capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets, while supporting the council to achieve at least three of its strategic ambitions.

- Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.
- Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.
- Health inequalities are reduced.
- People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.
- People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.
- Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.
- Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

The fund will open for a single round of applications during the 2023/24 financial year, with an upper bid limit of £40,000. Cambridgeshire based voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations will be eligible to apply, as will district, town and parish councils, and businesses if they can evidence the public benefit of their project.

The remaining £0.5M will be reserved for the County Council's own community based assets, where this will support the council's commitment to decentralisation.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Flood Group conference

Following the success of last year's first Flood Group Conference at Alconbury Weald, the 2023 Conference will take place on Thursday 21 September in St Ives. The County Council's Community Flood Action Programme has been shortlisted for a national award.

Green Energy Together / Solar Together

Solar Together is a national scheme run by iChoosr, an independent organisation that vets and appoints accredited installers of solar panels on homes. iChoosr appointed three installers in 2022 to deliver solar panels and battery storage across Cambridgeshire. The County Council promoted the scheme to residents and it has been popular, with over 2,000 installations completed to date.

We were disappointed to hear that one of their suppliers, Green Energy Together Ltd (GET), who operated in Huntingdonshire, had appointed liquidators following the loss of their MCS certification. This accreditation is a requirement for installers participating in the Solar Together scheme. Other Solar Together installers in Cambridgeshire are unaffected.

We have sought assurance that iChoosr will be in contact with affected Huntingdonshire customers to explain the situation and their options.

Home Upgrade Grants

Cambridgeshire has been awarded £11.5M over two years to improve energy efficiency in homes which are not on mains gas. More information, including eligibility criteria, at actiononenergycambs.org/funding

Sunnica solar farm

The Planning Inspectorate is currently expected to submit its recommendation for the Sunnica solar farm application, located between Burwell and Red Lodge, by 28 June.

Smart journeys

The new *Smart Journeys* team is now in place working with developers of sites at Northstowe, Alconbury Weald, and Cambridge Science Park to promote active travel throughout the developments.

Disposal of vapes and metal recycling

Following a number of fires, an information campaign is being planned about the safe disposal of vapes and the hazards of fires in collection vehicles and waste plants arising from the batteries sealed inside these items. There is currently a six week campaign of bus advertising, radio and social media across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough promoting the need to recycle all metals.

Envar application refused

The application for new waste facilities including an incinerator at the Envar site at Woodhurst was (narrowly) refused. The applicant is considering next steps which include an option to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

Waste Water Treatment Works

Having withdrawn its application to relocate its waste water treatment works from NE Cambridge to Horningsea, Anglian Water resubmitted its plans on 28 April. These plans have been accepted by the Planning Inspectorate.

Infrastructure Levy consultation

The Government is consulting on technical aspects of its proposed changes to how developer contributions towards new infrastructure are secured. The Government says the Levelling Up & Regeneration Bill seeks to replace the current system of 'Section 106' developer contributions with a mandatory, more streamlined, and locally determined Infrastructure Levy.

Biodiversity and green spaces

The Tree & Woodland Strategy is now out to tender, including assessment of tree canopy cover for the whole county, and more detailed analysis on County Council land. The strategy will also include length of hedgerow on County Council land, amounts of carbon sequestered, and areas for future tree planting.

Work is also ongoing with Natural Cambridgeshire on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire, with a formal launch imminent.

Low carbon heating for council buildings

Air source heat pumps have been installed at 22 council buildings to date, replacing fossil fuel heating systems. A further five new projects are also now in progress, supported by grant funding, and the County Council is applying to the Low Carbon Skills Fund for grants towards design for the next batch of sites.

Autonomous vehicle trials

Connecting Cambridgeshire will be supporting the Greater Cambridge Partnership to deliver two autonomous vehicle projects, one running services around the West Cambridge campus, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and between Babraham and Trumpington Park & Rides; the other looking at the feasibility of autonomous transit to support developments to the east of Cambridge.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

East West Rail

The southern route, rather than the northern, has now been announced as the preferred option for the section of East West Rail from Bedford to Cambridge. Leader of the County Council Lucy Nethsingha said:

This is a nationally important piece of infrastructure, and we have been supportive of the principle of the rail link between Oxford and Cambridge for many years. It was good to hear a renewed government commitment to

the project earlier in the year, and we are keen to study the detail of these proposals.

Rail travel is one of the most efficient and greenest transport systems, and increasing the opportunities for rail transport in our area is a key priority and important as part of our commitment to a greener fairer Cambridgeshire.

We will look closely at the detail of what has been announced today, we want to understand the exact alignment and what this means for residents and particular areas of the county. We look forward to working with our communities and with the East West Rail Company to understand and refine the proposals and address local concerns. We are also keen to understand whether the calls for the line to be electric from the start have been heard.

Sustainable Travel Zone / Congestion Charge

The public response to the *Making Connections* (Sustainable Travel Zone / Congestion Charge) consultation has now been published. More than 24,000 people responded to the consultation, which proposed measures to transform the bus network alongside better walking and cycling infrastructure that would be funded in the long term by the phased introduction of a road user charge.

The key findings and the wide-ranging views—both in favour of and against the proposals—are contained in a paper to the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Joint Assembly which meets on Thursday 8 June. The headlines are below.

- Over 70 per cent of people were in favour of the future transport network, with more buses to more locations, cheaper fares and longer operating times supported by better walking and cycling infrastructure to give people faster, cheaper and more reliable travel alternatives to the car.
- 58 per cent of respondents opposed the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) as the means for delivering the transport vision. Opposition increased with age from 35 to 64, with 55-64 year olds the most likely to oppose. Those who lived outside Cambridge were also more likely to oppose.
- 34 per cent of people supported the STZ as proposed. Support was highest among the youngest and the oldest respondents, who are more likely to find it most difficult to access education and healthcare due to the limitations of the existing bus network. Support was highest in the centre and west of Cambridge.
- Around half of those who opposed the STZ did support the vision for better buses.
- The views from organisations such as business, healthcare and others were broadly supportive of the plans but with caveats about the impact on staff or those who were vulnerable.

- Additional representative opinion polling was carried out which showed opposition and support for a road user charge was more balanced.

The reasons for supporting or opposing varied but covered a variety of areas.

- Those who supported the proposals were keen to get more frequent bus services, would be able to cycle more safely and generally were positive towards the idea of a charge to tackle climate change and reduce congestion.
- Those who opposed felt the exemptions didn't go far enough, and perceived a charge to be unfair, in particular on those travelling to Addenbrookes, and also believed there would be a negative impact on jobs.

With a large number of free text responses in the survey to supplement the 'closed questions', a lot of detail is now available about what people feel could be positive amendments to the scheme. These included changing the rate for cars, changing the hours, amending the discounts and exemptions, and altering the boundaries.

No decisions have been made, and the report will be discussed at the Greater Cambridge Partnership's Joint Assembly meeting on Thursday 8 June.

Fatality at Witcham Toll

The recent tragic death of a motorcyclist on the A142 near the Witcham Toll garage has prompted questions about whether changes to the road layout would have made a difference. Once we have more information following the conclusion of police investigations and any legal proceedings, I will liaise with the County Council and the Combined Authority.

Traffic Regulation Order application Manor Road Witchford

Following a 'delegated decision' meeting, officers have decided to proceed with the raised table and build-out on Manor Road. This decision is however dependent on receiving assurances from the applicant that the narrowing at the build-out will not restrict access to deliver mobile homes to Cathedral View.

Local highways updates

- The Internal Drainage Board has completed repairs to the collapsed culvert on West Fen Road.
- I recently worked with County Council officers to get a water leak repaired near the junction of Main Street and School Lane Coveney.
- I have liaised with the Rights of Way officer about clearing the overgrowth on Byway 12 at Wardy Hill once the nesting season is over.
- The footpath between Gravel End Coveney and Downham Hythe remains closed until the weather is consistently drier because the planned works

to replace the bridge require the ground to be very firm indeed to allow the use of a mini crane or low loader.

PLANNING

Enforcement activity

- The County Council has received a complaint via the district council about importation of waste material onto land behind the Corkers Crisps factory in Little Downham. Following investigations and site visits, Planning Contravention Notices were served on the landowner and FDS Construction on 30 March, and a letter sent to the landowner following non-return of the completed notice.
- Concerns have been raised about failure to comply with conditions at Willow Hall Farm Haddenham relating to supervision by archaeological consultants during works, and the destruction and loss of archaeological deposits. Officers at the County Council are seeking authorisation to serve a breach of condition notice.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The most significant item on the Combined Authority Board agenda for 31 May was the Local Transport & Connectivity Plan. However, the Plan requires the two upper tier councils on the Combined Authority—Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council—to support it, and as the leader of Peterborough City Council announced at the last minute that he would not, it was withdrawn. It is not currently clear whether or when it will be possible to agree a Local Transport & Connectivity Plan.

The draft document's Mission Statement says:

The transport network must put improved health at its core, it must help create a fairer society, it must respond to climate change targets, it must protect our environment and clean up our air, and it must be the backbone of sustainable economic growth in which everyone can prosper.

And it must bring a region of cities, market town and very rural areas closer together. It will be achieved by investing in a properly joined-up, net zero carbon transport system, which is high quality, reliable, convenient, affordable, safe, and accessible to everyone, Better, cleaner public transport will reduce private car use, and more cycling and walking will support both healthier lives and a greener region. Comprehensive connectivity, including digital improvements, will support a sustainable future for our region's nationally important and innovative economy.

The East Cambridgeshire section notes the five per cent growth in the district (the highest in the county) 2011 to 2021, but limited delivery of new major transport links. Transport challenges include poor active travel, limited bus services, rail service constraints, heavy vehicles, and poor road safety.

The Plan's proposed approach was to deliver new high-quality active travel infrastructure, prioritise bus links including demand-responsive transport, improve the rail network, investigate new Park & Ride facilities near on the A10 near Waterbeach, improve the A10 and the A142/A14 junction at Exning, and support electric vehicles.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLOR

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will hold our surgery in the school Community Room on Monday 3 July, 6:30 to 7:30PM.
- **Witchford:** Cllr Dr Caroline Shepherd and I will hold our surgery in St Andrew's Hall in Main Street on Monday 26 June, 6:30 to 7:30PM.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall on Friday 30 June from 10:00 to 11:00AM.

Meanwhile I can also be contacted

- by email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- by Facebook Messenger
- by phone on 07930 337596

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division