

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2023

ADULTS & HEALTH

Priors Field

The NHS has now published two reports on its Sutton webpage

<https://www.cpics.org.uk/sutton>

- A Public Engagement report of the two public meetings held in late June and the main themes that emerged from them
- The Patient Participation Group's compilation of patient values.

The NHS is still considering its options for securing premises to enable the long-term future of GP provision in Sutton. This is a challenge when the current state of the economy means there is no money in the health system for new projects.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools

A Government order to schools to immediately shut buildings made with aerated RAAC concrete until safety work can be undertaken has been prominent in the news as term starts.

RAAC is a lightweight, bubbly form of concrete usually found in roofs and occasionally in walls and floors. It looks like standard concrete but is weaker, less durable, deteriorates over time, and is also prone to collapse when wet. The problem has been known for a long time, but the *Building Schools for the Future* rebuilding programme was scrapped by Michael Gove in 2010. Attention returned to the use of the material in schools in 2018 when the roof of a primary school in Kent collapsed 24 hours after signs of structural stress began to appear.

Fortunately as of the start of this month all but three of Cambridgeshire's schools have been surveyed and no RAAC has been found. The Council has no concerns about the remaining schools but at the time of writing each requires a survey to rule out RAAC.

Following assessments and surveys, the County Council has also been able to confirm that none of its public buildings have been found to contain RAAC.

RAAC elsewhere

RAAC has been causing issues in a number of hospitals including Hinchingsbrooke and especially the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn where

last October the number of wooden and steel props required to hold up the building had risen to 2,482. The hospital has been promised a rebuild estimated to cost £862M but this will not be open until 2029 at the earliest.

Childminders and restrictive covenants

A council motion successfully proposed to the County Council by my colleague Cllr Firouz Thompson in Northstowe has prompted change at national level. The motion drew attention to the fact that many new developments had covenants placed on homes so that they could not be used for childminding. This was leading to shortages of childminding capacity in many places.

This motion has attracted national interest, and the relevant Government minister has now written to developers as well as housing associations and landlords, asking them to better support prospective childminders and remove these barriers to parents seeking to return to the workforce.

Cllr Thompson found that while in 2019 there were 641 childminders in Cambridgeshire, by January 2023 this had reduced to 456, a drop of 17 per cent. Additionally, the data shows that the number of childminders operating in new developments is significantly lower than those within surrounding villages, despite demand.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund

A reminder that this fund is open until 24 September, for bids of up to £40,000 for capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshire-priorities-capital-fund

Libraries of Sanctuary award

Libraries throughout Cambridgeshire have been awarded Libraries of Sanctuary status. This national award celebrates libraries that work hard to demonstrate hospitality, solidarity and welcome to new arrivals in the area. The title was awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, a nationally coordinated network of organisations and services, including councils, universities, theatres and libraries that welcome and support refugees and people seeking asylum.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Major planning applications updates

- The Wisbech incinerator planning examination closed on Monday 21 August. The County Council submitted a joint letter with Fenland District Council stating its final position and itemising remaining areas of disagreement with the proposal.

- A decision from the Secretary of State on the Sunnica solar farm application is expected by the end of this month. I wrote a letter to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, in my capacity as Chair of the County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee, to draw to his attention the poor level of engagement by the applicant with local communities.
- The process for the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation (from North East Cambridge to Horningsea) is ongoing. This is one of the schemes that Michael Gove has said his planning 'hit squad' for his 'Cambridge 2040' project will aim to speed up, though it is not clear how. The same can be said of the proposal for a new Fens Reservoir in the Doddington-Wimblington area.

Weekly food waste collection

The County Council has responded to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) within its 4 August deadline, rejecting 'transitional arrangements' for district councils in Cambridgeshire to move to weekly food waste collections.

Under the Government's proposals, the district councils would receive financial support to move to the new arrangements, but the County Council would not, despite having submitted evidence showing that the move would incur considerable ongoing costs for the County Council.

This all shows how difficult it can be to manage waste in a 'two tier' council system, when one council is responsible for collecting waste and another council is responsible for disposing of it. It has been encouraging to see the determined attempts by the local councils in Cambridgeshire to work together as a 'whole system' for waste despite this barrier.

Government delays 'extended producer responsibility' scheme

The Government has confirmed that the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme will be deferred for a year. The decision means first payments to councils from the scheme will now be expected in October 2025. The delay is disappointing for councils such as Cambridgeshire, and it is critical the scheme is introduced in ways that cover the full costs for councils and incentivise industry to reduce unnecessary packaging and increase recyclability.

The aim of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is for producers to pay the full net costs of managing and recycling the packaging waste they produce. This will help to reduce unnecessary and difficult to recycle packaging and increase recycling.

Carbon footprint

The Government has recently published new data on the greenhouse gas emissions of each local authority area for 2005 to 2021. This shows that the

carbon footprint of the whole of Cambridgeshire was 6.78M tonnes CO₂e in 2021. Transport is now the highest emitting sector in the county.

Work is also still under way collating data on the County Council's own organisational carbon footprint for the financial year 2022-23. This will be presented to the Environment & Green Investment Committee later in the year, alongside further details of the county-wide emissions.

Renewable energy updates

- All the solar carports are now in place in the first part of the main car park at Babraham Park & Ride. Electrical work is currently under way to complete phase 1. Solar carport structures and modules in the remainder of the car park will follow in the coming months in phases 2 and 3.
- As at the end of July, 84 properties at Swaffham Prior had their external connections to the new community heat scheme completed, with 40 of those customers fully connected to the heat network and receiving heat. 23 Sanctuary Housing Association properties are among those with their external connection completed. One fully connected property is a Grade II listed building.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

A10/A142 BP roundabout

In response to the vociferous campaign by local county councillors Alison Whelan, Piers Coutts and myself and others, County Council officers have been working with consultants to narrow down options for delivering a safe crossing for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders at this notoriously dangerous roundabout, and potential costings and timescales should be known by the end of this month.

I and my county and district council political colleagues opposed the reconfiguration of this roundabout—by the previous Mayor and previous county Council administration with the support of the District Council leadership—at the time of its planning and construction, because of the lack of consideration for anything except cars.

We have been consistently pressing for safe crossing facilities to be put in place. It is shocking that this will require two sets of lengthy works at this junction, rather than building in the interests of non-motorised users from the start, when the road was widened for cars without being made safe for everyone else.

The next phase will involve feasibility studies, public consultation, and the announcement by the Combined Authority and County Council of a preferred option. My colleagues and I are continuing to make the case for funding to be identified to carry out these next stages and move to construction, and for the work to be completed as quickly as possible.

Weeds

I'm aware of growing complaints about weeds in various parts of the district and across the county. The County Council's current Highways Operational Standards state that the Council will apply weed killer using a targeted approach at agreed locations identified on the basis of risk, rather than cyclically as before. This policy affects about 30 per cent of the highway network in Cambridgeshire, as only kerbed urban areas were previously cyclically treated for weeds.

The County Council's policy remains to remove hazardous weeds, or weeds causing safety issues or nuisance. Where the use of chemical weed killer is part of wider maintenance activity it is still carried out—for example weeds should be cleared before slurry sealing footways or surface treating carriageways.

A mid-season review of the policy has already been programmed in, and I will certainly be reporting back residents' concerns.

Winter gritting

Once again the County Council is inviting gritting volunteers for the winter season 2023-2024. Under this scheme, parish councils decide which routes in their area are important to the local community and agree them with the County Council. Local volunteers then grit these as required in freezing weather.

Parish councils looking to join the scheme should submit their completed form by 31 October 2023. Each volunteer will need to submit a form, including those who have volunteered before. The form is required annually to ensure health and safety standards are being met. Paper forms are also available on request.

http://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Community_gritting_registration_form

Further information about the scheme is available online.

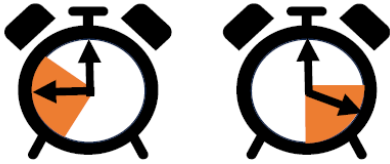













<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/help-with-gritting-and-clearing-snow/>

Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)

Following last autumn's public consultation on the GCP's proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone in Cambridge including a congestion charge, GCP officers have drawn up revisions to the proposals. These include

- A reduction in the hours of operation to morning and evening peaks only
- No charge for motorcycles
- A discount for local small and medium size businesses
- A discount for those on low incomes
- Fifty 'free days' per household

There would also be other exemptions as in the diagram below.

 <p>Peak time only charging 7am-10am 3pm-6pm</p>	<table> <tr> <td></td> <td>£5</td> <td>50% low income discount</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£10</td> <td rowspan="2">} 50% local SME discount</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£50</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£0</td> <td>100% discount</td> </tr> </table>		£5	50% low income discount		£10	} 50% local SME discount		£50		£0	100% discount
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 <p>50 free days a year</p>	<p>Other exemptions Disability; care workers; community transport vehicles; A&E or labour ward visits; patient/visitor/staff exemptions defined by the hospital; public & school bus services; emergency service vehicles; ZEV taxis and/or wheelchair accessible taxis</p>											

The timetable for consideration of these revised proposals is currently as follows.

- **Thursday 7 September:** non-decision making meeting of the GCP Joint Assembly (the pre-scrutiny body of the Greater Cambridge Partnership)
- **Thursday 28 September:** meeting of the GCP Board
- **Wednesday 11 October:** special meeting of the County Council Highways & Transport Committee.

Cambridgeshire County Council is the highways authority, and is the only body with the powers to agree to charge for use of the public highway.

Roadworks and repairs

The Brook, Sutton

Work in the highway at The Brook in Sutton is now complete. At the time of writing there has been a small delay in getting UK Power Networks to connect the signals up to the power cables on the nearby telegraph pole. It is hoped the lights will be working on Monday, ahead of children returning to school on Tuesday. If there are any issues, the county council's contractor Milestone will position some temporary (battery powered) signals at the crossing until the connection is resolved. Reinstatement of the green will follow the removal of the site compound.

Downham Common

Downham Common is currently expected to be closed between Downham Byway 36 and Main Drove from 9:30AM to 3:30PM on Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 September for carriageway improvements.

The Row, Sutton

The Row, Sutton is currently expected to be closed for thirty metres west of the junction with Hillside for electrical works. These are intended to be carried out between Monday 2 and Wednesday 4 October.

20MPH proposal for Ely

A consultation on a proposal for a 20MPH zone for the whole of Ely closes on Thursday 21 September. City of Ely Council agreed unanimously to apply to the County Council for this scheme, which my political colleagues in Ely campaigned for in the recent elections. They and I have been handing out literature in the centre of Ely to advise residents of the proposal and how they can comment. Ironically, a member of the District Council markets team threw one of my colleagues off the Market Square for distributing leaflets about the scheme, at exactly the same moment as the Leader of the District Council was speaking on the radio complaining that residents were not being given enough information about it.

Road safety is a priority for the County Council's joint administration. Other 20MPH areas recently installed are in Stilton, Godmanchester, St Neots, Woodhurst, Somersham, Great Gransden, Toft, Oakington, Barton, Hauxton, Melbourn, Sawston and Duxford. The work involves installing signs, lines and markings.

Pavement parking

The Chair of the Highways and Transport committee at Cambridgeshire County Council is calling for pavement parking action from the Department for Transport.

Cllr Alex Beckett has written to the Department for Transport (DfT) asking for an update on what the current plans are for any changes in legislation and an estimated timescale.

In November 2020, the DfT ran a consultation asking whether a change in existing parking legislation should occur. The County Council responded and said it would like to see a ban on pavement parking being put in place, outside of London, with a new process for exempting areas from the ban without using the current Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process.

Cllr Beckett said:

"Parking on the pavement is a persistent problem and an ongoing concern for Cambridgeshire residents. It causes safety issues for everyone; it damages our pavements and prevents access for pedestrians and cyclists. There are many areas across our network where we would want to prevent pavement parking, particularly where a lack of enforcement is abused by anti-social drivers.

"Currently, we must make a TRO, which is expensive and time-consuming. We responded to this consultation almost three years ago, so I have written to the Rt. Hon. Mark Harper MP to ask for an update as we have not seen any action or changes."

Districts with Civil Parking Enforcement can enforce against inconsiderate parking. It is likely that civil parking enforcement will soon be in place everywhere in Cambridgeshire except East Cambridgeshire.

Peppercorn lunch

At the end of last month I attended the 'Peppercorn lunch' on behalf of the County Council at Marshalls Aerospace in Cambridge. Marshalls owns the land on which the Newmarket Road Park & Ride sits. The agreed annual rent payable by the County Council for this piece of land is one peppercorn, which the Council formally presents to our landlords before a lunch laid on by Marshalls.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Combined Authority held no meetings in August.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will hold our surgery in the school Community Room on Monday 2 October and Monday 6 November, 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 18 September and Monday 16 October.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall in Little Downham on Friday 6 October (not 29 September as previously advertised) and Friday 3 November from 10:00 to 11:00AM.
- **Coveney:** I hope to be at the Coveney coffee morning on Wednesday 4 October.

Meanwhile I can also be contacted

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

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division