

CLLR FIROUZ THOMPSON

Best wishes for 2023 to all residents

FULL COUNCIL

Full Council meeting 13 December - of the five motions for debate listed in last month's report, one was withdrawn, two were passed, and two were defeated. The two motions passed were

- A Lib Dem motion calling for managed divestment by the Cambridgeshire Local Government Pension Scheme from fossil fuels, and a timeline to reduce carbon emissions with an aim of reaching net carbon zero earlier than the Paris Accord; and
- A Labour motion committing to the development of a local, county-wide 'Place of Safety' pledge, which supports the right of all to seek services, advice, support and representation without fear of adverse consequences; establishing a councillor 'migrant champion' role; and asking the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to highlight the challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees in Cambridgeshire and to call for safe and legal routes for asylum and adequate funding for local authorities to support resettled communities in Cambridgeshire.

Staffing

The full council meeting appointed a new Service Director Legal and Governance (Emma Duncan) and a new Executive Director of Finance and Resources (Michael Hudson). Frank Jordan will also join Cambridgeshire County Council in the spring as the Council's new Executive Director of Place and Sustainability.

STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Government Settlement

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.
- Some of the remainder replaces lost business rates income.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Director of Public Health annual report

The annual report of Cambridgeshire's Director of Public Health to the Adults & Health Committee in December argued strongly in favour of universal, rather than targeted, approaches to health inequalities. She observed that targeted public health interventions risked missing the majority of people needing these services. Her conclusions and recommendations were as follows.

The renewed interest and commitment to tackling health inequalities as a result of the pandemic, is very much welcomed. Historic approaches at tackling these inequalities have not been successful, in fact inequalities have widened.

The automatic response to tackling inequalities is to target, however, as demonstrated in this report, universal approaches can be far more effective at reducing inequalities, than targeted approaches. Universal approaches are also necessary in identifying those individuals who are in need of further intervention. Targeting has also often been carried out on geographical basis or using IMD [Index of Multiple Deprivation] quintiles, as argued in this report, this can often lead to the majority of individuals in need, being missed.

To be fair to our residents we need to successfully reduce inequalities in health outcomes. To be successful in this we must be more intelligenceled and evidence-based. We need to:

- Keep a focus on universal interventions as a key way of improving outcomes, reducing inequalities in health in our population.
- Make sure that any universal offer is systematically planned and delivered to enable access to all and give additional support according to need.
- Start early (pregnancy and childhood) before inequalities become entrenched.
- Ensure that any targeted intervention is
 - based on need, ideally through universal identification of need or risk rather than grouping by easily available information such demographics or geography
 - evidence-led as to approach.
- Be transparent and explicit around considerations for interventions clearly articulating the proposed individual and population benefits, draw first on evidence-based approaches with proven cost effectiveness and where evidence is not available, research and evaluate the impact of new and innovative approaches.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Cost of Living

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>

Birth, deaths and marriages

A report to the COSMIC Committee in December on the Council’s registration services included the following information about the numbers of births, deaths, marriages, civil partnership ceremonies, and new British citizens in Cambridgeshire in the last two years.

	2021/22	2020/21
Births registered	7,760	7,135
Deaths registered	5,779	6,115
Notices of marriage / civil partnership	5,417	2,737
Marriage / civil partnership ceremonies	1,925	608
New British citizens	2,322	874

Both years’ figures were affected by the pandemic.

Mobile library service review

A review of the Council’s mobile library service took place last year, resulting in a number of improvements. Twenty-one additional stops were added and routes were rearranged, enabled by storing vehicles within communities, rather than centrally.

- Mobile libraries are now available to the public nearly 20 per cent longer, due to reduced driving between stops.
- Travel has been reduced, with over 150 fewer miles travelled a month and so less fuel used.

- The service visited several events around the County, such as Thriplow Daffodil weekend, Ely and Cambridge Prides, fetes in Sutton, numerous outdoor The Library Presents events, Our Place in Space, and many more summer fetes by local staff using the new book bikes.
- 300 new members joined between May and September; and there were 6,296 visits to the vehicles and over 20,000 items issued—a stronger recovery than many of the service’s static libraries to pre-pandemic levels.
- Bessie the book bike and Jessie the Jubilee bike attended twelve events to raise awareness for the service, including a royal reception at Cambridgeshire Day.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

POPs in WUDS

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are found in various Waste Upholstered Domestic Seating (WUDS) such as sofas and upholstered dining chairs. Such materials should not be landfilled. The law against landfilling of POPs was introduced in 2007, but the Environment Agency recently announced it would become more rigorous in its enforcement. The Environment Agency announced in August 2022 that it would soon expect councils to cease landfilling upholstered seating, and instead to incinerate it. It published its Final Regulatory Position Statements on this matter on Monday 19 December 2022, with implementation starting on Sunday 1 January 2023. The short notice over Christmas has provided little time to organise incineration capacity, and the Council is therefore seeking an extension of at least a month while it works through options and liaises with its waste contractor Thalia (formerly Amey) and with the district councils who collect Cambridgeshire’s waste. This does however mean that from 1 January the Council will not be able to dispose of soft furnishings until a method of disposal acceptable to the Environment Agency has been identified and put in place.

The obvious routes to dispose of sofas and upholstered dining chairs are via the charities (if the furniture is in good condition and still has its fire safety label) or local freecycle groups on social media; or to take advantage of any takeaway services provided by suppliers of new furniture if you're buying new.

- Emmaus 01223 863657
- Cambridge Re-Use 01223 576535
- Sue Ryder Ely 01353 659266

Other charities in the Cambridge area (EACH, British Heart Foundation) will also accept used furniture in good condition. Some may require that the fire safety label is still in place.

Sunnica solar farm application

The Planning Inspectorate conducted a number of meetings in December as part of its consideration of the Sunnica application for the country’s largest solar farm, spanning East Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk. Cllr Lorna Dupre addressed one of the Open Floor meetings, in Newmarket on Tuesday 6 December. Her comments covered food security and soil quality, biodiversity, transport and public rights of way, as well as the concerns the County Council raised in July 2021 with the Secretary of State regarding the size and scale of the proposal, the effect of Covid restrictions then in force on opportunities for public engagement, the exclusion of some residents from the initial round of consultations, and the impact of the proposals on rural communities.

Swaffham Prior energy scheme in the spotlight

The flagship renewable energy scheme at Swaffham Prior, initiated by residents and supported by the Council, was covered by BBC Radio 4 in its Money Box programme between Christmas and New Year.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

20MPH schemes

The Highways & Transport Committee approved the changes to the Council's policy on 20MPH speed limits outlined in last month's report. The proposed timetable for applications for funding for new 20MPH speed limits is as follows.

- Go 'live' with application process on-line for new schemes (February 2023)
- Application period (February to April 2023)
- Prioritisation (May to June 2023)
- Committee report for approval (July 2023)
- Programming and delivery of schemes (August 2023 onwards)

Making Connections consultation

The Greater Cambridge Partnership Making Connections 2022 consultation closed on Friday 23 December. Around 23,000 responses have been 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.

The consultation is about proposals for public transport improvements, and better cycling and walking options, as well as about the element which has been most talked about—a congestion charge.

Any decision on a charge for driving on roads in Cambridge—or anywhere else in the county—would be a matter for Cambridgeshire County Council. I would expect the proposals in the consultation, including the proposal for a congestion charge, to be significantly changed by the public response to the consultation. We do not yet know whether a proposal for a congestion charge will progress beyond the consultation, or if it does, what it might look like after the public responses to the consultation have been taken into account. And I would want and need to know what the public—all the public responding to the consultation—thought before casting a vote.

Safe and Dry

The Council has used a data interpretation and modelling tool to process information about local flood locations. As a result, it has identified a 'Safe and Dry' programme of 115 locations where work is needed to improve flood resilience, and work has begun on the first 50 of these locations.

The remaining locations will be kept on a 'long list' for future works, which will be added to on an ongoing basis. The Council is also in the process of delivering a two-year programme of works to clean and plot all gullies and surface drainage features countywide using the Kaarbontech Asset Management System.

King Charles III coronation street parties

The 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-event>

Meanwhile 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 following is a summary of the various bus workstreams currently being undertaken by the Combined Authority.

The Combined Authority Board agreed a draft **Bus Strategy** on 30 November—consultation is planned to start in the week beginning Monday 9 January for six weeks. The Strategy will then go to the Combined Authority's Transport & Infrastructure Committee and the Board in March. The Strategy will form part of the suite of documents associated with the Combined Authority's emerging Local Transport & Connectivity Plan (LTCP). The Government is expected to issue national LT(C)P guidance for local transport authorities early this year, and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough's draft LTCP will be assessed against that guidance before being presented to the Board.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough was one of a majority of local transport authorities to be given no funding by Government for its **Bus Service Improvement Plan**. This funding is intended to support new approaches to bus provision, not directly subsidise bus routes. The Combined Authority is working with partners to prepare a revised Plan reflecting the priorities of the emerging LTCP and the draft Bus Strategy. This will be presented to the Transport & Infrastructure Committee and the Board in May / June.

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. This work will continue in parallel with the Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan work above. Engagement with operators and other stakeholders will be vital if franchising is to progress to the next stage following the outline business case work. It will also be essential to identify reliable ongoing revenue funding.

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.

The Transport & Infrastructure Committee will consider a **Bus Assessment Framework** in January. This will draw on the emerging LTCP and Bus Strategy, and be used to inform decision-making on bus subsidies in future.

The GCP **Making Connections** proposals include an enhanced bus network and mechanisms for both upfront investment and ongoing subsidy. The Combined Authority will need to consider the effect of this on its own work. The GCP would develop any necessary outline business case, and any decision on road charging would rest with the County Council.

In an initiative with Stagecoach and the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Combined Authority secured Government funding for **thirty zero emission buses** for Cambridge. These are expected to be available from March.

The Combined Authority Board agreed on 30 November to extend the contract for the TING **Demand Responsive Transport** service in Huntingdonshire for a further year. The Combined Authority is also exploring the case for further Demand Responsive Transport services elsewhere.

Finally, the Combined Authority is also working with bus operators to understand the scale and effect of **driver shortages** and how it can provide support through its skills programmes

LONGSTANTON

- Pothole on B1050 leading to first Longstanton roundabout was reported on 2 January and was filled on 3 January.
- 8 Potholes are due to be repaired on 6 January on High Street, Longstanton. Traffic control will be multi-way signals <https://one.network/?GB132260888>

OAKINGTON

- 20mph and A14 Legacy - snagging will be taking place this week starting 5 January, these works were due to start on 3 January, so it could go into next week.
- Obscure sign on Cambridge Road - The 'Cyclists Rejoin Carriageway' sign was moved to the back of the 'Priority' sign on 21 December. Hopefully this has fixed the main issue, but if one is still obscured then we can move the shared use sign onto the verge/lamp column at a later date (this requires permission from streetlighting and a slightly longer process).
- The double yellow lines on the junction are scheduled to be blacked out in early January, exact date yet to be confirmed.
- LHI scheme with Girton Parish council – great to hear that the joint scheme was approved at Girton Parish Council on 4 January following the surveys, fantastic effort put in by all.
- I attended the Transport Advisory Group on 4 January and a few actions:
 - Snagging list for 20mph and A14 Legacy – will work with Cllr. Tony Starling and James Chapman on this to ensure that all works are complete.
 - Water Lane footpath – over hanging trees and bushes – have sent an email to LHO
 - 20mph scheme details – dates are above, Highways team will send out an email when exact dates have been set
 - Flooding along the busway at various points

OVER

- Potholes were reported on social media on 3 January on Over Road and Station Road, some of the potholes were filled in on 4 January.

COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY GOVERNMENT FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

If you have a problem or concern do not worry too much about who can solve it just ask the question and we will endeavour to signpost to the right person. The organisational structure of Cambridgeshire is complex, but it is important to identify where responsibility lies.

<p>County Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.</p> <p>Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.</p>
<p>District Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p>Parish/ Town Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</p> <p>'The local delivery body for a City Deal with central Government worth up to £500 million over 15 years, to vital improvements in infrastructure (decarbonising transport), supporting and accelerating the creation of 44,000 new jobs, 33,500 new homes and 420 additional apprenticeships.'</p> <p>Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.</p>
<p>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</p> <p>'A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.'</p> <p>What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.</p>
<p>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</p> <p>The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is made up of Cambridgeshire County Councillors and Peterborough City Councillors.</p>

CONTACT DETAILS

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or any other matters.

Firouz Thompson, County Councillor for Longstanton, Northstowe, Over and Oakington & Westwick
Email: firouz.thompson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For those on social media we have highly active Facebook groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/> - Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe

<https://www.facebook.com/libdems3rdMay18> - Over & Willingham