

## **County Councillor Report to Great Wilbraham Parish Council for September 2021 from Councillor Claire Daunton**

### **Local County Matters**

#### **Cycling and the Wilbrahams**

I now have an estimate from the relevant County Highways officer of the cost to make 'a trod' or 'beaten earth' footpath along with Wilbraham road up to the junction with the A1303 and on to Bottisham. This would be a footpath, but suitable also for cycling. The cost also includes a speed reduction on the road to 50mph. The cost is upwards of £200,000. I now need to take this back to the discussion group which includes representatives of the three parish councils (Wilbrahams and Six Mile Bottom and Bottisham) concerned and of the two county councillors, myself and Alan Sharp, county councillor for the Division which includes Bottisham. Clearly this is a significant sum of money and considerably more than first envisaged on account of safety precautions and highways regulations. We will also need hard evidence of potential number of users of such a path in the Wilbrahams. I understand that members of WEG and our two 'cycling champions' will put out a survey questionnaire to gauge possible usage. All this information is needed in advance of any bidding for possible future 'active travel' funding.

#### **LHI Funding**

Since the last full meeting of the parish council I was able to work with parish councillors and the TWG to organise a meeting with a senior Highways Officer to seek advice on putting in an LHI bid. The meeting took place on 13<sup>th</sup> August and I believe was constructive and helpful in its range and the content of the advice given. TWG members are now working on the bid for submission on 30<sup>th</sup> September. I know this will be covered elsewhere on the agenda

#### **County HGV Working Group**

I am now a member of the County HGV Working Group. We had an informal discussion in August on a number of issues including the covenant with businesses; the pressure for out of town distribution centres; the need for different treatments in different places for HGV problems. We will have a formal meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> September and will be reporting to the County Highways Committee which will have a more substantial discussion at a meeting later this year. HGV traffic is also a live issue now in Cherry Hinton on account of an application for a distribution centre on Cherry Hinton Lakes. We have opposed this and developers are indicating that they will come up with a modified application.

#### **Footpaths**

I have asked again for an update on the footpath repairs on Angle End and Church Street which were rated as a priority back in July. There is normally a 12-week waiting time. I will definitely be pursuing this.

## **General County Matters**

### **SCHOOLS**

#### **Greener Heating Systems**

**Schools across the county will be supported in replacing gas and oil boilers with cleaner, greener heating systems thanks to a new model of funding approved by Cambridgeshire County Council, which will speed up the process and make it easier for work to be carried out.**

At a meeting of the council's Environment and Green Investment Committee last month, members agreed that a combination of capital and loan funding could be used to supplement any grants, to help cover the costs of retrofitting Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) systems in council-maintained schools where existing boilers need to be replaced.

The council will apply for grant funding towards the costs of ASHP installation from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) whenever this is available as this will help deliver change quicker, cut emissions faster and really start to address the climate emergency we face. The council has already successfully applied for PSDS funding to decarbonise its office buildings and three schools, however grants from this scheme are only available in phases and have been over-subscribed within hours of launching.

The grant funding will be supplemented by capital funding from the council's Education Capital budget, as well as its Environment Fund, which was set up to reduce the council's carbon footprint and tackle climate change.

The committee also resolved to draw down £30,000 of development budget from the council's Environment Fund to commission initial development work on a number of schools in order to prepare for future phases of PSDS applications. This will give the council a head start in preparing applications for the scheme, and a better chance of securing funding.

The funding confirmed by the committee will allow work to begin on the first three maintained schools where boilers have reached the end of their life. Alongside the ASHP, additional measures such as LED lighting, solar panels and energy management systems will be installed at each school to offset energy costs and to help achieve the council's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. These additional measures will be funded by a loan from the council's schools' energy efficiency retrofit programme fund, which is designed for energy conservation projects where the amount borrowed can be paid back over 15 or 20 years. Loan repayments can be made from the savings in energy costs ensuring no net cost to the school.

#### **Meals Vouchers**

Over 18,000 vouchers were sent to families of children across Cambridgeshire receiving free school meals.

The £42 vouchers were a continuation of the scheme which operated in previous school holidays and half term breaks.

Although the amount of Government grant has been reduced, the new Joint Administration at Cambridgeshire County Council agreed to allocate an additional £570,000 to the scheme to keep benefits at their previous level.

The vouchers did not need to be used in a single shopping trip and once claimed will last for at least a year.

In addition, each district and city council in Cambridgeshire was given a further £30,000 to support vulnerable families and individuals in need over the summer holidays. This funding went towards further supporting local activities and was coordinated by the district and city councils.

A further £100,000 went to the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme to support families in need with essential supplies.

Further funding was also given to the direct award scheme, which enabled local community groups identified by the district or city councils to make direct food and cash awards for families in need. Over 550 of these awards had been made by the middle of August.

## **ROADS and TRANSPORT**

### **New Director**

Following an extensive and intensive recruitment and selection process, Sue Procter has been appointed as the new Director for Highways and Transport at Cambridgeshire County Council.

Sue Procter will join the County from Kirklees Council, and prior to that had many years of service leadership at Lancashire County Council.

On accepting the role Sue said: "I am thrilled to be joining Cambridgeshire at this time of unprecedented change. Supporting officers and members in building a new senior management team is both exciting and challenging. Working together with the service teams I will bring a clear focus in supporting the delivery of high-quality customer focused and member led services. The sheer scale and challenge of complex partnerships and delivery mechanisms in Cambridgeshire is one that demands the very best technical leadership and I am delighted that I'll be leading on this opportunity."

With over 30 years' experience Sue Procter is highly skilled in service leadership, partnership working, policy development and service delivery including Private Finance Initiative, major highway civil engineering and more latterly at Kirklees managing a significant in house team of frontline key staff. Sue's experience working with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and partnership working across and within different councils will serve Cambridgeshire well working with the Greater Cambridge Partnership, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and our colleagues at the District and City Councils. She joins Cambridgeshire County Council on 1 November.

### **Local Highways Improvement Board**

The intention to set up and LHIB is progressing into action. The thinking behind this initiative is to bring together elected county members, officers, contractors and parish councillors so

that issues concerning agreements on local highways work to be done and funding for it; timetabling of work; quality control and reporting. We all want to see a more responsive service and hope that and LHIB might be part of the solution to this. Still in the development stage, but work going on apace.

### **Real time roadworks information trial success**

A couple of months ago council officers and contractors set up a WhatsApp Group among themselves. The contractors posted information and pictures to the group at the beginning and end of each day. They also reported if they changed sites during the day. Information Services officers used the information to update the Council website

once a day. The Communications team and the Council's Integrated Highways Management Centre posted the information on the relevant Twitter feeds. Real time closure information was fed through to satnavs via the one.network web platform. And the Council's Contact Centre used the WhatsApp information to provide up to date information in response to customer enquiries.

Officers managing the works could track the contractor more accurately, ask more informed questions, and respond better to enquiries. The contractors felt this was a success and are keen to adopt the new system when they carry out works in Cambridgeshire. Their Micro Asphalt team want to use it for their autumn programme which will start in September. The Integrated Highways Management Centre was happy as it could deal with enquiries much more quickly, though there were some issues with roadworks permits. Staff are also putting out information on Instagram. Information Services staff were pleased, as they could update the website each day. They could do this more quickly and provide more accurate information. The Contact Centre felt it was particularly helpful for highlighting weather delays, and informing enquirers about these.

From a staff point of view the trial was a huge success, and will improve the information the Council provides about these works. The autumn Micro Asphalt

program begins in September, and staff will use this method again. Meanwhile the Council will look to provide links for parishes and councillors so that they can access the information and advise residents how to do so.

The new Joint Administration of Cambridgeshire County Council, and its Highways Chair Cllr Peter McDonald, are keen to improve the use of IT to manage the council's highways. It is pleasing that this first project has got off to such a positive start.

In addition to this initiative, during the course of the summer the Gaist project has been underway: this consists of a digital mapping of roads across the county to take account of areas that need repair. This exercise will obviate the need for someone to go out marking areas for repair and will enable the work to be done, and updating to take place, quicker and more effectively.

## Chief Executive

The search is on for a new Chief Executive for Cambridgeshire County Council to succeed the present postholder Gillian Beasley, who told councillors of her intentions before May's election. Gillian is currently Chief Executive of both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council, but both councils have agreed that this joint arrangement should cease. Cambridgeshire will therefore have its own Chief Executive dedicated entirely to the county.

## Decentralisation of services

One of the new Joint Administration's major commitments is to decentralise council services, making decisions closer to communities. This might include:

- Joint decision making—the County Council working closely with the District or City Council, Town or Parish Councils, local voluntary, community and faith groups, and communities to identify priorities and agree how best to deliver to them.
- Service relocation—County Council services physically located within the heart of communities where there is an evidenced need, with opportunities for co-location between council departments and with partner agencies.
- Delegation of funding, service delivery, and/or decision making—a community or local organisation being given formal delegation to deliver a service or to make decisions relating to county council services.

A progress report will be made to the December meeting of the Communities, Social Mobility & Inclusion Committee. The Council aims to support and enable partners to deliver services or make joint decisions, rather than adding pressure and cost to those organisations. This will be an important principle to establish before firm decisions can be made, and reflects some of the early feedback received from District and City Councils.
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## Foster carers

Cambridgeshire County Council needs more foster carers. Fostering means caring for one or more children or young people in your own home when they are unable to live with their family.

Foster carers provide a safe and secure home for children and young people of all ages, and come from a wide range of ages, cultures and backgrounds. Becoming a foster carer normally takes four to six months. The Council offers

- a generous mileage allowance, a setting-up fee for furniture and equipment, two weeks additional basic maintenance payments for holidays, birthdays allowance, a festivities allowance, and an initial clothing and school uniform allowance.
- round-the-clock 'out of hours' support should you need reassurance.
- a dedicated social worker to provide regular supervision and support.

Foster carers could earn up to £44,720 plus benefits for looking after two

children aged eleven or over, subject to experience, training, and assessment.

There are lots of different types of fostering available for the right people and their families. Applicants will need enthusiasm and commitment to support the needs of children and young people in care, as well as a spare bedroom—and be over 21 years of age. The Council urgently needs foster carers for teenagers, sibling groups, and children with disabilities.

There are a lot of myths around fostering, which the Council is keen to dispel.

- Finances and home
- Career and work
- Personal circumstances
- Relationships and lifestyle

More information:

- Six steps to fostering
- Siblings and teenagers

Being involved with social services or the police will not automatically rule out an applicant. The Council would just need to discuss this further. For more information

- visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/fostering](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/fostering)
- call 0800 052 0078 or
- text FOSTERING to 60777

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## **Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy**

The County Council has drawn up a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy as all county councils are required to do by the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The three key aims of this strategy are to achieve:

- Earlier identification of, and intervention for, domestic abuse through access to domestic abuse support, local authority housing advice, and social and private landlords.
- A reduction in the number of victims of abuse who are made homeless as a result of domestic abuse.
- Increased housing sustainment options so that people experiencing domestic abuse can remain safely in their home when it is their choice to do so, or do not lose their tenancy status if they relocate.

The Council's Communities, Social Mobility & Inclusion Committee is being asked to approve the strategy for submission to Government.

## County Council flood prevention survey

As part of the County Council's Community Flood Action Programme, they are updating 'Riparian' guidance to make it more useful for those living next to a watercourse. As part of this work, they want to better understand what residents and landowners currently understand about responsibilities of maintaining watercourses (ditches, streams etc.) on private land. A short survey (5 questions) has been published, and we are helping to promote this to residents. If you would be willing to share our [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) posts within your communities, that would be helpful. Alternatively, you can access or share the survey [using this direct link](#). The deadline to respond is 30 September. You can find out more about [Riparian ownership on the County Council's website](#).