

County Councillor's Report for Parishes, March 2020 – Anna Bradnam

County Council Meeting - Budget 2020/21 to 2024/25

On 11th Feb the Council approved an unbalanced budget including a £4 million deficit, while increasing Council Tax by 1.59% instead of by the permitted 1.99%. At the beginning of this financial year the potential gap was £21 million, so over the year the Council has had to make savings of £17 million to reduce the potential shortfall. Whilst some efficiencies have undoubtedly been justified, they have made dramatic cuts to Adult services (-£5.8m), to Highways and to Children's Services (-£6.3m). We are lucky to have retained our Child and Family Zone at Waterbeach but 19 Children's Centres elsewhere in the County have been closed. You will all be aware that our Local Highways Officer has been unable to commission work for lack of funds. Many Councillors report waiting years for simple maintenance jobs to be completed, like the line painting we have requested in Waterbeach, Landbeach and Milton.

At a liaison meeting on 20 February with the Clinical Care Commissioning Group and Healthwatch, County colleagues heard some stern words of warning about the impact of the new Adult Social Care charges. Council finance remains in critical state, as seen for example in new controversial and complex charges to vulnerable people receiving Adult Social Care that will save the council £3.4 million over the next two years.

At full Council both main opposition parties (Lib Dems and Labour) proposed increasing Council Tax for 2020/21 by the maximum amount allowed (1.99%). This pattern over recent years (2016-2019) of not raising council tax by small permissible increments, including a sustained period of total council tax freeze, has cost the council £34 million that should have been deployed to prevent this tide of disappearing public services. The difference between 1.59% and 1.99% for a Band D home is 11p/week/household which could have added £1.17m to the Council budget this year and £6.39 million over the forward plan period.

For a national view, here is a report from the County Councils Network on 21/02/2020:

"Today's report updates a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for the County Councils Network (CCN); which revealed that councils faced a deficit of £46bn over the next five years. The government's funding announced last September, predominantly for care services, has reduced this figure by 35%. However, if all councils raise their council tax by the maximum over the period [*the County Council has not - AB*] the funding gap is still £19.1bn - or £30.4bn without.

Of the £19bn funding shortfall, the 36 authorities represented by the CCN account for £7.7bn of this funding gap, 41% of its total. This means that service reductions and council tax rises will be felt most in county areas.

With councils currently finalising their budgets for the next financial year, a CCN analysis of all 133 councils, who have so far published their draft budgets, out of 151 who have social care responsibilities, 116 authorities plan to raise council tax by the full amount permitted – 3.99% (that is 2% given by the government for Adult Social Care plus 1.99% to be raised from Council Tax). [*Cambridgeshire County Council only raised the Council Tax element by 1.59% – AB*]

For residents, their council tax bills will vary across the country. Taxpayers in county areas (as opposed to City areas) will face an average rise of £69 compared to £45 for residents in Inner London. The average Band D will rise to £1,853 in shire counties, some 40% higher than Inner London (£1,332). CCN say higher council tax levels in their areas are due to historically lower funding.

As a result of this funding gap, it will be necessary for the vast bulk of councils to raise their council tax over the next four years to fill the £19bn funding black hole they face, with the demand for services and the cost of providing those services far outstripping government grant funding and current income from local taxation. Councils will likely outline further cuts to important but non-statutory services, as well as raising charges and fees for other services.

The CCN says that this huge funding gap persists despite the government providing councils with the 'largest real-terms funding increase in a decade' – and have called on the new Chancellor Rishi Sunak to commit to long-term funding of councils."

Hard times ahead I fear.

Update on the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

"Developments regarding novel coronavirus (COVID-19) are continuing to be carefully monitored by Public Health England. The latest information is:

1. The current impact of the disease is currently considered moderate
2. The current risk to the UK population is considered moderate
3. Latest information and advice for the public is [here](#)
4. To help prevent the potential spread of any infections, including Covid-19, the NHS has launched the Catch it, Bin it, Kill It campaign. Use a tissue to catch a sneeze, bin the tissue and wash your hands - is the best way to stop the spread of any germs or viruses."

I note the symptoms are a high temperature, a dry cough and shortness of breath.

If you have recently returned from China and have any symptoms, do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. **You are advised to call 111, stay indoors and avoid close contact with other people.**

The GOV.UK website, which is being updated daily, says:

"As of 23 February, a total of 6,324 people have been tested in the UK, of which 6,315 were confirmed negative and 9 positive."

Transport – Roads A14 Junction 33 (Milton) and Junction 32 (Histon)

I was advised 06/02/2020 by John Akester, Stakeholder Manager A14 Integrated Delivery Team that:

J33 (Milton) southbound bridge (*where work has been done to renovate the waterproofing of the carriageway*) – resurfacing works are scheduled for overnight work for a week towards the end of February. Once that work has been completed it is hoped to finish there sometime in March."

J32 (Histon) - and the forthcoming closure of the inbound carriageway on Histon Road

"Our current programme shows A14 works to be completed there in the next couple of months, including the slips roads.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership works are outwith our project and my understanding is that they will not start any works involving road closures until the A14 work at J32 has been completed.

However I believe they are carrying out some enabling works in preparation for the full works starting."

Transport – Buses

I am South Cambs District Council's representative on the Mayor's Bus Reform Task Force. The next meeting is on 31 March 2020. Let me know (in good time) if you have specific suggestions for bus infrastructure, which I can take to the meeting.

Highways – Local Highway Improvement Fund 12/02/2020

Matt Staton the Interim Highway Projects & Road Safety Manager has written to parish councils, asking them to feed back their views on the proposed changes to the LHI schedule. He asks parishes to feed back to your County Councillor in the first instance. I wondering if you will you be able to prepare bids ready to submit between 1 April and 31 May 2020?

"Dear Councillor,

IMPORTANT INFORMATION IN RELATION TO 2021/22 LOCAL HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT (LHI) APPLICATIONS

*Following discussions in relation to the delivery timescales experienced for Local Highway Improvement (LHI) schemes and concerns raised regarding the number of schemes not completed within the financial year for which the funding is allocated it is proposed that **the application window for schemes to be delivered in the 2021/22 financial year is brought forward by two months, opening on 1st April 2020 and closing on Sunday 31st May 2020.**"*

Assuming that the Highways and Infrastructure Committee agree the proposal in March 2020, the schedule will be:

May – September 2020 – feasibility studies

October 2020 – panel meetings

December 2020 – County Highways and Infrastructure Committee – for approval

January to March 2021 – design schemes

1 April 2021 onwards – delivery of schemes

"If you have any questions or concerns please can I ask that you direct them to your local County Councillor in the first instance, in order that they can inform the committee decision-making process in March 2020."

Please let me know what you think about the schedule.

NE Cambridge - Area Action Plan

Members of the community and Councillors have been consulted at various workshops and forums since late 2019 about options for the site, if and when the Wastewater Treatment Centre moves, freeing up the land for development. A number of aspects are being considered. Planners are considering a road **bridge over the railway**, to give the community at Fen Road Chesterton another access when the Fen Road level crossing is closed. This is likely to be north of the current industrial estate and aggregate site. The best route for a **heavy goods route through the site** from Cowley Road is being considered, possibly to the north of the Mick George site.

Landowners have agreed to the principle of an E-W **underpass** under Milton Road, from the northeast part of the Cambridge Science Park (CSP) to near the St Johns Innovation Centre, for public transport vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians. A **ground-level/ 'at grade' crossing** is planned directly across Milton Road, effectively from Cowley Road to the Science Park. In this location they originally considered a bridge but there was insufficient space to launch and land. There are already plans approved to reduce the number of parking spaces at the Science Park long-term, so regular buses serving Cambridge Regional College (CRC) and the CSP, with an internal 'hopper' bus are being planned.

The Lafarge **aggregate site** near the railway is likely to be moved off-site in due course, and the **bus depot**, is likely to move, possibly to a site near the Park and Ride.

The **boundary of the AAP** has been adjusted to exclude Bramblefields Nature Reserve and the Chesterton Allotments but to include Cambridge Regional College and the car showroom sites on Milton Road. This will make it easier to manage the anticipated traffic movements.

Since parking will be reduced on CSP the team are mindful that residents in neighbouring communities may seek/need Controlled Parking Zones to avoid displacement parking e.g. in Milton and Chesterton. They are undertaking a scoping study.

A first draft of the Transport Study should be ready mid-February 2020 which will be reviewed by the policy team, and then by Councillors (it is hoped) by end of March 2020. Matters to be considered will be – what sort of place do you want this to be? – aspects of scale, density and height, - open space and recreation and – transport. Thereafter papers will be published for the Joint Local Plan Advisory Group and various committees at City and South Cambs for scrutiny. The final draft of the Area Action Plan will then be open to public consultation between 20 July and 25 September (12 weeks to allow twice as much time as normal as this will be over the summer). The team aim to be at pre-submission stage this time next year – May 2021.

Between now and then Position Statements are being drawn up that enable the team to manage any speculative applications that might be received before the AAP has been adopted. This is to ensure that one application cannot jeopardise a particular site before its intended ultimate purpose has been considered and agreed.

Waste Disposal - Amey – next Community Liaison Forum – 16 July 2020

The roof of the MBT hall suffered some damage in the recent high winds, and information has been posted [here](#). Here are links to the last two newsletters ([Summer](#) and [Autumn](#)) and here is the link to the information published on [odour](#).

We have a **Waterbeach New Town Community Forum** on Wednesday 26 February, 7-9pm at the Baptist Church, Chapel Street, Waterbeach.

I have no specific news for parishes this month.

AB 25/02/2020