

## **March Report**

*Mark Howell: Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Bourn, Greater Cambourne, Little Gransden, Longstowe, Lower Cambourne and Upper Cambourne*

### **Cambourne Village College**

As we are aware we require additional secondary pupil places in Cambourne for this September 2019.

CCC put in process the capital project to expand Cambourne Village College for this September, but an ecological survey carried out late last year found great crested newts. This has caused a delay in the project programme. The main reason for the delay in the programme has been the timing of finding great crested newts. The project programme for the 2FE extension was already tight and there was no time contingency in the programme for delays of this magnitude when we started the project. The presence of newts has always been considered as a risk, given there are known refugia (habitat) within 200m. A suitably qualified ecologist was appointed early in the design development phase to help mitigate and manage the risk around ecology. However, the last survey undertaken during the second expansion project by the contractors Morgan Sindall last spring, showed no presence of newts, whereas the one taken by Kier later in the year as part of the ecologists work in September 2018 found a newt.

The team tried to obtain permission to remove newt and refugia before the first frosts of Autumn. The project team tried to engage with Natural England on what type of licence they would give to allow the removal and allow continuation of the scheme and if they need any further surveys. The surveys have certain protocols to observe and need to be undertaken by specialists who themselves need to be procured. The survey itself needs to be conducted under certain conditions i.e. before hibernation, with agreement on methodology from Natural England. A mitigation licence is required if your work will have impacts on European Protected Species it is an offence to commence work without one. Natural England did not respond in time and as a result it has delayed the project programme.

As a result of the delay in delivering the expansion to the college temporary accommodation will be required from September 2019 for a short period of hopefully no longer than four months. We have started this process to ensure that two double mobiles are provided for the start of term September 2019 and the project team have been working closely with the school on the location of these mobiles.

In summary, the timing of the discovery was very unhelpful (though better than discovery later when we're on site) but we have put into action a Plan B for this September 2019.

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### **Heidi Allen South Cambridgeshire MP**

Heidi Allen the South Cambridgeshire MP stated she had weighed up all the pros and cons over “a couple of months”, and along with her colleagues, Anna Soubry and Sarah Wollaston decide to leave the Conservative party and join the eight MPs who had left Labour and formed the Independent Group, which has yet to be formed into a party.

In the Guardian, Mark Howell said he was “disappointed” in Allen’s decision, and described her as “an exceptionally hard-working brilliant constituency MP, and nothing can take away from that”.

“There was speculation, but I think we were still taken aback today,” he said. “Conservative or not, she will still be an excellent constituency MP, so, in that respect, it won’t affect the constituents at all. And I think Heidi has done this, she believes, for her constituents. Though I have not spoken to her about it, that is the way I would see it.”

The Prime Minister said she was “saddened” by the defections.

### **Public Access to Castle Mound**

Concerns have been raised recently about notices posted on the Shire Hall site, and whether they were aiming to reduce public access to Castle Mound. Nothing is further from the truth.

Castle Mound is a scheduled monument which means it's nationally important from a heritage point of view. While the site has been owned by the County Council, we have always allowed public access, but we don't believe it is a public right of way.

By issuing a Landowners Deposit (the notices that have been displayed around the site), we are taking steps to clarify this, and to protect and ensure that the existing permissive access rights remain, even after we vacate the site.

We certainly don't want to restrict access, but also we must be careful not to create new rights where they don't exist.

As part of the bidding process for the site that began last year, interested parties were asked to consider our Heritage brief, and we invited them to address how they would make sure of the continued permissive public access to the Castle Mound.

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We are now in commercial negotiations, but from the bids received for the sale or lease of the site we are confident that our expectations will be met and that the importance of retaining and even enhancing the heritage value of the site has been understood

### **Overnight Support for Children with Disabilities**

We want to make sure that we provide overnight support in the way that best meets the needs and wishes of families, children and young people. Currently this is mostly provided outside the child's family home in residential services or with Link foster carers.

We are seeking your views and want to plan together on how best to deliver this in the future.

### **New CCC Headquarters in Alconbury Weald**

Cambridgeshire County Council is inviting residents to view and comment on plans for its new Headquarters in Alconbury Weald, prior to the submission of a formal planning application and members of the public also invited to attend an Information Event in Alconbury Weald on Thursday, 28 February.

A decision taken by Full Council in May 2018 set the wheels in motion for the Council to move from its costly six acre Shire Hall site in central Cambridge, and move to a smaller, more flexible purpose built building in Alconbury Weald.

The new two-storey headquarters, which aims to be 'bright, efficient and flexible' will incorporate a private wing for staff housing around 350 desks, and a public reception area with informal meeting space.

Council and Committee meetings are set to be held in a multi-use 90 seater space, which can be split into 3 rooms, and offering potential for future community use.

Even after taking the cost of the new building into account, the move is set to save the Council in the region of £46.5m over the next 30 years, savings which will be reinvested back into public facing services.

Planning permission will be submitted in late spring, with construction set to begin towards the end of 2019, and completion due by December 2020. The current Shire Hall, running costs are in the region of £900,000 per year. The building of the new and smaller HQ is part of a much wider plan to base ourselves closer to communities, and make better use of our own assets and those of partners across Cambridgeshire.

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## **Park and Ride**

More than three million passengers chose to leave their car and catch the Park&Ride in the last year, new figures reveal.

Passenger journeys increased by nearly 250,000 over the last year as thousands more people used Park&Ride services to get into the city. There were more than 261,000 journeys on Park&Ride services in January – up more than 15% compared to the same time last year.

Drivers can leave their car for free at sites at Madingley, Milton, Trumpington, Newmarket Road, and Babraham and pay just £3 for a return service into Cambridge.

The Newmarket service has seen a 35% increase in journeys year-on-year – up to 43,702 this year from 32,184 in January 2018 – while there were 71,960 more journeys from the Babraham P&R – up 15.1% - for the same month. Finally, the Guided Busway – which connects Huntingdon, St Ives and Cambridge – saw passengers rise by over 6.3% in the year to date to 379,521.

## **Vulnerable Children**

The positive impact of recent ambitious changes to transform our support for vulnerable children in Cambridgeshire was highlighted during a recent Ofsted inspection.

Ofsted undertook the unannounced two week inspection of children's services in January. In the report they said that overall, children's services in Cambridgeshire require improvement to be good and that we have put in place a package of measures to swiftly address those areas that we know we need to improve.

The report rated the impact of senior leaders as good and praised our accurate assessment of strengths and areas for improvement, as well as our use of peer review and evidence-based analysis to improve children's social care. They said, that leaders had recognised that improvements were needed, and had taken a series of well-considered actions, which are now improving the quality of services for children and young people. They also noted how we have worked closely with the local safeguarding children board and partner agencies in order to drive and monitor progress.

Inspectors said that the leadership of the change programme that resulted in a major restructure of children's services - the 'Change for Children' programme - which was implemented in November 2018 **'has been intelligent and effective'**. They noted that despite the inevitable disruption in

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any major restructure, staff were kept well informed and engaged in the process.

The report said, **“Whole Council ownership of the change programme and strong political backing had secured significant additional investment.”** The areas for improvement identified by inspectors had all been covered in reports to the Children and Young People’s Committee. Members have, in turn, supported investment into the service to implement the changes and boost staffing levels.

Inspectors highlighted a number areas where there is good practice. They were impressed by our Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Hub which makes sure that any young person who has been missing from home or from care has an opportunity to speak to an independent person about any issues that may be troubling them. This team works closely with the police and other partners to ensure that action is taken in relation to any adults who are seeking to target vulnerable young people for exploitation.

Similarly, they praised the work of some of our children in care teams and said that the new team supporting care leavers was already having an impact. They praised the quality of our fostering service and the training and support provided to our carers. They also noted that a strengthened approach to recruitment of foster carers to provide local loving homes for our children in care is also beginning to have an impact. They also said that our support for children with disabilities is good.

We are taking swift action to address the recommendations highlighted in the report. Inspectors said that the number of children that each individual social worker supported remained too high but despite the inevitable pressure that high caseloads bring that, **“our staff are upbeat and work hard to make a positive difference for children”** and that, **“social workers and other staff who spoke to inspectors were overwhelmingly positive about the future.”**

The need to reduce caseloads in the face of the continuing national and local shortage of qualified social workers was the driver behind the introduction of new Children’s Practitioner roles. These practitioners support our social workers so that they can focus on the most complex or urgent cases. The additional investment in children’s social care services has resulted in an increase in the number of case-holding practitioners from 151 to 183 full time workers.

We had also previously identified a need to increase the level of management supervision and oversight of our work with children, young people and their families. Recognising this need, the Children and Young

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People's Committee and the wider Council supported the development of additional specialist team manager roles across the service.

### **CCC Budget**

Cambridgeshire County Council has agreed a proposal to set a 2019/20 budget which continues to protect and invest in vital services, and puts service transformation and commercialisation before considering service cuts.

**Continue to invest in vital services aimed at vulnerable adults & children** and increasing funding on highways repairs, which means

- £45m in additional spending planned for adult and children's services over the next five years.
- £18 million additional spending planned for highways improvements in the next five years.

**Continue with ambitious plans to maximise the return on the council's investments** to support frontline services

- The council's housing company This Land; it's County Farms Estate, the largest in the UK and investments in new energy projects together are due to return a profit of more than £12m in 2019/20.
- The range of innovative energy schemes include the ground breaking Soham Solar farm which in January surpassed its annual £1m income target two months early.
- Cambridgeshire County Councils' plans for commercialisation and investment are set to return to more than £58m to support frontline services over the next five years.

Continue to invest in transforming services to make them deliver more efficiently for local residents – but **use a £1.436m surplus built up in the council's Transformation Fund to balance the 2019/20 budget** without the need to make unpalatable cuts to services that local residents need and value.

- The council has so far invested £8m from the Fund into initiatives to transform services or manage demand, which has returned £40m to reduce the cost of services.
- A £1m fund to help parishes and community associations to deliver and improve service has just been extended for a second year. From an initial £564,268 awarded in grants, the return on investment from direct savings or delaying or reducing demand on council services is expected to be £1,165,091

**Support areas of increased demand – particularly from vulnerable adults and children, making prudent use of the £9.1m 'smoothing' fund** in 2019/20

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established by the council last year, specifically to manage growing levels of demand for services.

**Accept the Government's proposal to raise general council tax by 2.99%**, announced in last month's Revenue Support Grant announcement, as well as continuing to apply the 2% increase to directly fund adult social care services.

- A total 4.99% increase would add £1.20 a week to the bill of a Band D council tax payer, although the majority of Cambridgeshire council tax payers will pay less than this as Band C is the average across the county.

Recognise and thank council staff for their contribution to meeting the costs of rising demand within the current year with three days unpaid leave – but **remove a £930k saving requirement from next year's budget, recognising the need to reward and retain good quality staff.**

As one of the fastest growing counties in the UK we face a considerable disadvantage which is not fair and not of our own making - as if we were funded even at the rate of the average county council we would receive an additional £19m each year

### **Bus services**

From April, all Cambridgeshire County Council funded bus services will continue after the county council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority agree funding for the next year.

The Combined Authority has asked Cambridgeshire County Council to continue providing bus service policy and delivery on its behalf for one more year while opportunities for radical reform of the network are explored. We have agreed this short-term fix for us, as the local authority, to fund and continue working with the bus operators on services across the county.

CCC believe it is vitally important that residents have the necessary transport links in place and we like to reassure the public that county council funded bus services which are currently in place will continue. We have already started to re-tender services, which were due to end in March, to ensure services are maintained without interruption.

### **Bourn Airfield**

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7.10 Paragraph 8.35 It is essential that the junction design ensures that the access onto the Broadway bans left turns out of the development as well as **banning right turns in**, coming from the direction of Bourn. The only movements permitted for all traffic should be right turn out and left turn in. It is not clear if this is the case so far. This should be clarified.

7.11 Paragraph 8.68 States that all the stand-alone junctions assessed operate within capacity and it is only the cumulative assessments that pushes the junctions over capacity. This is not accepted. The Madingley Road junctions are currently experiencing queuing during the peak hours. The base models need to ensure they reflect this existing queuing.

7.12 Paragraph 8.69 The TA suggests that the Madingley Road corridor is only due to go over capacity under the Base + Growth conditions. As stated above this is not the case as several junctions including the M11 off slip, the Park and Ride junction and the High Cross junctions are all currently experiencing queuing during the am and pm peaks. Therefore the base models should be rectified to replicate this so the future year assessment are accurate.

7.13 Reviews of the junction assessments are currently ongoing. Discussions are taking place with the developer's transport consultants to try to agree suitable models. CCC position is reserved pending the outcome of these discussions.

7.14 Cambourne had to build its own access onto the A428, which is very well used and can be very busy. It's not made clear in the TA why this wasn't a requirement for Bourn airfield. Further information is required detailing why this access option was not pursued.

7.15 As above, the TA needs to show that the existing A428 access has capacity to accommodate the additional trips. The Hardwick A428 dumbbell junction should be surveyed and assessed to demonstrate that this will not go over capacity during the peak hours. This has not been undertaken to date and since this is the main access onto the A428 for all development traffic this should be undertaken to show there is capacity.

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7.16 Measures required to mitigate the traffic impact of the development on the villages of Bourn, Caldecote, Toft, Comberton and Barton should also be provided. Further information is required detailing proposed schemes along with a breakdown of costs. It is agreed that annual surveys will be required to monitor the traffic flows through the villages.

### **Access for Pedestrians and Cycles (Chapter 6 of the TA)**

7.17 Paragraph 9.2. The development proposes to provide a new pedestrian and cycle network to link into the existing network in the surrounding area. This includes direct and segregated pedestrian and cycle links to Cambridge, Cambourne/ Highfields, Caldecote, Hardwick and Bourn. Further information is required on the details of these proposed links to the surrounding villages before these can be agreed. Currently there is little provision available so to fulfil this requirement upgrades will be needed.

7.18 Paragraph 9.5. A dedicated strategic public transport route is to be provided through the development. This is being discussed through ongoing discussions with the developers to ensure the provision is to the correct standards and requirements. CCC's position is reserved subject to the conclusions of these discussions.

7.19 Paragraph 9.7. An improvement to the Cambridge Crossroads junction has been proposed to improve cycle connectivity. Comments for the Highways DM officer should be reviewed.

7.20 Walking distances should be shown in real distances rather than as simple radii. This should be amended.

7.21 Figure 8.10. The proposals shown in figure 8.10 will require a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.

### **Public Transport Accessibility (Chapter 10 of the TA)**

7.22 Paragraph 10.1 The proposals include a public transport package. This includes a diversion of the Citi4, X3 and the 18 bus route through the site. CCC does not object to these improvements in principal, however additional information is required before these can be agreed – including expected patronage and viability figures.

7.23 Paragraph 10.6 as part of the Travel Pack for households it is proposed to provide all residents with *up to* 1 year of free travel by bus. This will be a good benefit and promote sustainable travel. The bus ticket offer should be for *at least* 1 year rather than *up to* 1 year.

7.24 The TA doesn't specify what exactly will be provided out of the various options, and how much funding will be available. Further information should be provided before this can be agreed.

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7.25 Paragraph 10.16 and tables 10.1 and 10.2 The Beaulieu example used in the TA shows that some good changes in mode share have been achieved towards bus use. It is not clear whether these figures include data following the end of the free annual bus pass or whether they just include data when the bus passes have been still active. Further clarification is required.

### **Proposed Mitigation (Chapter 12 of the TA)**

7.26 The TA sets out various mitigation proposals:-

- Delivery of the dedicated strategic Public Transport Route within Bourn Airfield – See comments from GCP team within this report.
- Contribution towards delivery of a traffic calming and pedestrian improvements scheme on Broadway and monitoring of movements through the surrounding villages – Further information is required on the proposals and the contribution before this can be agreed.
  
- Contribution towards the delivery of the wider dedicated strategic public transport route – This is a key requirement with the financial amount to be agreed.
  
- Delivery of off-site pedestrian and cycle improvements – Further details are required showing the proposed improvements.
  
- Delivery of the bus strategy – As detailed in the above response, further evidence on the proposed viability and patronage is required.
  
- Implementation of Travel Plans – Confirmation should be provided that this will include an annual pass for 4 residents of each household.
  
- Provision of a Cycle Voucher for residents - The TA states that the Travel Plan coordinator will endeavour to enter an agreement with a cycle company to provide residents with a vouchers to obtain discounts to buy a cycle - This needs to be a definite part of the Travel pack rather than just an endeavour. Confirmation that this is agreed is required