

September Parish Report

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

Free School Meals

Cambridgeshire families can now find out instantly if their children are entitled to free school meals at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals

The improved online application process allows parents and carers to find out straightaway if their children are entitled to free school meals.

Despite all children in Key Stage 1 benefitting from the Government's Universal Infant Free School Meal scheme, applications are greatly encouraged as the means-tested free school meals, administered by Cambridgeshire County Council, are provided to all school-aged children and will also allow your child's school to receive [Pupil Premium](#), which is extra money to support children from families on lower incomes.

With recent changes to the benefit system due to the roll-out of Universal Credit, families may not necessarily realise that they qualify. Therefore, this is an optimum time to apply. Those families already in receipt of free school meals need not apply as their entitlement is protected until 31 March 2022 regardless of any change in family circumstances. However, applications will need to be made for younger siblings who are starting school.

Once an application has been submitted for a child, if the family do not qualify at that point, we will continue to check for future entitlement throughout that child's school life, informing parents if they become eligible.

The form can also be used to check entitlement for Early Years Pupil Premium (for 3 & 4 year olds) and free childcare for two-year-olds (up to 15 hours per week).

Fly-tipping

Local authorities are saying enough is enough, by joining hands and launching a county-wide campaign called **SCRAP** to address the issue of fly-tipping.

More than 11,000 incidents of fly-tipping were recorded across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in the last year alone.

RECAP the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership, has launched the campaign this month, to help fight the costly battle against fly-tipping in the county.

The campaign, which was initially developed by the Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, advises people to make sure that their waste is being taken away by a registered waste carrier, to a suitably licenced disposal site. This can be done by asking to see a Waste Carrier's Licence, and checking the company on the Environment Agency website before using them and obtaining a waste transfer note and invoice.

Anyone found to be involved in fly-tipping faces a hefty fixed-penalty notice of up to £400, or an unlimited fine. By following the simple **SCRAP** code these fines can be avoided:

- **S**uspect ALL waste carriers
- **C**heck with the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506 or their [website](#), that the provider taking your waste away is licensed
- **R**efuse unexpected offers to have waste taken away
- **A**sk what will happen to your waste
- **P**aperwork should be obtained – get a full receipt

A number of activities will take place across the county over the coming months - kick starting with the first events held by South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire Districts Council at the end of July.

For more information about the campaign, fly-tipping and legal ways to get rid of unwanted items, visit: www.recap.co.uk/fly-tipping

Greener future

A pledge has been made by Cambridgeshire County Council to deliver 100% clean energy by 2050 creating a greener future for young people.

Cllr Steve Count, Leader of the County Council, and Cllr Josh Schumann, Chair of the Commercial and Investment Committee, signed the [UK100 pledge](#) after General Purposes Committee at Shire Hall today where approval was also given for the Council's new corporate energy strategy.

By signing up to the UK100 network the Council is pledging to secure clean energy, relegating fossil fuels to the past as much as it can, and for Cambridgeshire to become part of an exciting smart new energy system.

UK100 is a network of highly ambitious local government leaders focused solely on climate change and clean energy policy. When tackling climate change, the move towards energy sustainability and zero carbon emissions will only be achieved if energy is supplied from renewables and low carbon fuels and energy is used more efficiently than it is now.

Cambridgeshire County Council as a member of UK100 plans to lead other rural authorities on a body of work - to find out what climate change concerns and solutions look like in rural communities and how to make energy change solutions work.

More renewable energy and battery storage is needed to support the Government's net zero carbon commitments by 2050 and deliver on the County Council's climate emergency declaration in May 2019. Agreeing the Council's Corporate Energy Strategy is a big step towards a greener future for us all and complements the recently approved Plastics Strategy.

The Council has more than two hundred public buildings, over 250 schools and manages significant farm estates and has so far invested £19million into energy projects including solar parks. With an investment programme of a further £55million

to deliver during the next few years, this will help Cambridgeshire move towards the new energy system our future needs.

Cities councils in order to learn from them and work to influence national policy.

For more information on what the Council is doing, visit the dedicated web page: www.mlei.co.uk/climate&environment.

Free sanitary products

Girls and women in Cambridge will now be able to pick up free sanitary products at Arbury Court Library as part of a new Period Poverty initiative launched yesterday.

Period Poverty is when women don't have access to basic sanitary products due to financial constraints, which can have a serious impact on their hygiene, health and wellbeing.

County Councillors Claire Richards and Jocelyne Scutt have worked with Cambridge City Council and Cambridge City Food Bank to launch the scheme in Arbury Court Library before expanding it to other public libraries in the city.

The library is a donation point where members of the public can donate sanitary items, as well as a collection point where women of all ages can come to pick up anything they need from a 'help yourself' box in the public toilet.

The scheme will be rolled out in more libraries across the city so that more women, of all ages and background, can benefit from it.

Cambridgeshire Libraries are hosting similar schemes run by volunteers and providing essential toiletries in Ramsey and Yaxley Libraries.

Sanitary products are also available for free in Cambridge Community Centres, which are listed on <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/community-centres>

Coroner Service

The Coroner Service annual report will be discussed at the Communities and Partnership Committee meeting

The Committee will review progress made over the past year as well as look at the current pressures on the service.

The service has had some noteworthy improvements, including the excellent working relationships with the new Medical Examiners in the area, such as the scheme at Addenbrooke's Hospital which is leading the way. A new case management system means less is being done in paper form and by post with a more digital focus.

The biggest challenge is around increasing workloads, the service is seeing a significant number of exceptionally complex deaths which can be difficult and time consuming to investigate and conclude, particularly from hospitals and prisons.

Although, the number of referrals has remained constant, there has been an increase in the number of highly complex cases. These cases have nearly doubled from 10.5% to 19.2%.

For these reasons and a range of other factors, the cost of the service is increasing. The committee will hear about an action plan to help with these demands.

Open Access technology in Cambridgeshire libraries

Work is about to begin to introduce Open Access (self-service) technology in Cambridgeshire libraries following a £1.1M capital investment.

Open Access will extend the times libraries are open and will enable local community groups, County Council staff, public sector and partner agency staff to increasingly use libraries as touchdown and meeting places, in line with the council's plans to locate its services closer to communities by making better use of its own buildings.

Over £1.1M of capital funding was agreed in the council's 2018 Business Plan to introduce open access and touchdown facilities into the nine largest libraries and a further 22 libraries across the county.

A version of this self-service technology has been running successfully as a pilot in St Ives Library since 2016, with almost 2,000 members registered and a total of 18,622 visits recorded during Open Access sessions. The technology allows registered members to use their library card as a swipe card to access the library outside of opening hours, and use the self-service systems to issue and return items, use public computers or meeting rooms.

Initial site visits are currently taking place in 31 libraries and the procurement process to appoint the contractor is under way. The programme is due to be rolled out in the next two years, with an ambition to install the technology in as many libraries as possible by the end of 2021.

- Open Access technology is in use in many libraries across the country and internationally, and there have been very few issues or damages. It's been well proven that people respect libraries and that the busier and better used the libraries are by communities, staff and partners, the less likely it is that there would be any problems.
- Safety concerns are also alleviated by comprehensive risk assessments which will be carried out in each library. A full CCTV system be in operation while libraries are in Open Access sessions, which will be monitored remotely.
- Currently only people aged 16 and over can register to access St Ives library in an Open Access session and this policy is likely to be extended across the network. Under 16s are welcome to come in to the library during unstaffed hours if they're accompanied by a parent or guardian who is registered.
- Open Access will increase the opening hours available to the public on a self-service basis. This initiative is not linked to any reduction in library staffing or staffed opening hours, which will remain at current levels.

Reduce reliance on plastic

Since Sir David Attenborough highlighted the devastating effect plastic is having on our environment, raised public awareness around the issue has seen an increase in people taking responsibility for their own actions in an attempt to reduce reliance on plastic.

Inspired by the goal of eliminating avoidable single-use plastics, Cambridgeshire County Councillor Anna Bailey asked the Council late last year if it would be possible for the organisation to commit to tackling avoidable waste, particularly plastic, as an estimated eight million tonnes of plastic waste enters the sea each year creating pollution.

An officer working group was set up to define what a [plastic strategy](#) could look like, and the resulting document was signed off by Full Council last month. The strategy focuses on key areas that can be influenced by the organisation to bring about positive change in the way that plastic is acquired, used and disposed of – both within the council, including staff as individuals, and as part of the procurement and delivery of services.

By setting out the Council's ambitions for acknowledging and changing corporate use of single-use plastics the hope is to provide a clear statement of leadership and commitment to delivering a greener and healthier Cambridgeshire.

The strategy will see the County Council encourage its nearly 5,000 staff to reduce and re-use plastics wherever possible before recycling. The strategy started with the removal of plastic bottles from office vending machines in January, and there is a plan to provide a guide for staff that will offer hints and tips for plastic-free lunches. This will include a directory listing local establishments where people can either take their own containers to fill or buy plastic-free lunch options to avoid adding unnecessarily to pollution.

Schools will also be provided with resources to enable them to deliver plastic-free lunch days and encouraged to download lesson plans to educate pupils and their parents.

As a Waste Disposal Authority, the Council already works closely with Waste Collection Authorities, to provide local households with sustainable options for waste management, and will continue to work in partnership to ensure that residents can make good choices about their plastic recycling.

The Council also recently signed the UK100 pledge, promising to deliver 100% clean energy for Cambridgeshire before 2050 and now plans to collaborate with other UK100 city councils in order to both learn from them and work together to influence national policy.

An overarching Climate Change & Environment Strategy to measure and reduce our carbon footprint, enable adaption to a changing climate and protect Cambridgeshire's natural capital, is currently being developed and more information will be available in the coming months.

For more information about what the Council is doing to tackle environmental challenges, please visit the [Climate Change and Environment pages](#) on the Mobilising Local Energy Investment (MLEI) website.

Applications for primary school places

Applications for primary school places in Cambridgeshire can now be submitted in September after the county council extended the window to give parents more time to apply.

The change from the usual November start date means that both primary and secondary school applications will be accepted from the same date: 12th September.

The application period for primary schools will close on 15th January, with the secondary school window closing on 31st October.

Parents are reminded to use all three of their preferences when applying for their child's school and to include their catchment school, which will give them the best chance of securing a place at a school close to their home.

This year, there was an increase in the total number of applications for primary school places with 6,890 applications for reception places at Cambridgeshire schools for September 2019- up from 6,763 last year.

However, the percentage of children offered a place at their parents' first preference school **went down from 95% last year to 92.5%** this year because applicants were only naming one school.

Jonathan Lewis, Service Director for Education, said: "I can't stress enough the importance that parents list all three preferences when applying for a primary school place as this will give them the best opportunity of securing their first preference.

"The extended window for applications will give parents more time to apply and decide which schools they would like their children to attend. It also brings the primary sector into line with the secondary."

Key Stage 4 GCSE results

Students in Cambridgeshire received their Key Stage 4 GCSE results yesterday (22 August) after sitting exams earlier this summer.

Over the past two years, the Department for Education has been rolling out the new GCSE syllabus. Exams are now graded from 9 (top) to 1 (bottom) with a grade 4 accepted as a standard pass (equivalent to the middle of a former grade C) and a grade 5 a good pass.

In Cambridgeshire more than 5,600 students sat the exams in schools across the county this year. In maths 74.6% of students achieved a grade from 4-9 (at least a standard pass) an increase of 0.6% on 2018 and 55% achieved at least a grade 5 (up 1%). This year 79% achieved at least a grade 4 in English, the same level as last year, with 64.3% achieving a strong pass (at least a grade 5) an improvement of 0.3%.

The proportion of students achieving a grade 4 or above in both English and mathematics in Cambridgeshire was 69%, 1% higher than last year, with 48.4% achieving a grade 5 or better (up 0.8%). National outcomes are not yet available as a comparison. Results are currently provisional as they don't take account of remarking or changes for pupils who are new to the country.

There has been a rapid improvement in the quality of our secondary schools which has been as a result of significant effort by all involved. **Four years ago, less than 50% of our schools were graded as good or better by Ofsted. This figure today sits at 93.5% of schools, 16th out of 150 local authorities nationally.**

Voting has officially opened!

We need your help to name Cambridgeshire's dragon patchers, as we mark their first year of service in the county.

Vote for your favourite two names using our online survey. The closing date to cast your votes is Monday 2 September 2019.

Throughout August, we have been asking residents across our social media channels to suggest names for our dragon duo. Just like their glitter pals – Gritney Spears, Brad Grit, Usain Salt and crew, we thought it's about time they were named too.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in our competition and suggested names for the dragon patchers.

A panel of judges, made up of representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council and Skanska, have narrowed down the 150 suggestions we received to a shortlist of five names.

The winning names will be revealed on social media on Thursday 19 September 2019. You can follow the competition using the hashtag #DragonsOfCambs and watch the naming ceremony live on our [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

Mark Howell
2, Vinter Close, Papworth Everard, Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB23 3RU
01480 831848 / 07816 925843
mark.howell@cambridgeshire.gov.uk