

## **March 2021 Parish Report**

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

### **Gratitude to Red Cross as charity leaves**

Tributes have been paid to volunteers from the British Red Cross as they vacate their Alconbury base this week.

The charity has been key to the Community Hub in the area – working alongside Cambridgeshire County Council and the NHS to support people who were shielding, ensuring the continuity of critical public services and helping the most vulnerable to benefit from community support.

Although the Red Cross is ending its work at the warehouse, the Community Hub will continue to offer services to those most in need throughout the COVID pandemic.

Over the past 12 months, the Red Cross has helped 4500 people receive their vaccinations and delivered over 141,000 lateral flow tests. Volunteers delivered over 3700 food parcels, and distributed more than 3000 information leaflets to advertise the extra support available.

The charity delivered nearly 2500 packs of PPE, as well as helping with the distribution of over 1200 laptops to enable students to work from home. They also made over 4300 welfare checks on the vulnerable and delivered 660 hygiene packs.

From early on in the pandemic, they set up two warehouse operations to manage the food and PPE supplies. They have supported countless vulnerable people throughout the pandemic and helped ensure vital care services were able to continue. This included establishing a complex distribution network, running 7 days a week throughout the last year and manned by volunteers.

### **Families reminded that extra support is available over the coming weeks**

The government has announced an extension of the Winter Grant Scheme to provide additional support to Cambridgeshire families until the end of the Easter holiday.

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

Cambridgeshire will receive £507,000 in government funding to support those in need of support at this difficult time and will receive an additional.

The scheme aims to support many people whose lives have become more difficult because of COVID-19 and will allow Cambridgeshire County Council to provide food vouchers to children during the Easter holiday. The extension will also allow the hub network to not only provide food vouchers to children, but to offer families financial help with utility bills and household items relating to warmth, hygiene and cooking.

The Winter Grant Scheme is available to families, children or young people who meet one of the below criteria:

- Funded childcare for 2-year-olds
- Early years pupil premium
- Care leavers
- Educational health and care plans
- Young carers

If children receive Free School Meals or are over 16 years old and receive a bursary, parents or the child don't need to do anything further – they will automatically receive £30 food vouchers on 26 March to cover the Easter holiday.

Jonathan Lewis, Director of Education for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said: "The funding extension is great news and will give many families in our region peace of mind over the next few weeks. Even though there is light at the end of the tunnel, people continue to struggle financially, and we are committed to doing all we can to support those in need, particularly children and young people who should never have to go hungry.

"To date, over 100,000 free school meal vouchers have been distributed to families in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough since the start of the pandemic. These figures go to show

the demand for help is there and I am pleased we will continue to provide vouchers for use over the next few weeks.

"This additional funding will allow the network of hubs, set up as a result of the pandemic across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, to continue to support those in need. Therefore, we want to encourage families to contact their local hub to understand what support is available in their local area."

## **Covid campaigns reach over 700,000**

A series of campaigns aimed at reminding people of the importance of lockdown has so far reached over 700,000 residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

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The #StandFirm campaign is made up of five films featuring people who have suffered the effects of COVID-19 and are urging others to stick to the rules.

Two other films – one for Cambridgeshire and one for Peterborough – were produced and acted by young people.

The #StandFirm films – commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council and paid for by ring-fenced Government funding – feature social workers, IT managers and a loneliness campaign manager.

Released over the past two months, each subject talks about catching COVID-19 and how several thought they were going to die and took many weeks to recover.

They were posted across social media channels - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The #StandFirm films alone reached 407,000 people with a total engagement of 54,000.

The Young People's films – Be Part of the Solution – had a reach of 52,500 in Cambridgeshire and a further 38,700 in Peterborough, with a total engagement of over 20,000.

An additional campaign – This Depends on Us – focussed on general advice throughout the pandemic and reached over 220,000 across both counties. The #Standfirm films can be seen on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough channels.

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough said: "These campaigns have played a vital part in encouraging people to stick to the rules of lockdown.

"The films feature real people – not actors – who have had first-hand experience either of catching COVID or in the case of the young people, living in a COVID world. While the future is looking brighter, the focus on COVID-safety will need to continue for some time, and the message from all these campaigns is the same - there is no room for complacency. It's still essential that we stick to the rules in order to progress along the government's road-map - which does depend on us."

## **Repair work to fix drought damaged roads across the county**

As part of a scheme to repair drought damaged roads across Cambridgeshire, more work will begin at the start of April.

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Work begins on B1104, Prickwillow Road and Putney Hill Road on Tuesday, 6 April. Repairs will also be carried out on B1040 Ramsey Road, Pondersbridge, on Thursday, 15 April and both projects are expected to be finished by the end of May.

These repairs are part of a larger scheme, as work started on B660 Long Drove, Holme in March and is expected to finish in April, as well as repairs to B1093 Fifty Road, Manea which is planned to finish in May.

The work will involve significant road reconstruction as they have been damaged by drought and as a result the foundations of these roads have deteriorated. Our contractor will need to dig deep to replace the foundations and once completed the roads will be more resilient against extreme weather.

General maintenance work will also be carried out at the same time with vegetation clearance, cleaning the drains, installing new signs and road markings.

Roads will be closed to all traffic with a signed diversion route in place for the duration of the work. Some work may also be carried out at weekends and access to properties will be maintained.

The scheme will be carried out safely while adhering to the Covid-19 government guidelines and health and safety measures, with workforces practising social distancing.

The reconstruction work will be carried out as quickly as possible and letters have been delivered to local residents and businesses directly affected by the work. Follow up letters confirming dates and diversions will also be sent before the scheme starts.

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