

District Council Report August 2023

Cllr. Shrobona Bhattacharya

My question to the July Full Council Meeting:

Could the Leader of the Council please provide an update on the progress of the Cambourne High Street project in today's Full Council Meeting?

Four days working week

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) hit the national headlines recently with stories on the BBC, ITV, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Daily Mail and other media outlets regarding its controversial trial of a four day working week on full pay for its office staff. South Cambridgeshire is the first council in the UK to experiment with introducing four-day working week.

Local Government Minister Lee Rowley warned SCDC in a recent letter that giving staff an extra day off each week is unlikely to provide value for money to taxpayers. He said: "Whilst some private sector organisations may choose to experiment with their own capital and capacity regarding 'four-day working weeks', local government should not do the same." He said such an approach could breach the council's legal duties under the Local Government Act. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will "shortly be issuing clear guidance" on the matter, he added.

Despite receiving this warning, the leadership of the council are continuing with their experiment and its extension to bin collection crews. The trial will start later in the summer and will mean that collection days for many villages are changed as Monday is the new 'day off' for all collection staff. The Council has advertised for extra collection crews, as employee numbers need to be expanded to do five days' work in four. The direct cost to council taxpayers of having to employ more staff and buy more bin lorries to collect waste in four days rather than five would be over £100,000 in the first year, rising to over £200,000 in the second year. The council claims to be able recover these increased costs through lower levels of staff absence and reduced use of agency staff.

The council has not been operating a regular office working environment since Covid, having kept the overwhelming majority of office staff working from home every day. Many private sector businesses have increased home working since then too, but many also have one or two days in the week when staff go in. Face to face contact is important for productivity and employee morale, especially for newer or younger staff who need to learn their roles from more experienced colleagues. Councillors don't have access to a list of home telephone numbers for staff, and this means that matters that could be resolved with a quick telephone call must now become long drawn-out email correspondences.

Cambridgeshire quality of life survey

Cambridgeshire County Council has launched a survey to understand residents' views on the quality of their lives. The annual survey aims to track the responses over time to see how changes to council decisions and policies – and the work of other public sector bodies in the county - affect people's views, and to give Members vital insight when they make business planning decisions.

In addition to an online survey, they will be pro-actively calling 5,500 residents. The 15-minute telephone survey – run by an independent market research company Thinks Insight and their partner Team Search - aims to speak to 1,100 people aged 18+ living in each of the five Cambridgeshire district areas – broadly representing each area's population. In addition, they will talk to people from specific groups who are less often heard from, including people who may have been homeless or are from migrant or Gypsy/Roma/Traveller communities. The Council is also planning a specific piece of work with younger people via youth engagement teams.

The online survey is available until Friday 4th August, and can be filled out at: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey. They have not provided a way for residents to request a paper copy.

Digital switchover: replacement of copper telephone lines

The Local Government Association (LGA) has recently launched a toolkit for partners to use to raise awareness of the digital switchover for their residents and communities. It can be accessed at: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/digital-switchover/digital-switchover-partner-toolkit.

The telecommunications industry is replacing all old copper telephone lines in the UK, and it hopes to upgrade to a fully digital internet-based service by 2025. Councils have a critical role to play in the digital switchover to implement the solutions required to support residents and prevent impact on their day-to-day lives. Devices such as personal alarms and health monitoring systems, as well as plug-in telephones could be affected. The toolkit contains resources to use on social media, plus draft copy for websites and bulletins. The LGA has also recently added to the toolkit a poster with space for a partner logo and space for a few lines of local contact information to help councils with communications locally. This first wave of communications aims to educate those around 'telecare' users. The next stage is to have a printable newsletter template for partners to distribute directly to residents who may be digitally excluded, or for use in libraries and community hubs. Department for Science, Innovation & Technology (DSIT) will be talking about the digital switchover and the LGA will highlight their toolkit at DLUHC's Local Comms meeting next week. Councils should visit the LGA's digital switchover hub linked above if they are interested in the toolkit. If you any questions, please contact: socialcaredigital@local.gov.uk

Walking and cycling prescription trial funding allocations published

Funding allocations for each of the 11 councils taking part in a £13.9 million trial that enables health workers to prescribe walking and cycling to patients have been published on 7 July by Active Travel England (ATE). The active travel social prescribing scheme, which was launched in August 2022, is helping councils start a range of projects that will evaluate the

impact of active travel on an individual's physical and mental health, such as through reduced demand for health care appointments and reliance on medication due to more physical activity. ATE has also today published the breakdown of funding for its £32.9 million capability fund, initially announced in January. This investment will help 78 councils in England design, develop and consult on active travel schemes that work for residents. The funding will also be used to deliver training and engagement activities that give people the choice to walk, wheel and cycle.

HSE's guidance on running events safely this summer – reminder.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) website has a selection of guidance about running events safely this summer. Large-scale outdoor events such as festivals, sporting events and concerts are increasingly popular, regularly attracting large crowds of people. HSE's guidance provides some additional advice for organisers to help them run such events safely. HSE's website also includes guidance for organisers on how to plan, manage and monitor an event as well as guidance on how to manage crowds safely. Councils are encouraged to share this information where appropriate.

Police and Crime Commissioner giving victims a voice

POLICE and Crime Commissioner Darryl Preston has launched a new survey asking the public how offenders of anti-social and nuisance behaviour should be punished. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough PCC unveiled the consultation as part of his responsibility to give local people and victims of crime a greater say on policing and increase their trust and confidence in the justice process. The Community Remedy, introduced as part of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014, is a list of actions that can be considered by police in conjunction with victims of crime in order to deal with someone's offending where anti-social behaviour or less serious crime is dealt with out of court. It encourages the offender to face up to the consequences of their behaviour, take responsibility for their actions and recognise the harm they have brought. Community Remedy will only be used where certain conditions are met, including that both victim and perpetrator must agree to the process and the offence must be admitted and evidenced. The survey asks people to select from a range of punitive options that reflect the impact on the victim, address the perpetrator's behaviour and provide appropriate amends. They include a written or verbal apology, work to repair damage caused, and referral for support to an external organisation.

A link to the online survey can be found here: [The Police & Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire | Community Remedy \(cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](#).

Further information about Community Remedy is available on the Commissioner's website here: [The Police & Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire | Community Remedy \(cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](#).

The survey closed at 5pm on Friday 21 July.

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