

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Report to Parish Councils October 2016

There was no meeting of **Council** since my last report. The next one will be held on 18 October. Items on the agenda include consideration of recommendations from General Purposes Committee relating to the Draft Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Capital Strategy. Motions from Councillors cover various subjects including Minor Injuries Units, the relationship between the County Council and the CCG and NHS funding. The meeting of Council to consider the Devolution Deal, originally planned for October, has been postponed until 15 November. Agenda pack for 18 October meeting: bit.ly/2dFO1Dv

In support of the County Council's efforts to manage the Adult Social Care budget **General Purposes Committee** approved an investment of £260k for the expansion of the use of assistive technology in the care and assessment of older people. This initiative comprises two phases. Phase 1 involves investing to expand the use of 'Just Checking' [or similar] equipment. This gives a full report of a person's movements during a given period. Longer term Phase 2 of the strategy will involve a partnership project to establish an enhanced response service for more complex incidents involving social care service users. The committee also approved the outline business case and savings proposals for renegotiation of the Council's waste disposal contract. A full business case and details of savings will be considered by a steering group before being brought back to General Purposes Committee. Agenda/decisions/minutes: bit.ly/2ee2lrN

All the service committees are now beginning their consideration of budget proposals for 2017/18. There is still a way to go until Council is presented with a budget proposal [will it take 12 hours to get it through as it did last year?] but budgets are currently framed on the assumption that the Council will levy the 2% allowed by Government for Adult Social Care but not increase its portion of general Council Tax. The Council has made £68m worth of savings over the last 2 years. Total savings required over the 5 year period [to 2021/22] of the business plan amount to £99m with £29m being required in 2017/18. Despite this, at this first stage some proposed savings have proved to be unacceptable to some of the service committees.

Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee specifically requested that the proposals to (i) reduce service levels in Archives and (ii) remove community grants be withdrawn from their proposed Business Planning savings and that the proposal to reduce Community Resilience and Development delivery work be reviewed. Agenda pack and decisions: bit.ly/2e8RmMM

Children & Young People Committee was particularly concerned about the budget for Looked After Children. Members noted the identified pressures in the placements budget and associated savings proposals and agreed that these need to be addressed through the wider business planning process. They gave their 'strongest support' for pursuing the achievement of a realistic budget for Looked After Children. They also asked in relation to Children's Centres that more detail on the precise nature of where potential reductions would fall, both in terms of buildings and staff, be brought back to a future meeting before any budget decisions are made. Agenda pack and decisions: bit.ly/2ee6coT

Economy & Environment Committee debated the impacts of withdrawing funding for community transport. These would be keenly felt in our rural villages and particularly in areas of high deprivation. Cuts would affect the old and the young and would limit study and employment options. Lack of transport increases social isolation which in turn impacts on both mental and physical health. Members of the committee asked that savings on all budget lines relating to community transport be removed and GPC be asked to reconsider means of reinstating this funding. I suggested that this impacts more than just E&E's responsibilities and funding should be considered in that light. Agenda pack: bit.ly/2ekbHOF

Adults Committee made no specific requests for items to be removed but I made the point that the County Council cannot expect to make savings through cutting services it provides, rely on 'Community Resilience' to take up some of these responsibilities and then cut budgets to those voluntary organisations that are the mainstay of community resilience. I am not a member of H&CI committee but applaud their request to have the removal of community grants withdrawn from their budget [as above]. Agenda pack: bit.ly/2dTmCzx

A final point in relation to budgets: the Government has launched a technical consultation on the 2017/18 local government financial settlement. It contains a proposal to introduce a referendum requirement for large parish councils that increase council tax above a, to be determined, threshold. It would appear that no parishes in South Cambs would be caught by the requirement as proposed but views are being sought on widening this requirement to all parish councils. Details: bit.ly/2dOejXL The deadline for responding to the consultation is 28 October 2016.

The **Greater Cambridge City Deal** [GCCD] proposals for the A428 Cambourne to Cambridge Better Bus Journeys continue to court criticism. The meetings of both the Assembly and the Board attracted good attendance and received some well considered input from local residents and organisations. Despite the Board's determination to pursue its preferred route [off road], it did agree to request detailed work be carried out on an on road scheme. Assembly agenda pack: bit.ly/2e5qMVF Board agenda pack: <http://bit.ly/2dvU1yb>

Apart from the GCCD proposals on tackling congestion in Cambridge, the City Council is also proposing a solution: increasing car parking charges. It is currently inviting comments on its proposed hikes to charges. You may well like to have a say: bit.ly/2dUW4iR

The City of London Police, in partnership with Get Safe Online, has put together a **National Cyber Crime Survey**. Its purpose is to learn about people's awareness of online safety and experiences of cybercrime, with a view to improving its knowledge and understanding and to help provide an improved response to victims. The results will help police forces gain a better idea of the challenges they are facing. If you have a few minutes to spare please go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CybercrimeSurvey2016>

This weekend is the 185th anniversary of the **Special Constabulary**. They are a much valued and well trained resource and in the 12 months to March this year Specials worked nearly 10,000 shifts in Cambridgeshire, amounting to just over 66,000 hours of duty. Times have moved on since the longest serving Special first started 37 years ago. He was given his uniform on a Tuesday, sworn in two days later and was on football match duty at the weekend. Given no training he was handed a truncheon, pair of handcuffs and a whistle! Today's Specials are properly trained to do the same job as regular officers.

Many parish councils and local community organisations have now installed life-saving defibrillators. Recently the Government has warned that a relative few have been shown to have a design fault and has urged that checks are made on the functioning of two types of widely distributed models made by the same US manufacturer: Physio-Control. The models which may be affected are LIFEPAK CR PLUS or LIFEPAK EXPRESS.

I look forward to seeing you at your October meetings. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have comments or questions about the contents of this report or any other local matter.

Lynda

lyndaharford@icloud.com; 01954 251775/07889 131022; Follow me on Twitter: @2whit2whoo