

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Report - May 2017

There have been very few meetings at the County Council since my last report due to this being an election year. The diary published on the website shows no meetings at all in May before 23 when **Council** will meet for the first time in 4 years with one group holding a majority. This will no doubt influence the way the Council works in future although the committee system that was introduced 3 years ago will endure for at least another 2. Whilst the change from a cabinet to committee system was delivered through the combined efforts of all but the largest group at that time, there has been acknowledgement that generally it has worked well. This year's election created not just a majority group but also saw the survival of only 3 of the 5 political groups that previously made up the County Council. At the May meeting members of the trimmed down Council [61 down from 69] will elect its Leader, Chairman and Vice Chairman.

The **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority** [CA] met on 26 April; its last meeting before the new Mayor was elected. The CA approved its constitution which had been prepared in two phases. Phase 1 relates to the essential elements for holding meetings and for decision making [approved at the CA Board's first meeting on 20 March 2017]. Phase 2 includes the functions of the Mayor, the budget framework, contract standing orders, the officer scheme of delegation, codes of conduct and internal procedural rules. The parts relating to the Mayor came into effect following the Mayoral election and the parts relating to the Overview & Scrutiny and Audit & Governance Committees came into effect on 8th May 2017.

The constitution includes arrangements for an Employment Committee. The clear governance arrangements and process for employing staff are broadly similar to a local authority model. Contract procedure rules have also been established and provide a visible and accountable process with clear benchmarking. Following discussion at the previous meeting 'observer' status has been amended to 'co-opted member' status to better reflect the contribution being sought from these key partners. The constitution contains a schedule that will be updated annually to specify co-opted members.

The Shadow Overview & Scrutiny Committee had, as requested by the CA, considered the section of the constitution relating to scrutiny arrangements and the CA's financial definition of a key decision. It had agreed with the Board's proposal to set the financial limit for key decisions at £500,000. It had also agreed with the proposal to set the call-in limit at 5 members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. It had, however, agreed that these limits should be reviewed after the local and mayoral elections and once the Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been formally established.

It was confirmed that the CA had received the first tranche of DCLG funding on 20 March amounting to £40.5m in total. These funds have been put on short term deposit in accordance with the Board's approved Treasury Management and Investment Strategy. The 2017/18 highways maintenance block has been received and the funds will be transferred to Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council as agreed previously by the Board. The sum of £1.155m shown in the Pothole Action Fund for Cambridgeshire County Council is additional to the £2.5m funding which the County Council has allocated to address potholes, grass verge maintenance and associated works. I am trying to clarify what this additional funding might mean for us locally.

Full details: <http://bit.ly/2reElqF>

A belt and braces type extraordinary meeting of the **Health & Wellbeing Board** [H&WB] was held on 27 April. This was required to deal with a difficulty typically encountered at election time. In view of the fact that approval of the Better Care Fund plan will be required very soon after the elections and that the Chairman of the H&WB may not have been appointed in time, members of the current board were being asked to approve the outline approach of the plan and delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to finalise and sign it off. At the time of the meeting only the Government's Policy Framework was available to inform work on the County Council's plan. The detailed guidance necessary to complete it, including funding allocations and performance metric detail, were still awaited. Some changes in approach are though indicated in the framework.

The Better Care Fund [BCF] supports implementation of the Care Act, reablement and provision of carers' breaks. The framework indicates that funding will continue to be routed through the BCF to the responsible local authorities and is to be used to 'contribute to the maintenance of adult social care services which also have a health benefit'. Additionally new funding for social care [as announced in the Spring Budget 2017 and the previously announced 'Improved BCF' funding] will also be routed to this pooled budget. The number of national conditions which apply to the funding look to be reduced from 8 to 4. One of these is the proviso that plans must be jointly agreed by local organisations and approved by the Health & Wellbeing Board. One is new and reflects the much publicised problems with delayed transfers of care which are a cause of bed blocking in the NHS.

Full details: <http://bit.ly/2qiZKPt>

On the planning front: the **Joint Development Control Committee - Fringes** approved a reserved matters application for pedestrian and cycling access from the now mostly built out Clay Farm development to Shelford Road.

Marking a real milestone for South Cambridgeshire's new town the first residents of **Northstowe** moved in during April.

As always I welcome your questions and comments on the foregoing and any other local or strategic matter in which you are interested.

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