

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Report July 2018

There was no meeting of the **County Council** in June. The next one is scheduled for 17 July and for those who would like a preview of what Members will be considering, the agenda pack is available at: <https://bit.ly/2KKIYHp>

Commercial & Investment Committee's [C&I] agenda included a decision on the appointment of a replacement director for the County Council's legal officer who has now left the authority. The decision was to replace him with a councillor but not one who serves on the C&I committee. Agenda, decisions and minutes at: <https://bit.ly/2J68D6F>

Following my reference last month to the increasing number of children being taken into the care of the County Council there may be some of you who are interested in the Council's role as Corporate Parent. The **Corporate Parenting Sub-committee** meets regularly to oversee this role and the agenda, decision statement and minutes for its June meeting can be accessed at: <https://bit.ly/2KUo2fb>

The **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority's** [CPCA] agenda for its June meeting included approval of the Community Land Trust [CLT] Strategy. This will see the development of a strategic model to deliver CLT schemes across the whole Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area and an assessment of the total loan facility required. Meanwhile the CPCA will engage with the Treasury to understand its position with regards to the cap applied to CPCA borrowing as well as the relevant rules and requirements on borrowing for this purpose. There are of course benefits to bringing forward housing through these community schemes not the least of which is the control that the community has over the development and the subsequent allocation of affordable homes that are part of those schemes. However, they are slow to bring forward and may provide no more affordable units than commercial developments do. SCambs DC is to be applauded for its continuing work with Housing Associations and on building its own homes. The need for affordable homes can only be met through looking at all options for delivery. Agenda pack and decision summary at: <https://bit.ly/2u5pvpA>

Highways maintenance is something of interest to a great many. **Highways & Community Infrastructure Committee's** agenda for Tuesday 10 July [tomorrow at the time of writing this report] includes a report which reviews the first nine months of the Highway Service contract between Cambridgeshire County Council and Skanska and summarises performance and achievement. Committee will also be considering a report on Traffic Signals Design & Operational Guidance following an audit on all signal installations carried out by the **Greater Cambridge Partnership** [GCP] in collaboration with the County Council. The audit has reviewed the current situation and assessed the potential for improvement at each site. A new guidance document on signal design and operation has been jointly prepared by the traffic signals team and the GCP. This focuses on improving the movement of people rather than on the management of vehicle queues which has tended to be the key factor in signals management in the past. It will inform and influence a future GCP signal upgrade investment plan as well as other signal infrastructure projects that are undertaken by the County Council and by developers. Following scrutiny by the GCP Joint Assembly and Executive Board, Committee will be asked to approve the new guidance. How the guidance is applied across the wider county highway network will be managed by the Council as Highways Authority under the Traffic Management Act 2004. A flexible approach is recommended to best reflect circumstances such as road hierarchy and even air quality and achieve a pragmatic balance between competing movement demands. Prioritisation of sustainable transport modes over motor vehicles is likely to be more significant in city and town centres than in suburban and more rural locations. Agenda pack: <https://bit.ly/2udaMrQ>

On the subject of highway maintenance, I know that some of you are preparing to put in an application to the **Local Highways Improvements** scheme. Please remember that the deadline for applications is Tuesday 31 July. Please let me know if you need my support but please don't miss this opportunity.

You will recall that I have previously reported on the financial challenges that our **local schools** wrestle with due to the inequity of government funding. Cambridgeshire is one of the worst funded education authorities in England. The county receives £400 less per child than the average funded authority and £1,600 less per child than Westminster. The rural nature of the county means that there are a high number of small village schools that have been seriously disadvantaged by the introduction of a National Funding Formula which has meant a cut from £150,000 to £110,000 in the lump sum allocation for each school. That cut roughly equates to the full cost of a teacher. The High Needs budget is also under enormous pressure with an increasing number of children presenting with high needs and the complexity of those needs also escalating. Funding for early years childcare is also stretched as Government funding levels for 30 hours of 'free' childcare does not cover the actual cost of delivery. Funding for the county's schools has not kept pace with inflation over recent years and although two-thirds of Cambridgeshire schools saw a modest increase in funding for 2018-19 this has been completely eroded by increasing costs including salary and pension increases, growing recruitment costs, inflation and the Apprenticeship Levy. Cambridgeshire's Schools Forum met on 06 July and is calling on the Secretary of State for Education to increase funding for all the county's early years, primary, secondary and special schools. Parents, students, school staff and others who care about our schools are asked to show their support for the campaign by signing and sharing the Government petition which can be accessed at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/211156>.

Following news of a couple of awards last month it seems that achieving such success is becoming a habit for the Council. Its Energy Investment Unit has won a British Renewable Energy Award for its pioneering approach to energy work. The Council's award was for its work on smart energy grid innovations, its energy strategy and the delivery of over forty projects involving schools and the upskilling of staff and politicians to facilitate more strategic development of, and investment in energy projects.

The Council has also been awarded £20,000 by NHS Digital and the Local Government Association in the first 'discovery' phase of funding for an innovative pilot project to help people with serious health conditions take their medication. Cambridgeshire County Council is one of just twelve councils chosen out of a total of eighty-two who applied to explore how technology can help shape the future of social care.

I look forward to receiving any questions or comments that you have about these or any other matters either at your July meetings or by email. Most of our Parish Councils don't meet in August so my best wishes to you all for the summer recess. I hope you all get an opportunity to enjoy some valuable down time with your families and friends.

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