
Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton) Cllr Michael Atkins February 2024

Highlights

- County Budget
- Measles outbreaks
- 20mph zone – funding window opens
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News from the County

Changes to council membership

Councillors from all parties were saddened to hear of the death of Cllr McGuire (Yaxley & Farcet, Hunts) who was the longest serving member of the council and held a number of roles during that time. I will miss his contributions to the Children & Young Peoples committee especially. A by-election will be held in due course.

Budget

The Council will be setting its budget at a special meeting later this month. The core proposals see an increase in council expenditure, particularly for Adult and Children social care, and additional investments in Highways, offset against the various monies (new and old) from central government and a 5% increase in Council tax. There are a number of proposed amendments, including allocating some recently announced government funding, so I will update you fully on the outcome in my next report.

Measles

Measles cases have been rising nationally over the last few months, with the outbreak declared an official incident on 19th January. Measles is highly infectious: for example, if a child in a class has it, unvaccinated children have a 90% chance of catching it.

So far the outbreak has not spread to Cambridgeshire but we must expect it to do so. The following advice has been issued:

- Parents should have their children vaccinated if they have not already done so
- Residents should call their GP or 111 if measles is suspected, or if a vulnerable person has been in contact with a confirmed case. Typical symptoms: high fever, red and watery eyes, blotchy red-brown rash
- Isolating when asked to do so is important if the outbreak is to be contained

Weeds policy

The Council has reverted to the previous approach to tackling weeds, i.e. a twice-yearly weed killing spray. Communities which do not want this will be able to opt out in favour of manual removal by volunteers. We believe is the right compromise between safety on our transport routes, and respecting those communities which object to chemical weed spraying.

20mph zone funding reopens

The 2024/25 round of funding for 20mph zones has now opened, both for new and resubmitted applications. The deadline for submissions is 5pm on 15th March. The website has been updated with the latest details and advice here: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/20mph-funding>

News from GCP & Combined Authority

Haslingfield Greenway

At its meeting last month, the GCP Executive Board approved the route of the Haslingfield Greenway. Whilst I am supportive of the aims of this project, and excited to see better cycling options for villages to the south of Cambridge, I am disappointed that they have not agreed with the village or my own intervention to consider off-road routes around Grantchester village instead of through it. I will continue to work closely with the Parish Council as further details and designs are published.

Mayoral precept

The Mayor has proposed to increase his precept on the Council tax to £36/year (for a reference band D property). This is intended to subsidise a number of local bus services, including the Citi4 and 28. The Authority is continuing to develop proposals for some form of bus franchising which will enable a greater degree of political and local control over bus routes, but in the meantime these cash subsidies are necessary to prevent a significant reduction in the bus network.

News from the District

East West Rail

I have been informed that EWR co. intend to hold two statutory consultations this year, one to share new designs and proposed environmental mitigations, and a second with the final proposal for the whole route. Dates are not yet available. More information can be found here: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/news/latest-stories/preparing-for-dco>

Civil Parking Enforcement

Following a lot of work behind the scenes, civil parking enforcement officers have started work in South Cambridgeshire. Parking offences have mostly been decriminalised so that officers can issue penalty charge notices (tickets) in instances such as parking on single or double yellow lines. Dangerous parking and obstructing the footway will continue to be a police matter.

Patrols are initially focusing on areas of high parking demand, such as around railway stations, but this will evolve over time as we seek to tackle bad parking across the whole district. If there are particular hot spots in your parishes, please let me know and I will contact the relevant team.

Contact Details

Councillors and residents are welcome to contact me on any issue which is concerning them:

<p>Cllr Michael I. Atkins matkinslibdem@gmail.com https://www.facebook.com/cllrmichaelatkins 07968 264637</p>
