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# Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton) Cllr Michael Atkins September 2023

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## Highlights

- Contact information

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## *News from the County*

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### RAAC (concrete) in schools

A Government order to schools to immediately shut buildings made with aerated RAAC concrete until safety work can be undertaken has been prominent in the news as term starts. RAAC is a lightweight, bubbly form of concrete usually found in roofs and occasionally in walls and floors. It looks like standard concrete but is weaker, less durable, deteriorates over time, and is also prone to collapse when wet.

Fortunately as of the start of this month all but three of Cambridgeshire's schools have been surveyed and no RAAC has been found. The Council has no concerns about the remaining schools but at the time of writing each requires a survey to rule out RAAC. Following assessments and surveys, the County Council has also been able to confirm that none of its public buildings have been found to contain RAAC.

### School uniforms

Towards the end of last term I became aware of the significant issues around school uniform, particularly where school policies are over-prescriptive and require lots of branded items. As a result of a motion I brought to the council, we are now gathering data on how this is affecting families across the County, and will be briefing school governors to remind them of the new statutory guidance to reduce the cost of uniforms. I would welcome any further insight or examples from residents.

### Special free schools

The Government has given the go-ahead for Cambridgeshire County Council to establish two new special free schools in the county. One is a 210-place, multiple needs school in March and the other a 60-place school in Gamlingay for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

Cambridgeshire has already invested £60m in creating 150 new special school places at new or existing schools, but more are needed. The Gamlingay school, which will be on the site previously occupied by the former Gamlingay First School, is due to open in September 2025 and will admit 60 pupils with SEMH.

## LHI applications

I was delighted to see that both Grantchester and The Eversdens LHI applications, for improved signage and MVAS scheme respectively, were successful, and I look forward to these “non-complex” schemes being implemented quickly. A 20 mph scheme has also recently been installed in Toft.

## Priorities capital fund

A reminder that this fund is open until 24 September, for bids of up to £40,000 for capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets.

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshirepriorities-capital-fund](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshirepriorities-capital-fund)

## Weeds

I’m aware of complaints about weeds in various parts of the district and across the county. The County Council’s current Highways Operational Standards state that the Council will apply weed killer using a targeted approach at agreed locations identified on the basis of risk, rather than cyclically as before. This policy affects about 30 per cent of the highway network in Cambridgeshire, as only kerbed urban areas were previously cyclically treated for weeds. The County Council’s policy remains to remove hazardous weeds, or weeds causing safety issues or nuisance. Where the use of chemical weed killer is part of wider maintenance activity it is still carried out—for example weeds should be cleared before slurry sealing footways or surface treating carriageways.

## Have you thought about becoming a foster carer?

I recently attended the Children in Care Awards Ceremony at Burgess Hall, St Ives and met so many of our bright, fun-loving children and young people in care. I also met and had the opportunity to thank some of the wonderful foster carers who support and love these children and offer them a stable home, for a while or long-term, so they can grow in confidence and follow their dreams. You can find details about the different type of fostering here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering-and-adoption>

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# News from GCP & Combined Authority

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## Sustainable Travel Zone

Following last autumn’s public consultation on the GCP’s proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone in Cambridge including a congestion charge, GCP officers have drawn up revisions to the proposals. These include:

- A reduction in the hours of operation to morning and evening peaks only
- No charge for motorcycles
- A discount for local small and medium size businesses
- A discount for those on low incomes
- Fifty ‘free days’ per household

Your councillors are currently considering if these revised proposals go far enough to allay the concerns of local residents, and I expect to share further updates later in the autumn.

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# News from the District

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## Changes to bin collections

From 18<sup>th</sup> September many residents will have a change in either their bin day and/or sequence of collections. Bins may also be collected earlier in the day than previously as teams will be working from 6am. Letters will be sent to all addresses where there is a change. These changes will spread the work between teams more evenly following various new developments in the district, and better accommodate our electric vehicle fleet. It will also concentrate collections over four days as part of the ongoing trial, with an additional benefit that rotas will be much less impacted by future bank holidays.

## Updated bus timetables

Stagecoach have given us notice that the following routes are now running to new timetables:

- Citi 2, Milton-Cambridge
- Citi 5, Longstanton-Bar Hill-Cambridge
- Route 8a, Orchard Park-Cambridge
- Route 25, Trumpington P&R-Babraham P&R
- Busway A, St Ives-Cambridge

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## Contact Details

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

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