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

Highlights

- Quality of life survey
- LHI applications open
- 4DW update
- Battery disposal
- Contact information

News from the County

Quality of life survey results

Most Cambridgeshire residents feel happy and safe in the county, well connected to their local communities, and believe it's a great place to raise children.

That's the headline finding of the County Council's first annual Quality of Life survey involving more than 5,500 residents. But the news is less good for some specific groups, with a stark finding that loneliness in Cambridgeshire is far higher than the national average. Loneliness was most likely to be reported by those aged 18 to 25, who also reported more struggles with their mental health.

The survey found the council itself plays a relatively trusted role in residents' lives, with just over half of residents trusting it to make decisions. Residents' views about whether the council acts on their concerns and delivers value for money were in line with Local Government Association averages for England. Satisfaction with council services was mixed—highest across library, waste management, street lighting, and registration services, and lowest in road and pavement maintenance. Residents reported high concerns about the cost of living and many said they were changing their behaviour because of it. 48 per cent have cut back on heating use, 27 per cent have cut back on nutritious food, eight per cent have used a foodbank and nine per cent have stopped using prescription medicines. The council intends to run the survey again next year.

LHI applications open

The next round of LHI applications is now open until 12th January 5pm. More information can be found on

- Application form and associated guidance – [Applying for a Local Highway Improvement \(LHI\) - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)
- Measures and indicative costs – [Local Highway Improvement funding - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

There are also drop in sessions on the 9th Nov and 5th January if you require guidance – please contact me for the details.

20mph schemes—the next round

The council plans to reopen the window for new applications for 20mph funding from Monday 15 January 2024, and close it on Friday 15 March 2024 at 5:00PM. There was intense interest from parish councils in this opportunity, showing how much popular support there is for road safety and speed reduction initiatives. In the meantime, the council plans to review and update its 20MPH website pages to provide additional information and assistance to applicants.

Budget planning

The Council is currently preparing a full budget for the next financial year, alongside forecasts for the subsequent four years. The estimated budget gap for 2024/25 currently stands at £23m due to high demand for statutory services (adult and children's social care, plus home to school transport) and other inflationary pressures. This pattern is being repeated right across local government, particularly for County Councils and other upper-tier authorities.

We continue to scrutinise the Council's spend to reduce inefficient or unneeded spending, though after the last few years we are already pretty much at the 'bone' of what the Council has to provide.

Next stage approval for Children's hospital

Cambridge Children's Hospital, which will be the first specialist children's hospital for the East of England, has been given the green light to proceed to the final stage of its business case development. The hospital, which was awarded planning permission in March 2022, is being built on the Biomedical Campus, and will care for children and young people across the whole of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It will be the first hospital designed to truly provide mental and physical health care together, delivered by staff who are trained in both. While the hospital will be built in Cambridge it will act as a central hub, working with services all over the East of England to provide care and support for children who may never visit the hospital itself.

News from GCP & Combined Authority

C2C busway update

Delivery of the C2C busway is currently on hold. C2C is bound-up with delivery of the Bourne Airfield housing development (they both depend on each other), and the Environment Agency have objected to further major housing developments until water availability can be improved across the region, thus temporarily pausing both schemes.

News from the District

4-day-week trial latest

Government minister Lee Rowley has now served a 'Best Value Notice' on the council following our refusal to cancel the 4DW trial. The data so far suggests the trial has saved the council money; improved recruitment and retention; reduced levels of sick leave; and improved staff motivation, mental and physical health. I therefore continue to believe that the trial should run its course before a full, comprehensive and public review.

Battery disposal

The Council is supporting the national Take Charge campaign, which aims to tackle the serious problem of recycling and waste fires caused by carelessly discarded “zombie batteries”. The campaign urges people across the UK to Recycle Batteries Responsibly by using specialist battery and electrical device recycling services, which will help reduce the growing number of serious fires started by carelessly discarded batteries.

Although safe to use normally, lithium-ion batteries are particularly prone to causing fires or explosions if they are not recycled properly. These batteries are most commonly found in products like laptops, tablets, mobile phones, radio-controlled toys, Bluetooth devices, shavers, electric toothbrushes, power tools, scooters and even e-cigarettes.

To recycle dead batteries in South Cambridgeshire place them in a small plastic bag, tie it closed and place it on top of your wheelie bin lid for our recycling or waste crews to collect. You can leave batteries on top of black, green or blue bins.

Asset of Community Value – The Orchard Tea Garden, Grantchester

The land and buildings of the Orchard Tea Garden have been added to the list of Assets of Community Value.

Draft Homeless Strategy out to consultation

The Council will be consulting on its new draft Homeless Strategy (2023-2028) between now and the 5th of January. A review of homelessness within the district has been completed, which looks at the numbers and trends relating to homelessness within the district as well as the factors affecting this. This helps to inform the Homeless Strategy, which sets out how the Council plans to respond to and tackle homelessness within the district over the next five year period, with the priorities coming under two main headings: homeless prevention, early intervention and support; and to provide suitable housing options.

The Homeless Review and Homeless Strategy consultation documents can be found on our website <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/homeless-strategy>.

Contact Details

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

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