

County Report March 2012

Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) Strategy

The assessment methodology and the HCV management strategy has now been adopted by Cabinet and this strategy will facilitate and inform the ways in which the County Council supports local communities in addressing concerns over the impact of lorry movements. Parish Councils have been informed of the new strategy and further work is in hand on web based resources to facilitate engagement and to support local communities in assessing their HCV issues.

Road Safety Partnership

The operation of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Road Safety Partnership is being reviewed in light of the various changes made or being made within various partnership organisations. The issues being addressed will include:

- the future remit of the Partnership Board
- how the combined resources of the Partners can be best utilised
- the implications of the tri-force police collaboration in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire
- how the health sector can best support casualty reduction work
- a joined up and holistic casualty reduction plan

Path Management

Contract schedules are currently being drawn up for the cutting of over 700 miles of the county's path network. Over 50 landowners/occupiers undertake cutting, special cuts are in place for protected sites which are grant aided by Natural England and the remaining paths being cut by County Council contractors or through our 80 Parish Path Partnerships. Several of the Teams contractors have agreed to forgo the inflation element of the contract, cutting at last years prices. This shows a significant saving on the Councils limited budget, more so given that our contractors are absorbing increased fuel and insurance costs.

Local Enterprise Partnership

Following confirmation of £10.9m allocated to the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP area from the government's Growing Places Fund, the LEP has invited details of potential projects which can generate economic activity in the short term by addressing immediate infrastructure and site constraints, and promote the delivery of jobs and housing. The aim is to establish a revolving fund to ensure that investment returns can be ploughed back into local areas. Royal Haskoning & Green Ventures have completed the work, commissioned by the LEP, to produce a visualisation of the challenges and issues facing the LEP area, particularly infrastructure ones, using funding secured through the LEP Capacity Fund. The Environment Agency are now funding an additional Environment Layer to the model.

Cambridgeshire Future Transport

A paper went to Cabinet on 6 March outlining the proposed programme for bus subsidy withdrawal. Now approved, it is anticipated that the first tranche of withdrawal will be in September. Because of the short timescales we will be starting the programme of engagement in early March. To support this work we will be recruiting two full time engagement officers. The franchise pilot based in Whittlesford started on 7 Dec. So far we have been unable to attract residents to use the service. We have distributed a leaflet advertising the service and a questionnaire to Duxford and Sawston and we are aiming to cover the other villages within CB22 shortly. We have had a good response on the questionnaires but no additional business. Although the pilot hasn't attracted the level of interest we would have liked, it is proving very useful to scope the work we do next as part of the wider CFT/Bus subsidy reduction programme.

Integrated Youth Support Services (IYSS) Transformation Funds

As part of the Budget a Transformation fund was established to enable local voluntary groups, Parish Council to bid for fixed term funding with a view to generating a longer term sustainable plan and this fund is now being allocated. Locality team have worked closely with Parish Councils and other partners to continue the provision of some open access services when they are well attended and 24 clubs have been saved from closure. More information is available from the relevant Area Managers.

Children's Centres are becoming more targeted

This is in line with national policy and is well supported by research about how to make sure that early intervention is targeted and evidence based (Graham Allen report). The offer from children's centres continues to include 20% of their time being non targeted activities. Health Visitors and midwives provide services from Children's Centres for all women and families in the 'reach area' for the Children's Centre.

Cambridgeshire Music Partnership (Hub)

Cambridgeshire has submitted a bid, with strong support from a wide range of partners, for music education funding as part of the government's recent published National Plan. The opportunity to secure £1.6 million over three years and develop regional partnerships to achieve scale economics and expand the range of provision, this will be enabled by the more uniform structure.

Meeting the needs of High Demand Families

Cambridgeshire's Public Services Board is actively supporting the work to look at how resources could be better utilised across public sector agencies to meet the needs of families with multiple problems. Initial discussions with partners and within the County Council have focussed on the expansion of the Family Intervention Project.

The work has been given additional impetus following the announcement from central government that some funds will be made available to Local Authorities to help 'Troubled Families'. Within Cambridgeshire work has now started to identify which families within the County would benefit most from a more coordinated approach to their needs.

Warm Homes Project

The Council working with the voluntary sector, district councils and Public Health, were successful in their bid of £207,000 for the Warm Homes project from the Department of Health's 'Warm Homes, Healthy People' fund. The £207,000 is being used to reduce death and illness caused by cold housing, by augmenting local services and commissioning flexible, responsive services which will quickly identify those people who are vulnerable, at risk and in need.

The project has established rapid referral systems and increased the range and level of practical support such as benefits advice, shopping services and emergency heating repairs. In addition, in periods of predicted severe weather, vulnerable people will be contacted to ensure they are safe and well and risks to their health are minimized by support from voluntary and local authority agencies.

Bin it, don't fling it

Three young people from Gt Abington, all subject to Family Intervention Project (FIP) interventions, volunteered to tidy up their local community open spaces by litter picking. The boys gained great satisfaction from their voluntary contribution, collecting 4 sacks of litter and have offered to repeat the exercise again in the Spring.

South Cambridgeshire and City (SCCC) Area Partnership

The SCCC CYP Area Partnership is in the process of finalising its commissioning plan for 2012 – 2014. In delivering its priorities, key partners have pooled funds in order to commission new areas of work. Having awarded a contract before Christmas for the delivery of some targeted work with 9 – 13 year olds, two further invitations to tender have now been issued. These are to take forward counselling and support services for young people, and to support community development work on Fen Road.

Mental Health Recovery and Prevention Services

Day services in Cambridgeshire that support people with mental health problems have recently been retendered. The successful bid was from a consortium made up of the Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon Minds and Richmond Fellowship. The new contract will be in place by 1 April 2012. People who use services were central to the development of the specification and in assessing bids. This will have significant advantages as future development can take place on a countywide basis, whilst recognising local requirements, and resources can be used equitably across the County.

There will be an emphasis on moving out of traditional day services by supporting people to make use of mainstream community resources. The philosophy of the service will be informed by the Recovery Approach. This means that people who use the service will be encouraged to play an active part in running activities with an emphasis on mutual support. An element of this will be 'peer mentors', people who have used mental health services that wish to support and encourage other service users. This 'giving back' to the service is strongly supported by service users.

Contact Centre Apprenticeship

The first apprentices on the new Contact Centre apprenticeship scheme started on the 13th February and commenced handling their first calls on the 22nd February. A second set of apprentices is being recruited now with an aim to start in early April 2012.

Libraries Development Initiative

A bid to the Arts Council, to develop community commissioning of cultural activities within Fenland Libraries, was successful in gaining nearly £20,000. The project aims to increase ease of access for cultural activity through the development of the libraries spaces (including physical flexibility of the whole space, use outside core hours, use of resources including IT, and working with staff and volunteer teams).

Library opening hours

All Members, parish councils and friends groups have been informed about the new library opening hours that will take effect from April, along with new staffing arrangements including single staffing in many libraries. Information is now also available on the Council's web site and was sent out in the Libraries e-newsletter.

County Councillor John Reynolds
March 12th 2012