

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 1ST MAY

CAMBRIDGESHIRE BOOST FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

With youth unemployment at record highs, Cambridgeshire County Council is laying down the challenge to businesses and organisations to create 4,000 new apprenticeships by this time next year. The Cabinet also agreed an ambition to help generate 1,000 new apprenticeships through the activities of Cambridgeshire County Council, its contractors and partners over the next year.

This will be through its activities as part of a new strategy to kick start a surge in apprenticeships across the county. The authority will also be encouraging its partners to develop apprenticeship schemes of their own and will be looking at better ways to buy services to reduce the number of young people who are currently unemployed.

COUNTY COUNCIL INVESTS £2 MILLION TO ENSURE CAMBRIDGESHIRE ROADS ARE WELL DRESSED!

The County Council is about to begin a £2 million project to ensure hundreds of kilometres of Cambridgeshire roads are maintained and improved. The surface dressing programme, using a thin film of bitumen and stone chippings, keeps the road surface in good condition and improves safety for all road users.

The technique costs around 20% of conventional asphalt resurfacing, enabling a far greater length of road to be treated from within the available financial resources.

Starting from May 8th work will be carried out in all areas of Cambridgeshire. Drivers are being asked to be aware of the work and to allow extra time for their journey if necessary. In some areas traffic management measures will be in place and some localised short-time road closures are possible.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE LIBRARIES CELEBRATES WORLD BOOK NIGHT

World Book Night, the nationwide celebration of the reading, recommending and giving of books, takes place next Monday (23 April) and Cambridgeshire Libraries have taken part. Thanks to the initiative, 5525 free books, donated by publishers, will be given out across Cambridgeshire by 221 'book givers'.

Now in its second year, World Book Night 2012 coincides with UNESCO's International Day of the Book and Shakespeare's birthday and Cambridgeshire's Mobile Library was out and about at Bar Hill and Longstanton handing out books:

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said "We're thrilled to be taking part in this year's World Book Night by going out and sharing the love of reading with our communities. There are 25 titles that have been specially chosen and donated by publishers which were given away free to encourage others to catch the reading bug.

"If you're not able to pop along to one of the events you'll also find a display in every library of books recommended by staff."

COUNTY CELEBRATES ST GEORGE

Cambridgeshire County Council joined the celebrations for St George's Day by raising a flag at its Shire Hall headquarters. In 1222 the Council of Oxford declared 23 April to be St George's Day, but it was not until 1348 that St George became the Patron Saint of England.

St George's Day was declared a national feast day and holiday in England in 1415. However, after the union with Scotland at the end of the 18th century, the tradition diminished and since has not been widely acknowledged and is no longer a national holiday.

St George was born to Christian parents in AD 270 in Cappadocia, now Eastern Turkey. He moved to Palestine with his mother and became a Roman soldier, rising to the high rank of Tribunus Militum. However, he later resigned his military post and protested against his pagan leader, the Emperor Diocletian (245-313 AD), who led Rome's persecution of Christians.

His rebellion against the Emperor resulted in his imprisonment, but even after torture he stayed true to his faith. However, the enraged Diocletian had St George dragged through the streets of Nicomedia, Turkey, on 23 April in 303 AD and had him beheaded.

County Council Chairman John Powley said: "I was delighted to raise the flag of St George at Shire Hall to help expand the awareness of St George's Day and promote English heritage and patriotism. April 23 should be a day when all English people come together to celebrate our great nation."

TALK ABOUT EMPLOYMENT EVENT TO HELP YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE

Local employers and organisations are backing a Cambridgeshire County Council event designed to help young disabled people live independent lives by accessing employment and training opportunities.

The 'Talk about Employment' event has been set up by the County Council's Transitions Team and pinpoint in response to requests from parents and carers to raise awareness of the issues facing young people with disabilities wanting to find suitable employment and training or volunteering opportunities or work placements.

The County Council will also be giving information on employment and training it offers to disabled people as a major employer in Cambridgeshire. The authority will be joined by representatives from Anson Packaging; Cambridgeshire Mencap; Red2Green; Branching Out; Burwell Print; Papworth Trust; Young Lives; Sainsbury and the National Child Minding Association.

More than 60 young people from eight schools and colleges, including special schools and the inclusion units within mainstream schools are expected to attend the event.

The Talk About Employment event at St Ives Corn Exchange on May 3, will be run by Pinpoint Cambs which has been commissioned by the County Council to support the participation of parent carers in decision making around the planning and delivery of services designed to support young people as they move between children and adult services.

NEXT STEP ON BROADBAND SUPERHIGHWAY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

The next big step towards bringing superfast broadband to the majority of homes and businesses throughout the county has been taken by Cambridgeshire County Council. Providing superfast broadband in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will help boost the economy and make sure communities can benefit from being connected.

Potential suppliers of next-generation broadband infrastructure and services for the region are now being invited to respond to the official Contract Notice published by the County Council on 17 April.

The Contract Notice is the next step in the formal procurement process to appoint a supplier by the end of the year to invest in rolling out superfast broadband across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with implementation beginning from 2013 onwards.

Cambridgeshire County Council is the contracting authority for the project, acting on behalf of the county and Peterborough City Council supported by District Councils, the Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership, and key partners in business, health and education, belonging to the Broadband Delivery Group.

The plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is for at least 90% of homes and businesses to have access to superfast broadband with speeds of at least 25 Mbps and above and better broadband connectivity for all remaining premises by 2015. The County Council has been working closely with the Government funding and advice body Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to meet the unique requirements of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

BDUK has allocated £6.75m to complement the substantial funding of up to £20m from Cambridgeshire County Council and up to £3m from Peterborough City Council. This public funding is being used to attract significant investment from the private sector. The complex procurement process began with a Prior Information Notice (PIN) issued in January 2012. This was followed by a Supplier Day in February to which suppliers were invited to find out more about the unique requirements for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Connecting Cambridgeshire website will go live in early May 2012 to support the launch of the countywide campaign to involve residents and businesses in showing the level of demand for broadband services throughout Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

TRUANCY SWEEPS IMPROVE ATTENDANCE AT FENLAND SCHOOLS

A joint initiative has been launched by Cambridgeshire County Council and the police to improve school attendance in the Fenland area. The truancy sweeps - which will focus on Chatteris, March and the surrounding villages - will also aim to promote child safety by emphasising the importance of making sure children are in school.

All children of compulsory school age will be stopped even if they are accompanied by parents, carers or relatives and live outside the targeted areas.

Parents or carers of truanting pupils will then be contacted by an Educational Welfare Officer and notified of the Education Welfare Service procedures. Their school will also be contacted and made aware of the absence and their attendance at school will be monitored. The sweeps will take place in March, Chatteris and the surrounding school catchment areas, with the aim of reducing levels of unauthorised absence.

Education Welfare Officer Julie Rutterford said: "Although Cambridgeshire's school attendance rates are in line with the national average and truancy is minimal, there is still room for improvement in Fenland.

"As a joint initiative with schools and police we want to send a clear message that it is unacceptable for a child to miss school without good reason and also that truancy is not necessarily the only explanation or cause for poor school attendance.

"Parents of persistent absentees or truants and are being warned they could end up in court facing fines and - in a worst case scenario - imprisonment. Children need to be in school learning, Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child or children are attending school regularly. By missing out on school children are limiting their potential and missing out on vital learning at a particularly important stage of their lives. Children who attend school regularly are four times more likely to achieve five or more good GCSEs, including English and maths, than those who are persistently absent."

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