

County Council - September Report 2013

Connecting Cambridgeshire

Connecting Cambridgeshire has secured over £4.6m extra funding through ERDF and the Urban Broadband Fund, which will enable the programme to offer a countywide package of support to hundreds of small and medium sized businesses - improving their connectivity and use of digital technologies to increase productivity and create new jobs. Work has already begun on setting up the new support for business scheme – to be launched in January 2014 – which will offer match funded grants and one-off payments for eligible companies to upgrade their connections and invest in digital technologies.

A 'My Area' roll-over map and A-Z look-up list has been launched this month on the Connecting Cambridgeshire website (www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk), which will include as much information as possible about the delivery phases of the broadband rollout. This will help people to find out how their parish/area fits in to the multiple phases of the roll-out plan and will be updated regularly as the programme progresses.

Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF)

The first year of the LSTF programme has seen the delivery of a wide range of transport projects and the provision of over £1.1m of funding from the DfT. A full report of what was achieved in the first year is currently being produced. The Cambridgeshire Travel for Work partnership has used LSTF funding to sign up over 40 new businesses over the last year. These businesses employ over 6,000 people collectively, and have invested over £45,000 of match funding for schemes that make sustainable travel a better option for their staff.

A14

Good progress is being made on development of the A14 upgrade scheme. The Highways Agency are to undertake an informal consultation exercise to start on September 9th. At this stage views will be sought on a single option and feedback on this will help to inform a preferred scheme, which will feed into the preparation of draft orders and commencement of the planning process. The Highways Agency is currently targeting the end of 2016 for construction to begin. The current design process is focused on reducing scheme costs and speeding up delivery. Some significant improvements have already been made, particularly around the key junctions.

Cycle City Ambition Grant

The Government announced on 12 August that Greater Cambridge was one of the successful bidders to the Cycle City Ambition Grant. The area has secured £4.1m of Government funding to match the Council's own investment of £4.1m to transform cycling in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The Greater Cambridge city region is one of eight places in the UK to secure a share of the £77m funding. The programme will deliver Cambridge's first on-road segregated cycle lanes. Outside the city, cycle routes linking communities, business parks and railway stations will be installed to make cycling a better option for commuters.

North West Cambridge

On 21 August the Fringes Joint Development Control Committee reconsidered this long-standing planning application for 1,593 new homes on the former NIAB site north of Huntingdon Road. The Section 106 legal agreement for this site is expected to be signed in September, when planning permission is expected to be granted.

Northstowe

Following the Planning Committee approval in March, work on concluding the Section 106 legal agreement negotiations for the first phase of development of 1,500 new homes is programmed to be completed in September, and the planning permission then issued.

Waste

The Local Authorities are working together through the RECAP partnership to develop a joined up approach to waste collection and disposal. This has the potential to deliver significant savings for all partners and provide more joined up services. The current priorities within this work package are:

- Procuring a Materials Recycling Facility contract to process the recyclables collected by the District Councils from the kerbside.
- Working on an Optimum Service Design to determine the most efficient collection of waste and recyclables from the kerbside, enabling the most efficient treatment through the Waste PFI Contract.

The council continues to support the Cambridgeshire Community RePaint scheme, which collects unused paint from six of the Household Recycling Centres in the county. This scheme diverts thousands of litres of paint from the waste stream and instead puts it to good use by offering it for sale at low cost, as well as making donations to community group refurbishment projects. The Supporting Business and Communities service will be providing support and assistance to enable this community organisation to secure additional outlets for the re-useable paint by making further links with other groups to ensure the longevity of the scheme.

Highways Maintenance

The Council has agreed to Atkins' proposal to assign its Highways Services Contract to Skanska as part of the proposed sale of their Highway Operations business to Skanska UK. The transfer successfully took place on 16 August with no disruption to the service provided. Between 10-12 July a Peer Review was undertaken by the DfT's Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme looking at the existing Highway Maintenance Service. An implementation plan has been developed in response to the peer review's conclusions.

Catholic Church junction improvements

The road works to improve the Catholic Church Junction in Cambridge where Hills Road, Regent Street, Gonville Place and Lensfield Road meet are progressing well. The improvements will include the UK's first traffic lights that allow cyclists to move off before motorists. The Government has approved a trial of new signals which will have an additional phase for cyclists, giving them a five seconds head start before vehicles start moving. The project will also see 'Trixi' mirrors installed to help drivers see cyclists. The Traffic Signals team has been working with the Integrated Highways Management Centre to ensure that disruption during these works is kept to a minimum.

Raising the participation age takes effect from September

In September, the national participation age will be raised to 17, meaning young people will have to continue their learning until at least the end of year 12. The change does not necessarily mean students staying on in school or doing A-levels. Young people have a choice about how they continue in education or training after the age of 16. This could be through full-time study, a combination of part-time education or training with work, or through an apprenticeship.

AskSARA

AskSARA is an online advice site developed by the Disabled Living Foundation. A localised version for Cambridgeshire residents has been available for 18 months. This takes users through a set of guided questions leading to general advice and recommendations about equipment to remain independent and help with day-to-day living. There have been around 5,000 visits to the site, exceeding the expected 2,000 annual visits. 67% of visitors say that AskSARA has provided a solution to a problem or need. A commitment to keep the site updated, review its content, and ensure it remains relevant extends to future-proofing developments to the site to sit alongside other work, such as Connecting Cambridgeshire and the county's Digital Strategy. Developments include the addition of information and advice relating to children's equipment which will provide support to parents of disabled children. This is expected to go live later in the autumn.

LGA peer review

In the week commencing 14 October, a team of peers from the LGA will conduct a peer review into the County Council. This will investigate a range of areas related to the way the Council operates and its preparedness to deliver for residents in challenging times. The review will include individual and group sessions with a selection of officers, Members and stakeholders.

Digital by default

As part of the continuous programme of work to deliver more services digitally, an online service for post-16 education transport has successfully launched recently on the Council's website. Since going live in early August, more than 300 online renewal applications have been received. Parents, through one simple online engagement, have been able to complete the application form, provide photo ID and pay online. With all digital services, for those customers who prefer not to use the online method or do not have access to online facilities, they can continue to contact council services by phone via the Customer Services team.

Neighbourhood Management – East Barnwell (Abbey ward)

The Community Engagement team have been providing community development support, linked to the planned development of the East Barnwell Community Hub, for the past 10 months. Initially the team helped to engage the local community to input into plans. More recently the work has broadened to support increased community activity. The results of peer research, in which local residents interviewed 70 of their neighbours to give insight into the local community, have been analysed. The team have also supported the development of a newly constituted community group ('Abbey People') and helped them to apply for two funding opportunities.

Business Plan

Work on the Business Plan for 2014/15 is progressing at full speed. The public consultation on the budget will be launched in September, with face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews being conducted as well as making the survey available on line for completion by residents, businesses and the voluntary sector. In September, a Business Planning Workshop will be held with Cabinet, Group Leaders and the Corporate Leadership Team, along with presentations and reports to the five Overview and Scrutiny Committees on plans for 2014/15 as they emerge.

Committee system

The Constitution and Ethics Committee met recently to begin in some detail the work to create a new Committee system for the County Council, to come into operation from May 2014. The session was well attended and led to a good debate that raised a number of areas where there was a consensus, but also identified areas where more work will be required to find a solution. A more detailed proposal is being put to a specially arranged session on 10 September, which all Members have been invited to attend.

Public County Council meetings in September

10 September 10:00 Cabine Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

12 September 10:30 Enterprise, Growth and Community Infrastructure Overview and Scrutiny Committee Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

12 September 14:30 Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 September 10:30 Joint Development Control Committee: Cambridge Fringes
The Guildhall, Cambridge, CB2 3QJ

19 September 14:00 Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

20 September 10:00 Shadow Local Transport Body Board, Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

25 September 10:00 Joint Development Control Committee for Northstowe
Council Chamber, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

26 September 10:30 Resources and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

26 September 11:30 Community Safety Strategic Board Police HQ, Hinchingsbrooke Park,
Huntingdon, PE29 6NP

26 September 14:30 Audit and Accounts Committee Kreis Viersen Room, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP

For regular updates please see

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/democracy/council-meetings.htm>

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 8th September