

County Report February 2014

TRANSPORT TO BENEFIT FROM CHANGES TO BUDGET PROPOSALS

Transport will be the main winner in alterations to the budget agreed last week.

After listening to the public and opposition groups, the Conservative Cabinet has agreed to earmark an extra £500,000 to invest in transport improvements. A cross-party group of Councillors will be formed to decide how this money is spent.

An extra £200,000 will also be put into Children's Centres and an additional £200,000 for mental health services in order to support these services through a period of transformation.

It is also agreed to reduce the level of savings and support change in older people service and in learning and physical disability services, by reducing the savings targets by £300,000.

The mild winter so far means the Council has not spent all of its gritting budget, meaning £200,000 can be held back and put into next year's budget.

An innovation grant of £28,000 is also being created to encourage innovative new ways of providing public transport services.

The extra cash – nearly £1.5m in total – has come from £1m money saved from capital building projects and £500,000 from improved Council tax collection rates.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "We have listened carefully to the public and to opposition groups on the County Council and as a result, have come up with these proposed amendments to the budget. We have looked at our priorities and taken on board the concerns raised at scrutiny committees, and believe we now have a budget which is innovative, inclusive and takes on board the many suggestions raised in the consultation process.

"The strongest views were in favour of improvements to transport, so we have taken this into account, together with extra money for children's centres, mental health services, learning and physical disabilities and older people's services."

FUNDING FOR A NEW HOME FOR SAWSTON LIBRARY ANNOUNCED

Plans to create a community space in Sawston - providing a new home for the library and other services to benefit local residents have taken a step forward.

Capital funding of £1.25million has been allocated within the authority's budget – has been approved. Plans are still to be confirmed, however it is envisaged that the new community hub, close to the original site of the library, would include multi-purpose rooms which would allow for flexible use of space.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said "We've been working hard for the last year to secure a replacement for the library and its fantastic news that we now have the opportunity to create a community space which will offer so much more than just a library service."

ROAD SAFETY IS A PRIMARY CONCERN FOR YOUNG SCHOOL PUPILS

Pupils from across Cambridgeshire will get the opportunity to sit as jurors in their very own courtroom drama designed to make them think about road safety and accident prevention.

The Road Safety Education Team is providing a two week tour of the interactive play 'Courtroom' which will be performed at schools weeks beginning 10th and 24th March.

This high energy, interactive play targets key stage 2 pupils (7-11 years) and takes the entire audience into a hugely entertaining, larger than life courtroom. Using the audience as jury members, the judge and lawyers go over events leading up to a road traffic accident and try to establish how this kind of accident can be prevented in the future.

Courtroom allows the audience to think about road safety and reach their own verdict on what causes accidents and how they can be prevented. The play includes vital Road Safety messages relating to pedestrian safety and the use of seatbelts.

WEBSITE LAUNCHED TO BRING HISTORY TO THE 21ST CENTURY

A project to research and revive some of the best traditions of Cambridgeshire has now launched its new website. The Enid Porter's Folk project, managed by Cambridgeshire County Council's Supporting Businesses and Communities Service and funded by over £60,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, has been using Miss Porter's notebooks, owned by the Museum of Cambridge, to learn about and re-enact the folklore, customs and traditions of a century ago.

This work has helped create www.enidporterproject.org.uk - a place to get involved with the project from engaging with various activities to adding content about Cambridgeshire's customs. Future project events are also listed in the 'What's On' section of the website and include schools performances, local history talks and a final celebration in July at the culmination of the project.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "The new Enid Porter's Folk project website really is the one-stop shop for all things Enid Porter. It provides plenty of interest for anyone keen to learn more about Cambridgeshire culture and it allows people to share stories they may have heard or even personal recollections they may have. It's a fabulous new resource that I encourage everyone to take a look at."

Jack Latimer of Community Sites Ltd, who built the website for the project, said: "The website is really easy to use and navigate and has an authentic heritage 'look and feel' to match the theme perfectly. A simple form is provided for adding content to the website, which can be in the form of text, photographs or videos. It is therefore envisaged that the website will grow and grow as contributions are made. The website will provide a lasting record of the project."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "This is an exciting project that is re-connecting the communities in five villages with the customs, traditions, dialects, and stories that inspired Enid Porter's writings. It also makes available, through the project website, her fascinating accounts of local life in a bygone era."

Working with five communities:

Swaffham Prior, Haddenham, Littleport, Wisbech and Whittlesford,
The Enid Porter's Folk project is exploring some of the stories, songs, dances, games and rituals as practised there some one hundred years ago.

COUNCIL AGREES TOUGH BUDGET

Councillors have agreed budget proposals which show public services are in for tough times ahead to meet nearly £149 million in savings over the next five years. The County Council agreed the draft budget proposals at this week's meeting. The proposals have been put forward to meet the huge savings required for 2014/15 and the following years.

The report warned that there are no easy solutions to meet the savings and that some services will need to be cut or reduced as the Council has already saved £128 million in the last three years. The Council agreed increases Council Tax by 1.99 per cent to help protect frontline services.

Councillors also agreed a £1.4 million spent on transport improvements, children's centres, mental health services, adult social care and winter gritting. A decision to withdraw funding to Cromwell Museum has also been deferred for an extra year to give more time for plans to be developed to find alternative management solutions.

Cambridgeshire is one of the hardest hit authorities in the country and has had a reduction in the Government's Settlement Funding Assessment of 20.9 per cent (£29.9m) over the next two financial years. The County is also the lowest funded for education in the UK and has the fastest growing population. This means the Council is seeing more and more demands on its services – especially for those who are the most vulnerable - as more people need them or are living longer and require more expensive care services. Increased population puts a £9 million strain on the Council's budget every year while inflation also annually adds extra pressure on decreasing funds.

Cambridgeshire County Council is expected to make savings over the next year (2014/2015) of around £38 million. This is following savings of £42 million last year (2012/2013), and a further £32 million this current financial year (2013/2014).

The Council will continue to look at sharing assets and buildings with other public bodies as it has been doing successfully through the Making Assets Count programme. This includes leasing the Castle Court building on the Shire Hall site in Cambridge. The Council will also be making it even easier for residents and businesses to access services online which is easier for many and reduces costs to the public purse.

Savings will continue to be made in Corporate Services and shared services with a total of £4 million expected to be saved.

The Council has continued to look to drive out efficiencies, further significant savings are expected from Home to School transport contracts for example. Additionally, work to prevent the escalation of needs is continuing with savings planned from reducing the number of children that need to be looked after by the Council and the number of vulnerable adults we support through intervening early and effectively. However, the financial challenges are such that reductions in services and support are unavoidable.

Adult Social Care will continue to target support for the most vulnerable but will look at reducing the demand for services, working more with communities and a reduction in the support offered to some service users.

The service will also continue to support people early to preserve their independence and stop them from needing more critical care.

In Children's Services focus will be put on more focussed work. There will also be a reconfiguration of Children's Centres and an overall reduction in the services they provide. Council agreed an extra £200,000 will be put into Children's Centres to help support this reconfiguration. The Council's funding for supporting Early Years settings and providers will also be reduced.

In Economy, Transport and Environment there will also be reductions in some services and where appropriate investigations will be carried out into looking at income streams on a user pays basis. Investment will continue in Cambridgeshire Future Transport to provide targeted public transport but consideration is being given to scaling back some services, such as winter maintenance. Some £200,000 has been agreed to transfer into a special winter gritting reserve to allay the introduction of cuts.

Public Health funding still remains ring fenced by Government and will be using feedback from You Choose and evidence to make sure services are targeted.

Cambridgeshire County Council leader, Martin Curtis, said: "This is a very tough time for Councils and especially Cambridgeshire. We are one of the hardest hit authorities in the country in terms of funding and yet we are managing the most growth. We have already saved tens of millions of pounds by making savings where people would expect whilst having very limited reserves.

But we are also being innovative with such projects as sharing services with other councils through LGSS as well as being a UK leader in better use of public sector buildings with our partners. However, the scale of savings we now need to make means we have had to make tough decisions and inevitably some regrettable cuts to frontline services. But these cuts are necessary so that we can continue to make sure we protect the most vulnerable while supporting the local economy and jobs."

"I would like to thank all parties who have engaged in this process throughout the year and the consensual way we were able to work together in these tough times to deliver a balanced budget."

TRANSPORT STRATEGY TO TAKE STEP FORWARD READY FOR NEW FAMILIES

Councillors are set to finalise a Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire aimed at improving accessibility and facilitate the 35,000 new homes due to be built to 2031. The Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire has been developed working with partners and based on feedback from public consultation. It aims to give better transport choice including more and better cycling, walking and public transport measures.

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire has one of the most dynamic and forward looking economies in the UK, and will continue to attract growth in jobs and population. Working alongside Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council we have developed a Transport Strategy to align and integrate with the ambitious growth plans, to ensure the transport network can cater for the predicted 44,000 new jobs and 35,000 new homes that will be created here by 2031."

The strategy is nearing completion and sets out how to keep the travel network moving despite the rising population and increase in demand, by enabling more people to use public transport and to cycle and walk.

Last summer, during a ten week public consultation, held jointly with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council's consultation on their own Local Plans, the Strategy received over 800 direct responses from local residents, employers and other organisations.

Over 76% of respondents agreed with the strategy's approach of increasing the use of sustainable transport while maintaining traffic levels at a similar levels to now; and around 75% agreeing with attempting to achieve this through increasing road space for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

Other key findings include:

- Approximately 60% agreed with restricting car traffic movement in some areas if it resulted in a boost in walking, cycling and public transport usage
- Around 50% supported increasing park and ride spaces available, at the expense of reducing the availability of free street parking in the city.
- Nearly 80% of respondents agreed with the strategy approach of enabling more people to use public transport for at least some of their journey

The strategy is now being finalised for consideration by the Joint Strategic Planning & Transport Member Group (JST&PG) meeting on 6th February and by Cambridgeshire County Council's Cabinet on 4th March.

After this the strategy will be published in full.

GREAT WAR EXHIBITION GOES ON TOUR

An exhibition about the Great War has been travelling around venues throughout Cambridgeshire during 2014.

The first of these displays, Hidden Stories, was on display at St Neots Museum and the Wisbech & Fenland Museum from the 11 to the 25 February. The exhibitions are part of the Cambridgeshire County Council project, 'Great War - Between the Lines' and commemorates the centenary of the conflict. Hidden Stories aims to highlight some of the less well known tales of the Great War including the 1912 army man oeuvres, the First Eastern General Hospital, refugees, war pigeons, the Death Wire and occupied Lille.

For more information on when and where you can view these exhibitions please visit www.great-war.ccan.co.uk and check out the 'Events' page. Local people can also advertise your own centenary events, contribute their own material and view the growing Great War digital archive. Project partners from across Northern France, Belgium and the UK have chosen 6 themes through which to explore their shared experience of the Great War. The themes chosen cover hidden stories, music, family, British troops in France, total war and military logistics. Great War - Between the Lines aims to bring the history and experiences of the conflict up close to people across Cambridgeshire.

RECYCLE TO CYCLE AT CAMBRIDGE ELECTRONIC RECYCLING EVENT

For the third year running, businesses, residents, schools and colleges in Cambridge are being urged to recycle their broken or unwanted electronics at a two-day event at University of Cambridge, Sidgwick Site Car Park, Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DD. The recycling event takes place on Thursday 06 March, from 7.30 am to 5 pm, and on Friday 07 March, from 7.30 am to 3.30 pm. All types of business and household electronic waste will be accepted for free and staff will be on hand to help with unloading.

The event is being hosted by Cambridge Business Improvement District (BID), Recycling Platform (ERP), and the University of Cambridge as part of a drive to increase the amount of e-waste that is recycled. The previous two events have already recycled 54 tonnes of electronic waste and event organisers are hoping to get this total as close as possible to 100 tonnes this year.

As an added incentive, everyone who contributes an item of e-waste for recycling will have the opportunity to win £250 worth of vouchers from a local bicycle store by completing a questionnaire. The winner will be drawn from the questionnaires.

Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the UK. Over 1.4 million tonnes of electronic goods were sold in 2012, but only 500,000 tonnes of e-waste were recycled. The materials used to make electronic goods are valuable and can be used to make new products. All e-waste collected at the event will be sorted and treated within the UK. Recycling is provided courtesy of Apple.

Scott Butler, ERP UK Managing Director, said: "ERP is proud to be involved with this great event for the third year running. We hope as many people as possible in Cambridge will get involved and do their bit for the environment by bringing along their e-waste for recycling."

KEY FACTS ON E-WASTE

- ? Electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the UK.
- ? Around 1.5 million tonnes of electronic goods were sold in 2012, over 23 kg per person.
- ? In 2012, about 505,000 tonnes of e-waste was collected and recycled, around 34% by weight of the EEE sold.
- ? The rest ended up in landfill or is still in people's homes.
- ? On average, each person in the UK recycled 8 kg of e-waste in 2012.

Visit www.erp-recycling.co.uk to find out more about electronic recycling.

About European Recycling Platform (ERP)

ERP is one of the UK's leading waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and batteries recycling schemes. Producers of electronic goods and batteries work with registered recycling schemes, such as ERP, to collect and treat WEEE and batteries on their behalf. ERP members include Electrolux, Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Samsung and Sony.

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Yours, John Reynolds, Cambridgeshire County Councillor.

Please feel free to contact me with comments, questions or concerns. I hope I can help but, if not we probably know some on who can." If I can be of help please contact me on the addresses below.

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