

County Report March 2014

Councillor John Reynolds

CAUTIOUS WELCOME TO SCHOOLS FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

A cautious welcome has been given to news that Cambridgeshire pupils will receive extra cash next year. The Government has announced a consultation that would result in Cambridgeshire's schools per pupil funding – the lowest funded in the country – rising by about £20m in 2015/16 - equating to an extra £275 per pupil at local authority level.

Although each school is likely to experience a different level of increase due to their own individual circumstances, this is a significant boost for all primary and secondary schools across the county. Head teachers, governors, County Councillors and MPs have been campaigning for several years to secure more money for the county's schools.

Cllr David Harty, Cabinet Member for Education and Learning said: "We welcome this news of increased funding for 2015-16. It acknowledges the dire financial situation Cambridgeshire's schools have been in for many years, as well as the tireless work that has been done by many people and organisations – particularly the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum - to raise the issue at the highest level.

"The extra funding is a step in the right direction – but there is a long way to go. Cambridgeshire has been chronically underfunded for many years and while today's announcement is good news, we need to continue our work to secure a fairer approach to funding schools in the long term."

COUNCIL SAYS YOU'RE HIRED DURING APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

You're hired – that's the view of Cambridgeshire County Council as it looks to beat the success of last year and hire even more apprentices. Services across Cambridgeshire County Council are working with our partner organisations to take on more apprentices.

In the financial year of 2012/13 the Council beat its own target of employing more than 50 apprentices. This year the authority, with partners, hope to employ a further 75. The National Apprenticeship Week is co-ordinated by the National Apprenticeship Service and is designed to celebrate Apprenticeships and the positive impact they have on individuals, businesses and the wider economy.

The objectives of the week were to:

- Increase awareness, understanding and demand for Apprenticeships.
- Celebrate Apprenticeship talent, skills, achievements and successes.
- Promote all Apprenticeship levels and progression routes, including Traineeships

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Cambridgeshire County Council is doing its bit by supporting apprentices and giving them their first step on the career ladder. We know that many local firms and businesses are also helping youngsters gain apprenticeships which are vital for the continuing prosperity and economic success of the County."

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GREATER CAMBRIDGE WELCOMES GAME CHANGING £BILLION CITY DEAL

Council leaders, businesses and the University of Cambridge have welcomed a Government announcement today to back a City Deal which could unlock one £billion of investment for the Greater Cambridge area. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at Parliament in his Budget statement today, Wednesday, a grant of up to £500 million through a “GainShare” Deal.

The Deal aims to secure hundreds of millions of pounds of additional funding for investment in transport infrastructure to support high quality economic and housing growth over the coming decades.

It follows more than a year of negotiations with central Government by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, The University of Cambridge and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership.

In addition to funding for transport, the Deal would see the three councils (Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridgeshire County Council) pooling some of their own separate funding and powers, and working even more closely than now. This would allow for the creation of a single strategic vision for the future of the area covered by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: “We welcome this news today and will now be looking carefully at the detail. But it could be a real game changer, moving the economy of Greater Cambridge and the wider County towards becoming a real economic powerhouse. The improvements will see a step change in transport infrastructure that will create jobs and boost the local economy. The success of this will also be felt outside the Cambridge area so all our communities benefit.”

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, added: “We have worked really hard with our partners to negotiate a deal on the right terms for our communities, and the news today moves us a step closer to unlocking up to a billion pounds of investment. This funding could prove to be a vital piece of the jigsaw in delivering the roads and transport links needed to support thousands of new jobs being created, as well as much-needed high quality housing for the area.”

The key elements are

- A total package of £500m for investment in transport in the Greater Cambridge area;
- This funding to be provided in the form of grant, meaning the authorities will not have to borrow, and therefore take on much less risk
- Investment to commence in 2015/16 with a first tranche of £100m for the period 2015/16 to 2018/19;
- Two further tranches each of £200m to be paid over periods of five years from 2018/19;
- These remaining payments will be dependant on the area demonstrating that the benefits of the City Deal that we indicated in our submissions actually materialise;

- The first £200m tranche payable from 2019/20 will be dependant on a review of housing delivery over the first period and likely to require significant levels of delivery based on the projections in the two local plans (Cambridge City and South Cambs);
- The second £200m tranche payable from 2024/25 will be dependant on an assessment of whether economic growth in the area has accelerated as a result of the investment. This will most likely be the result of an independent study by an eminent team who will report to government and the local area;
- The actual length of the deal is still being considered and could extend beyond the 15 years noted above;
- Changed governance will be an element of the deal. There is not a requirement to set up a Combined Authority (the legislation to enable that doesn't yet exist anyway). This could be through for example a joint committee to make investment and other decisions between the three authorities – the aspiration and expectation remains to combine our spatial and transport planning powers;
- Government is offering that the local councils have flexibility to invest the £500m as they see fit, however, there will be a tough 'Assurance Framework' to manage the technical process by which those decisions are made that will ensure investment goes to schemes that are good value for money. This framework has been agreed with the Department for Transport.

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CHILDREN'S TRAFFIC CLUB RETURNS TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridgeshire County Council's Road Safety Team is piloting an exciting new project in parts of the county to reduce accidents involving young children.

Youngsters aged three to four in Fenland and Cambridge City are being invited to join The Children's Traffic Club. Parents and carers will be encouraged to sign their children up to the club through their Nursery or Pre-school.

Activity packs which contain books, DVD's, cards and stickers are sent to the children's homes at staggered intervals through the year, these resources will help children and their wider family members to learn about Road Safety in a fun way. Nurseries and pre-schools will also receive a pack to use in support of the Children's Traffic Club.

CTC does not just have an effect on the pre-school children themselves. With all family members benefiting from the content, particularly parents and older siblings, there is likely to be a positive effect on casualties and behaviour in other road user groups.

County Council Director of Public Health, Dr Liz Robin, added: "The Children's Traffic Club is a great way to start getting across the Road safety message to children of this age and it will give valuable lessons that will help keep children safe throughout their life."

The CTC will be launched at the King's Hedges Pre-School, Northfield Avenue, Cambridge, on March 26.

Statistics for accidents involving children in Cambridgeshire over the last three years below.

2011 - 2013	Slight	KSI	Total
Cambridge	32	3	35
Fenland	35	5	40
Age 1 to 11	67	8	75

WIDENING OUR NET TO SAVE MONEY AND IMPROVE SERVICES

Improvements to Cambridgeshire County Council's website are being introduced as part of plans to help save millions of pounds and make it easier for people to access services. The County Council announced last year as part of its budget setting process that it would be looking at how to help people access services online to reduce costs and make improvements.

Changes to the website have incorporated feedback from local people and is in response to communities wanting to access more Council services online and from mobile devices. By helping people access services online more easily the Council aims to save at least £200,000 a year. The changes are also based on public consultation and testing so content is reduced to what people want and is easier for them to find. The Government Digital Service carried out a similar exercise and saved between £50 to £70 million.

Currently around 743,000 transactions a year take place using the Council's site www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk – such as renewing library books or applying for school places. National figures say a face to face meeting costs £8.62 while a phone call is £2.83 – compared to online at 15p. Last year there were some 12.3 million page views and 1.7 million unique visitors to the Council's website.

This Christmas around 47 per cent of people accessed the site using mobile devices, such as their phone or tablet, but many are put off because the current site is not mobile friendly. Making it easier for people to access services online saves millions of pounds for the authority and our residents.

It also means the Council can reduce costs by hosting all its information rather than use more expensive outside providers. The changes, which have been introduced as the contract runs out for the existing site, will be made on Wednesday, March 26.

Cambridgeshire County Council Leader Martin Curtis, said: "It is very clear that people want us to improve our online services to make it easier for them to access their Council. Not only does this make it easier for the residents we serve but also saves the Council millions of pounds that could be spent supporting frontline services. These changes will make it even easier for people to talk to us online and is part of an overall strategy to help make savings and improve services."

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DIVIDE AND CONQUER WITH NUMERACY CHALLENGE

Adults who want to brush up on their maths skills are being encouraged to stand up and be counted at this year's Numeracy Challenge. The Numeracy Challenge launched this week is a UK wide drive designed to improve adults' confidence and competence with numeracy. Helping people develop their numeracy skills can also really add up in helping them find a job or move on in the next stage of their career.

It's thought around 17 million people of working age in England had, at best, the numeracy skills expected of children by the end of primary school. Over 8 million of these adults had the skills expected of 7-9 year-olds or younger. However, a recent poll by organisation National Numeracy showed that over a third of adults wanted to improve their maths skills. This rose to two thirds for people who were unemployed.

Last year, Cambridgeshire County Council's Adult Learning Team helped local people gain over a 1000 accredited qualifications in numeracy and literacy. The team are also supporting the Numeracy Challenge and will be offering numeracy and literacy courses, throughout their centres in Cambridgeshire. Many of these courses are free. People can also take part in the Numeracy Challenge online by visiting www.nnchallenge.org.uk. This provides a numeracy 'Challenge check up', which takes 20 minutes to fill in. It will give users a clear indication where they need to improve.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said; "The Numeracy Challenge can provide the perfect formula to help people improve their Maths. It's a key priority for Adult Learning Services at Cambridgeshire County Council as it is a core skill that can improve people's wellbeing and job prospects too. Some of the stats show a real call for people to improve their numeracy skills, so please get in touch with our Adult Learning teams. Being numerate means being able to use numbers and think mathematically. This is now essential to so many aspects of our lives and at work. It can improve adults' confidence, competence and improve chances of securing work so there is a real economic value too.

To find out more about numeracy courses in your area call Cambridgeshire County Council on 0345 045 5200. Course details are also available www.cambridgeshire.net.

To take the Challenge Checker and to get more information about the Numeracy challenge, go to www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk

CONCEPTIONS FALL IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AMONGST UNDER 18'S

Cambridgeshire has seen falls in the rate of teenage pregnancies according to a national report which shows levels in England have also fallen to a historic low. The rate for Cambridgeshire is also the lowest in the region when compared with other county council areas. According to the report, Cambridgeshire had 181 pregnancies for this age group during 2012 or around 17 per 1000 people. In 2011, the rate was 238 or around 22 per 1000 people. The number per thousand in England was just below 28.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said; "Helping young people understand the importance of contraception and what parenthood entails is something Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to. We want to make sure where possible that all our young people have opportunities to fulfil their potential.

SAWSTON

Adult Social Care Staff from Disability Services and the Carers Support Team at Cambridgeshire County Council have organised a series of 'drop-in' information and advice sessions in Cambridge, Huntingdon, and Sawston.

The events provide free and confidential information and advice to adults living with a long-term illness or disability, older people struggling with an age-related condition, and anyone providing unpaid support to adult family members or friends who could not manage without this help.

Anyone who feels the discussions could be helpful can drop in at:

- Cambridge - **last Wednesday of the month** – at the Horizon Centre, 285 Coldhams Lane, Cambridge CB1 3HY from 1.00pm to 3.00pm
- Huntingdon - **first Monday of the month** – at the Hartford Village Hall, Main Street, Hartford, Huntingdon PE29 1XU from 10.00am to 1.00pm
- Sawston – **third Tuesday of the month from May** – at Sawston Free Church, 3 High Street, Sawston CB22 3BG from 10.00am to 12.00 noon.

Each informal session will have a speaker, an opportunity to book a one-to-one advice session and/or a carers assessment, share information and experience with others or talk in confidence to staff members.

Depending on the demand, further sessions could be organised in future. The current programme includes:

7th April, Hartford Village Hall – Advice: My Time Active Health trainer service

30th April, Cambridge Horizon Centre – Advice: Loan equipment & the Bobby

12th May, Hartford Village Hall – Specialist information from Trading Standards

20th May, Sawston Free Church – Opening event

28th May, Cambridge Horizon Centre – Specialist information: The Mental Capacity Act, Lasting Power of Attorney, and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

2nd June, Hartford Village Hall – Advice: the Bobby Scheme

17th June, Sawston Free Church – Advice from Age UK

25th June, Cambridge Horizon Centre – Specialist information from JobCentrePlus and an art activity

15th July, Sawston Free Church – Activity: Art and Craft

19th August, Sawston Free Church – Advice on Health Snacks

More information about the events is available on Cambridgeshire.net (search "Adult Support Drop-ins") or by emailing

Drop.InSessionsAsc@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or
CarersSupportTeam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or call (01480) 377616 or (01480) 373220.

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NEW NO COLD CALLING ZONE TO FREEZE OUT ROGUE TRADERS

Cambridgeshire's Supporting Business and the Community Team (Trading Standards) has been working with the police and local community to establish a new no cold calling zone to protect vulnerable people in Swavesey.

The new zone, centred around sheltered housing in the village, comes after vulnerable people living in the area were approached by potential rogue traders. No Cold Calling Zones were first set up in St Ives in 2002 followed by more than 100 similar protective zones throughout Cambridgeshire.

Residents are offered help and advice and provided with an information pack which enables them to have the confidence to say no to any cold callers who knock at their door and to warn rogue traders that they are not welcome. Window stickers and street signs advertise where no cold calling zones are in operation.

The new NCCZ in Swavesey will be launched in The Communal Room in Thistle Green, at 10.30 am on April 8, with an information session for residents, while at the same time street and residential signs will be erected.

Nationally, more than 10,000 complaints are made about cold calling doorstep traders every year.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "No Cold Calling Zones have proved very effective in areas where vulnerable people live – such as sheltered accommodation or developments for older or disabled people. "They are introduced with the full co-operation of local residents and are a good way of helping to support the community and protect them from unscrupulous traders or salespeople who may be seeking to exploit or steal from them."

Further information on No Cold Calling Zones is available from Cambridgeshire Trading Standards:

http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20074/trading_standards/273/trading_standards_community_projects or 0345 045 5206.

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