

Round up of recent County news From County Councillor John Reynolds

Adult Social Care

'County Council has clear vision for Adult Social Care' - Inspectors conclude.
The annual assessment by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has concluded that Adult Social Care Services in Cambridgeshire are consistently above the minimum requirements in almost every area of delivery.

The assessment is based on interviews with service users and covers performance information and a detailed self-assessment. The overall rating is performing 'well' .

Of the seven assessment areas, the services provided by the County Council in partnership with other agencies, six were rated as performing 'well' with only one rated at performing 'adequately' - 'Choice and Control' . Detailed work is already underway and this rating is expected to improve next year (see item below).

Delay to busway opening

Finishing works to the St Ives to Cambridge Busway have not yet been completed which means the route could not open at the end of November.

As with all building projects construction inspections take place once work is mainly complete to identify final tasks that need to be completed.

Much of the work identified from inspections has already been done, but there are still some tasks that Busway contractor BAM Nuttall need to complete.

The Council and BAM Nuttall have made good progress in recent weeks on the terms of the legal agreement needed to formally handover the track. However, the finishing works are part of finalising the agreement and until they are done, the agreement cannot be concluded.

Speak to us about Hills Road bridge safety trial

Local residents and businesses across Cambridgeshire are being invited to give feedback on a safety scheme trial on Hills Road Bridge.

The trial which has been in place since the beginning of September has shown that on average over 18,000 vehicles, 5,000 cyclists and 2,500 pedestrians use the bridge every day.

The trial scheme introduced segregated on-road cycle lanes so that all road users can be separated safely while they travel over the bridge.

The Cycle Cambridge team are carrying out the trial until Christmas and are currently evaluating traffic flow at the junctions either end of the bridge, looking at queue lengths and monitoring driver behaviour.

The feedback questionnaire is available online at:
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/cambridgeshire or via freepost paper copy or by e-mail at:
transport.delivery@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. The consultation ends on December 23.

Social care revolution continues in Cambridgeshire

A new approach to providing social care and support in Cambridgeshire is continuing to expand across the country - with people aged over 65 the latest to benefit. Since earlier this year the County Council and its NHS partners have been offering people with physical and learning disabilities the opportunity to take control of their own care arrangements using a Personalised Budget. The scheme is known as Self-Directed Support.

Personalised Budgets enable the service user - or their family or carer - to receive the money needed to meet their assessed care needs and to make their own decisions on how the money is spent to meet their own particular support requirements.

The scheme was launched to provide support in Fenland, but is now being expanded to include people aged over 65 years of age, in Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire, and across the whole of Cambridgeshire by early 2010.

New cycle bridge beats expectations

Cambridge's newest bridge is breaking all expectations after recent monitoring showed up to 1,900 cyclists a day are already using it just a year after it opened.

When the bridge was first planned it was expected that a total of 1,000 cyclists and pedestrians would use it daily. The recent survey shows this figures has been almost doubled by cyclists alone. The bridge, the first in over 40 years to be built across the Cam, cost £3 million and is part of an ongoing programme of measures being introduced to increase cycling.

Cambridgeshire County Council Gets To The Route Of Lorry

Residents are being asked to give their views on the advisory freight map for Cambridgeshire, which aims to help meet the needs of local communities and lorry operators. Cambridgeshire County Council has distributed the map to local councillors and parish councils to give their opinion and is now asking Cambridgeshire residents to do the same. The map, which is currently in draft form for consultation, is hoped to be used as a tool to improve Heavy Commercial Vehicle (HCV) traffic management, by giving freight companies the Highway Authority's preferred routes to consider when planning their journeys.

The strategic routes, shown in green, are those currently recommended for use by HCVs to get as near as possible to a destination. The local routes, shown in yellow, should be used by companies who are either based or delivering along the route or when it is no longer possible to use a strategic route to get to a destination. The local routes, which are shown going through weight restricted areas, will be available only for HCVs with premises there or deliveries to make in the area.

This is part of an overall package of improvements we are making to deal sensibly with lorry traffic. We are also looking at using planning agreements to fund new advisory signs for lorries and are putting in place routing agreements for companies serving large developments, such as quarries. Cambridgeshire is continuing to grow and with this growth comes extra traffic. The size and volume of HCVs using Cambridgeshire's roads have increased significantly over recent years, but this has not been reflected by an increase in Government funding to the local highway authority for spending on road construction or maintenance."

Please return any comments you may have, marked "Advisory Freight Map" to The Traffic Manager's Team by February 5, 2010, using these contact details; lorries@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or Traffic Manager Service Business Support on 01223 715547 or visit <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/trafficmanagement/heavy/draft+advisory+freight+map+for+consultation.htm>

A1307 drivers urged to slow down, stay aware and stay alive

The County Council has relaunched an education campaign targeted at making A1307 drivers Slow Down, Stay Aware and Stay Alive.

The campaign's relaunch is part of a package of improvements to reduce the number of deaths on the road. Provisional data shows that the 12 months between October last year, to September 2009 has seen no fatal accidents, 2 that were serious and 12 slight accidents - a reduction of 36% on the preceding 12 months.

The renewed campaign will run for around four weeks with advertising on buses that travel along the route as well as advertising on vans, the internet and posters being distributed to villages in and around the main route.

A specifically designed radio advert is also being aired within Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and across the Eastern region.

£42 million recycling plant opens for business

A £42 million recycling plant which will put Cambridgeshire at the forefront of waste management in the UK, opened in Waterbeach, on November 9.

Rubbish collected from households across the county will be sorted at the plant which is off the A10 and is run by local family firm Donarbon in partnership with the County Council.

The massive, hi-tech treatment plant, built by BAM Nuttall which is the length of three football pitches, houses giant shredding machines called Terminators, and the latest mechanical sorting equipment, provided by Kelagh and Komptech, which removes material for recycling before turning the rest of the waste into compost-like material for use on non-food crops or as fuel.

Maintaining Cambourne - audio walk and book launch

If you've ever wondered what it takes to maintain Cambourne and the facilities in the village - then a new book and audio walk could provide the answers.

Since March, artist and architect Helen Stratford has been spending time with people who produce and maintain Cambourne's open spaces and her new book 'Mechanical Operations in Cambourne,' is the result. The book was launched on November 12.

During her research she met local residents, young people, parish groundsmen, roadsweepers, planners and allotment holders and visited some of the lesser known areas of the village. Her research is part of the Communities under Construction residency programme at nearby Wysing Arts Centre, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

Review of secondary education in St Neots

A major review of secondary education in St Neots is being carried out by the County Council.

The review has been prompted by the need to provide extra secondary school places in the town in response to planned housing development, and the need to address challenges facing St Neots Community College. An estimated 1,300 new homes are due to be built in the town on land east of the railway to the south of the Love's Farm development, with a further 1,700 planned in the longer term.

Forecasters at the County Council estimate that between 600 and 900 extra secondary school places will be needed in the town between now and 2016.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

The national results for Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) are due to be published on December 9 via the Audit Commission's new web pages OnePlace (see <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx> for details). The public sector agencies in Cambridgeshire will be issuing press releases highlighting the outcomes for the County. CAA is the new assessment regime operated by a joint inspectorate and facilitated by the Audit Commission.

Making Cambridgeshire Count

The project continues to go through the fieldwork exploring lines of enquiry that emerged from the launch event and Cabinet member conference. During December Officers and Leading members (from across the public sector agencies working in Cambridgeshire) will hear the results of the fieldwork prior to options being developed in the new year.

The Queen's Speech

The Queen attended the state opening of Parliament and outlined the Government's legislative agenda for the coming year. Given the timing of the speech and the upcoming General Election in 2010, there has been controversy about the contents of the speech. Whilst the Government have claimed that they expect the majority of the new bills outlined to be introduced before the General Election, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats have questioned this, and have stated that the Speech is essentially the first Labour manifesto for the 2010 General Election.

Items identified so far that are of particular note for the Council and our partners are:

- * New powers and new inspection measures for schools in the Children, Schools and Families Bill;
- * The Equality Bill, which will introduce a new equality duty for local authorities;
- * The Flood and Water Management Bill, under which local authorities will be given the responsibility to deal with surface water flooding; and
- * The Personal Care at Home Bill, which will provide free care at home for up to 280,000 people - with some of the funding for this likely to fall to local government.

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act received royal assent on the 12th November and, has two main aims:

1. It will bring in the first legislation to support the Government 's July 2008 Community Empowerment White Paper, "Communities in Control " . This legislation aims to support the White Paper's goal of giving local people greater rights to shape their local services.
2. The Act also implements the recommendations from the review of sub-national review of economic development and regeneration (SNR) to integrate local and regional decision-making on economic development and allow local and regional bodies to do more to promote economic development and regeneration.

The Act also aims to improve current legislation around commercial contracts, aiming to provide a fairer system for construction companies (including the referral of disputes to adjudication)

Can I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year

Yours

John Reynolds December 14th 2009