

Report from County Councillor John Reynolds

Update on Busway talks - County Council and BAM Nuttall statement

Cambridgeshire County Council issued a joint statement at Cabinet from the County Council and Busway contractor BAM Nuttall Ltd. This was to update councillors and residents of the progress made on the outstanding issues since the Cabinet report was published outlining the latest position of the scheme.

Cabinet report: Link to Cabinet report

<http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/db/council2.nsf/c3cf865e3cc1131380256a6b0037e439/759179caced8509802576e1003c7df2?OpenDocument>

The joint statement read:

"Senior staff from Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) and BAM Nuttall Ltd (BNL) have met to consider further the outstanding issues holding up completion of the northern section of the Guideway as set out in the report to CCC Cabinet, dispatched last week and being considered today.

"The meeting was productive and actions have been agreed by both parties, commencing with early technical meetings this week, which if carried through, should lead to the resolution of the issues.

"Both parties have agreed that these actions will be monitored by the respective chief executives over the next five days, ahead of a further senior level meeting at the end of the month.

"One of the issues is the Busway's maintenance track that is currently under water in some areas.

"CCC and BNL have agreed that these areas need to be raised, a process that will require liaison with the Environment Agency because of flood storage issues in the flood plain. The good news is that any work on this could be carried out whilst the Busway is operational, so the work, which needs drier conditions, will not prevent the Busway opening.

"CCC and BAM Nuttall wish to see the Busway operational as soon as possible and have agreed to use the procedures laid out in the contract to progress the outstanding issues.

"Provided there is the expected progress during the coming weeks, both parties are hopeful that it will be possible to indicate by the middle of April the target date for trialling and then operating the Busway.

"CCC and BNL remain resolutely of the view that once completed the Busway will provide the high quality, well-used and successful service we always anticipated."

Deserving Projects Receive County Council Funding

Voluntary and community projects across Cambridgeshire have been awarded grant funding by Cambridgeshire County Council to help support their work with vulnerable adults.

The cash - up to £3,000 per project - was presented to 31 groups by the Chairman of the County Council, Councillor Linda Oliver, during an event at Over Conference and Community Centre, on Monday, March 8.

The grants will help meet the cost of a range of projects, including running lunch clubs, community centres and providing support and advice services.

Partnership Project To Protect Vulnerable People Officially Launched

Partners will come together to launch a new information pack and DVD giving details of a pioneering project to protect vulnerable people which has already proved highly successful across Cambridgeshire.

Over the last nine months organisations across Cambridgeshire have been working together to spot potential problems for people in their own homes and already 200 people have been given assistance.

Home Shield brings together more than 30 organisations across Cambridgeshire who regularly visit people in their own homes - staff who spot a problem or potential problem inform a co-ordinator who then refers the issue to the agency best placed to help the person get help or support - with a commitment that any referral will be dealt with within 10 days.

Representatives from the Home Shield organisations will come together at Girton College, Cambridge, at 8am, on Thursday, March 18, for the formal launch.

Cambridgeshire Trading Standards Say No To Unwelcome Callers

Cambridgeshire Trading Standards is working with local residents to set up schemes designed to discourage unwelcome 'cold-callers' and potential 'rogue traders' from knocking on their doors.

Distraction burglaries have been linked to unsolicited calls from visitors claiming to be selling goods or offering building or gardening.

A Trading Standards scheme called 'No Cold Calling Zones' was piloted in St Ives, followed by 60 further No Cold Calling Zones. Now the scheme is being further rolled out to streets in Linton; Leverington; Wisbech; and Hartford near Huntingdon.

Young People Lead The Way In Positive Activities

More young people are engaging in positive activities in Cambridgeshire than anywhere else in the country, new figures show.

Over 80 per cent of 14 and 15-year-olds in the county took part in a positive activity led by adults over a four-week period in 2009. This was the highest rate recorded in any authority which took part in the survey, according to figures published this week by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

The proportion in Cambridgeshire rose by 6.2 per cent from 74.2 per cent in 2008 to 80.4 per cent in 2009. Nationally, figures are falling. The survey was carried out in order to ensure that the first-hand views of children and young people were taken into account as part of each local authority's inspection process, and to provide data to compare at a national level.

Teenage Conception Rates In Cambridgeshire At All Time Low

Conception rates among 15 to 17-year-old girls in Cambridgeshire have fallen to their lowest level, according to new figures.

Data for 2008 - the latest year for which information is available - shows an average of 24.9 pregnancies per 1000 girls in Cambridgeshire. The national average for the same year was 40.4 per 1000. The Cambridgeshire figures represent a decrease of 20.7% since 1998 from 31.4 conceptions per 1000 to 24.9, compared to a national decrease of just 13.3% over the same period.

The reduction in teenage pregnancies is a key target of Cambridgeshire's multi-agency Sexual Health and Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, where professionals from the County Council's Children and Young People's Services and colleagues from health work alongside the voluntary sector, parents and the young people themselves.

Money Allocated To Tackle Anti-Social Behaviour

The County Council and Cambridgeshire Police have agreed grants totalling £44,000 to groups working to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) around Cambridgeshire.

Requests for funding outstripped the available cash and grants have been awarded to groups felt to be having the greatest impact on reducing poor behaviour in the county.

Five groups which are either working across Cambridgeshire or in specific areas of the county will receive grants.

Council To Carry On Fight For Transport Improvements

The County Council will carry on fighting for vital funds to improve transport and say they will not impose congestion charging on Cambridge.

The announcement follows a decision by Government, to drop the former Transport Innovation Fund (TiF) and replace it with the Urban Challenge Fund.

In announcing its change of heart on funding, the Government recognised that work done by authorities, such as Cambridgeshire, showed a range of transport improvements were needed. Improving transport and reducing congestion in and around Cambridge continues to be a priority for Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillors have also said they will carry on fighting for the creation of a much needed rail station at Chesterton and will put this at the heart of any new bid.

Councillors will invite Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council to work with the County Council to put together a bid for the Urban Challenge Fund through the Joint Transport Forum. This would build on the good work already undertaken by the Forum and will agree priorities for any new bid.

On The Road To Repairs In Cambridgeshire

County Council workmen are out in force across Cambridgeshire repairing unprecedented levels of damage caused to the roads by the extended period of winter weather.

Since the beginning of 2010, patching crews have repaired over 3,000 pot holes and the county council will keep up the pressure to repair the roads as quickly as possible.

Cambridgeshire Highways have diverted all available resources to the problem and currently have repair gangs of up to four men each are out on a daily basis carrying out repairs - in South Cambridge 7 gangs have been operating; in East Cambridge and Fenland 9 gangs are working and in Huntingdon 6 gangs have been repairing potholes.

Extension of Innovative Scheme To Support People With Learning Disabilities

The Cambridgeshire Adult Placement Scheme which offers carers a break from caring and helps service users develop their life skills and independence, is looking for Adult Placement Carers.

The scheme provides respite and support in the community for people with learning disabilities, and has just launched in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. The support offered is developed around the needs of the individual and careful 'matching' takes place to make sure that both carer and service user are right for each other.

For further information on the scheme or to apply to become an Adult Placement Carer, go to www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk,

telephone Cambridgeshire Direct on 0345 045 5221 or e-mail countywideadultplacementscheme@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Two-can Cross At New Newmarket Road Pedestrian Crossing

Engineers are about to start work on safety improvements for pedestrian and cyclists on Cambridge's busy Newmarket Road, and drivers are being warned of possible delays during the project.

The pedestrian crossing close to Abbey Street and the Elizabeth Way roundabout, is about to be updated and is expected to take approximately six weeks to complete at a cost of £90,000.

The Council will remove the current pedestrian crossing and replace it with a toucan crossing, which enables cyclists to cross without having to dismount.

Tree-mendous Efforts Helps Create New Cambridgeshire Wood

A tree-mendous community effort has helped create Cambridgeshire's newest wood and celebrate 100 years of Cambridgeshire County Farms Estates.

Around 400 volunteers helped at the weekend to plant around 3,000 trees on the land between Oakington, Girton and Histon. When finished around 8,640 broad-leaved trees and shrubs will eventually make up the new community wood which will cover 4.6 hectares of the 8 hectare site.

Make A Bee-Line To See The Hive Education And Enterprise Park Plans

Local residents and businesses are being encouraged to make a bee-line to see plans for a new multi-million pound education and enterprise park called the Hive.

What will make The Hive really different to other business parks is that its focus will be on business that's good for both society and the environment.

It is being developed through an innovative partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge Regional College, local charity Citylife and the Building Research Establishment (BRE). It has also been part-funded by Housing Growth Fund money allocated by Cambridgeshire Horizons and its partners, and the East of England Development Agency.

An exhibition will be held on Monday, March 22, between 2pm and 8pm at Orchard Park, Community Centre, Ring Fort Road. Visitors will be able to talk to representatives from the organizations involved and learn more about the plans for the Hive.

Burwell To Unveil Giant's Head

Children have been involved in the creation and design of three giants' heads which are being unveiled at sites across Cambridgeshire next week.

Each of Cambridgeshire County Council's outdoor education centres - Grafham Water Centre, Burwell House and the Stibbington Centre - commissioned one of the sculptures.

Huntingdon Employer Helps Give Young People A Chance

Youth service Connexions is working with local employers to find meaningful careers for what some politicians have labelled 'the lost generation' .

Connexions - part of Cambridgeshire County Council - provides young people with information, advice, guidance and experiences to enhance their personal development.

One such employer is Huntingdon-based insurance broking business Coversure Insurance Services. Coversure has recruited young people through the careers service since 1995 and has recruited 16 teenagers using Connexions' free recruitment service since 2006. A total of 11 of its 68 current staff have found their jobs this way. This includes Chris Fox, Head of Accounts, who joined in 1995 as an office junior.

Cabinet

Cabinet met on 23rd February and considered a number of key decisions, including decisions on shared services, the Council's Community Engagement Strategy and the review of primary school provision in Cambridge City.

Rural insights survey 2009 results:

This month the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) published results of a comprehensive survey, which took place during late 2009, on the perceptions and priorities of rural people. The survey provides detailed information on the views of residents across rural England, and comparisons with the views of people who live in urban areas.

The survey provides some useful insights:

*Top priorities for rural people: public transport, shopping facilities and activities for teenagers - public transport was mentioned by 28% as one of the main things rural people would like to see done to improve the quality of life. Other concerns were shopping facilities (17%), activities for teenagers (15%) and road maintenance (14%).

These figures are very different in urban areas. Only 10% mentioned public transport and 7% shopping facilities, while 20% mentioned the level of crime.

*Rural residents are generally positive about where they live and their quality of life - 94% are satisfied with where they live, compared with 89% in urban areas. The proportion 'very' satisfied is 62% in rural areas compared with 46% in urban. 92% rate their quality of life as good compared with 87% in urban areas.

The full results of the survey can be found at the CRC website:

www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk

The Council will be working with partners to analyse the results of this survey and other rural information in a Cambridgeshire context.

Freedom to Lead - Summary:

'Freedom to Lead, Trust to Deliver,' is a consultation document produced by the LGA. Cambridgeshire County Council has submitted a response to this consultation, which answers each of the LGA questions. The following is a much summarised note of the consultation and our response.

'Freedom to Lead,' advocates a devolved approach to local government. It is split into two main sections. One is an 'offer' to government, which sets out what local government can do locally to improve the quality of life for local people and make public money go further. The second section is the 'ask', which is what needs to change to allow the 'offer' to happen.

Cambridgeshire County Council does not believe that local government should be making 'asks' of central government, instead we should be constantly be engaged in a dialogue about how best to meet the needs of local people. The term 'principles of collaboration' would better support this idea than the 'offer' and 'ask'.

Local Councils and the public sector as a whole, in Cambridgeshire are making significant progress in developing and undertaking the principles proposed by the LGA. We therefore welcome these principles, but see greater value in a principle from central government of committing to work in partnership with local areas to enable reforms as and when these are identified locally. A blanket set of principles/offers does not reflect the different needs and capacities of local areas to undertake reform. A better approach would be centred on a commitment to open dialogue with local areas as local leadership is developed and enhanced (through initiatives like Making Cambridgeshire Count and Total Place).

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Making Cambridgeshire Count Update:

We are now in the second phase of the Making Cambridgeshire Count initiative. The first phase focussed on bringing partners across public services in the county together, working in collaboration to develop a shared identity and common purpose. Participants spent time identifying areas where increased collaboration can lead to more effective and efficient services for our communities.

This led to eight projects being identified which will now be developed as part of MCC phase two. When each project has reached a certain stage and there is a natural link it will be passed over to a Cambridgeshire Together thematic partnership to be progressed, three MCC projects have already reached this stage.

The second phase of Making Cambridgeshire Count will also include a continued focus on developing leadership and the culture of collaboration that has been established. Even more Members, employees and stakeholders will now be engaged and involved in achieving the overall aim of MCC - making Cambridgeshire a great place to call home.

Visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

I am available for consultation by phone, letter or e-mail. I can be contacted at the address or telephone number below. Please let me know if you would like these regular updates by email.

Yours

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