

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS

Busway contractor gives foundation for progress.

Contractors have finalised plans for the testing required to check. The Busway track foundations are sound - taking the project another step closer to being complete. The foundations are one of six issues holding are the opening of the track from St Ives to Cambridge and BAM Nuttall has recently set a timetable for carrying out the necessary tasks. The expected proposals from BAM Nuttall for bore hole testing were received by County Council experts last week, and at a site meeting on Friday the locations where bore holes will be dug to test soil conditions were agreed. BAM Nuttall has indicated to Council transport bosses they expect to meet the self imposed date for completion of the soil testing, and follow on calculations, as required by the Council - which is the middle of June.

Legal agreement courts savings for taxpayers

Legal teams from councils across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire have signed a new agreement which will see savings for tax payers whilst ensuring that their rights continue to be protected. The new Concordat will see legal expertise shared between the Councils and other ways of driving down costs implemented, while maintaining a high quality service. Council legal teams provide vital services for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough communities from planning enforcement, prosecuting rogue traders and for food hygiene offences, advising on housing and homelessness issues, drawing up contracts. All seven local authorities in Cambridgeshire signed up to the Concordat. The group calls itself the Cambridgeshire Legal Services Partnership and has already started work on the establishing a panel of legal firms which can be used by group members at discounted rates.

Pedalling ahead with new cycle lanes.

Work on new cycling links in South Cambridgeshire is due to start on Monday, April 12. A new route between Babraham Road Park and Ride site and Wandlebury will be starting next week while work has already started on a new shared use foot/cycleway between Horningsea and Fen Ditton. The schemes are part of the Cycle Cambridge programme, which aims to encourage more bicycle journeys and increase the levels of cycling in Cambridge's surrounding villages and new developments to equivalent levels in the city. The programme is being managed and delivered by Cambridgeshire County Council in partnership with Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Compost Week

National Compost Awareness Week enabled residents in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to get their hands on free compost thanks to their local councils and Donarbon. The weeklong celebration of all things earthy ran from 2 - 8 May and included a number of events across Cambridgeshire. Council staff were at a number of venues across the county to give away free compost made from kitchen and garden waste residents put out for collection in their green or brown bins or brown sacks. There were also experts on hand to show you how easy it is to make your own compost at home.

Pupils offered primary school of their choice

The vast majority of children in Cambridgeshire will be starting Reception in September in their first choice primary school. A total of 94.4% of children applying for a place in Reception this September by the response deadline have been allocated a place at their first choice school. A further 3.6% have been offered a place at their second choice school, while fewer than 2% could not be offered any of their preferences. This has been achieved by Cambridgeshire County Council's admissions team, despite the continuing pressure on primary school places throughout the county.

School travel plans in place

Hard work by schools across Cambridgeshire means every County Council school now has an individual School Travel Plan. The achievement also marks a success for the County Council in achieving its target for making sure all its schools have an approved plan in place. A School Travel Plan promotes sustainable travel and encourages practical ways of improving safety on the school journey, whilst reducing congestion at peak times and decreasing pollution.

Milestone for Children's Centres

Children's Centres across Cambridgeshire are celebrating two major milestones in their development. All 13 Sure Start Children's Centres developed during Phase 3 in Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire have achieved designation - which means they are open and meeting required standards. In order to be designated, Children's Centres have to provide a clearly signposted building, have staff in place and offer information to parents and carers about childminders, health and links to Job Centre Plus. In addition, each centre has two years to ensure it is delivering the full range of services expected of a Sure Start Children's Centre - this is called reaching their Full Core Offer.

Fakes spotted by Trading Standards

Cambridgeshire Trading Standards has continued its campaign to rid markets in the county of fake goods with another successful operation. Trading Standards Officers supported by Cambridgeshire Police, checked stalls at Bourn Market on Monday, May 3, and despite an earlier operation at the same venue, found four retailers still offering counterfeit items. As a result, Trading Standards seized more than 400 handbags branded Dolce and Gabbana, Louis Vuitton and Prada, 2,000 fake CDs of current chart music and 750 polo shirts and jeans branded Ralph Lauren, Fred Perry and Tommy Hilfiger.

Norwegian delegation visits Cambridgeshire

A delegation from Norway visited Cambridgeshire to learn more about how councils and partner organisations plan for the thousands of new homes due to be built. The 30 strong group, from the Municipality of Sandnes, included planners, transport planners, surveyors and cartographers. They learned about the challenges facing Cambridgeshire planners as well as visiting development sites. They also visited Trumpington Park and Ride to see how transport provision is planned for. Representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridgeshire Horizons covered a range of issues with the group as well as listening to the advice of the delegates themselves.

Working to tackle Council Tax fraud

An anti-fraud exercise has identified over 150 people claiming council tax discounts they weren't entitled to. In a national campaign to tackle fraud, East Cambridgeshire District Council found 171 people wrongly claiming discounts leading to almost £108,000 in overpayments being recovered. The National Fraud Initiative, run by the Audit Commission to identify fraudulent and erroneous payments from the public purse. For the first time residency data was matched with council tax information to identify potential cases where Single Persons Discount (SPD) was being awarded in error.

Improvements to St Ives Library

St Ives is set to be the latest library to benefit from the introduction of self-service technology after its successful use in six other libraries across the County. The introduction of the new self-service machines by Cambridgeshire County Council will give the team of library staff, which will remain the same, more time to provide assistance and help customers to find books and information. The self-service is quick and easy to use and staff will be on hand to explain how the machines work and to answer any questions.

The new self-service machines will enable customers to:

- *Issue and return books, story cassettes, DVDs and CDs quickly and easily
- *Check what books they already have out on loan
- *Renew items
- *Pay fines and loan charges for story cassettes, DVDs and CDs

Somersham local nature reserve opens

More than 200 residents, a tractor and a horse turned up to celebrate the launch of the Somersham Local Nature Reserve on Sunday, May 2. It was a great day for local people to discover their local wildlife, find out how the County Council, parish council and the friends group are managing the site and find out how they can get involved further. It covers just over 23 acres and includes a lake, woodland and grassland as well as a wealth of wildlife, such as bullfinches, common terns, kingfisher, butterflies, reptiles, lizards and wildflowers.

Swing into spring

To help anyone inspired by the recent US Masters - On Par Golf Club and the District Council have teamed up to offer the chance to try out the sport for free. East Cambridgeshire District Council's Sports Development team and On Par driving range and golf course in Ely are offering free coaching sessions with a PGA professional, 'Tri-golf' for children and putting and chipping competitions.

Instructors take to the water for charity

Instructors from Grafham Water Centre were among hundreds taking part in a charity windsurfing event. The Centre - which is part of Cambridgeshire County Council - was one of several venues being used for the Sunrise Sunset 2010 event on May 2. The aim was to be involved in windsurfing activities afloat sometime between sunrise and sunset on the day. Hundreds of sailors were involved at dozens of venues across the country - of which Grafham Water Centre is one - to raise money for cancer research, education and support.

Fenland conceptions at lowest rate for 20 years

New figures show that teenage conception rates in Fenland have continued to decrease to their lowest level in 20 years. The conception rate per 1000 girls aged 15-17 now stands at 38.0 (ie. 38 in every 1000 girls aged between 15 and 17) - a 27.5% reduction since the start of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in 1998 and below the current national average of 40.4 per 1000. The figures have come from the Office of National Statistics and relate to the period 2006-08. The Fenland rate equates to 188 conceptions over the 3 year period, roughly 63 conceptions a year.

East Cambs and Fenland workers rewarded for long service

East Cambridgeshire and Fenland employees of Cambridgeshire County Council have been rewarded for their long service at a special ceremony at Shire Hall. Three members of staff were presented with Long Service Awards after each completing 25 years service or more. They were joined by a further 10 long-serving members of staff from other parts of the county, who were presented with their awards by County Council Chairman Linda Oliver.

Comprehensive Areas Assessment:

Work continues to provide all the evidence required by the Audit Commission for Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2010. The Council submitted an update to its 2009 'Managing Performance' self-assessment in April; the Cambridgeshire Together partnership also published a short Area Self-Assessment update. A full Area Self-Assessment update is now being developed by the Cambridgeshire Together partnership and will be submitted to the Audit Commission late in May.

On-site work in support of Comprehensive Area Assessment is likely to take place in June, and conversations are taking place between the Audit Commission and the Council. The Audit Commission intend meeting a range of Members, our partners and Officers to discuss the information provided in our self-assessment update. The on-site work will focus on two Key Lines of Enquiry:

- * How well is the organisation delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?
- * Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvement?

It will aim to identify changes since the previous assessment, and what differences have these changes made to outcomes for local people.

Making Cambridgeshire Count Update:

Cambridgeshire influencing Total Place nationally

Senior leaders from local and central government were recently invited by Dame Helen Ghosh, Permanent Secretary for DEFRA, to join a high-level group - including Lord Michael Bichard - to discuss the next steps for Total Place. This was a significant opportunity for Cambridgeshire to contribute to the national debate, share our experiences from Making Cambridgeshire Count, and shape the future of the next phase of Total Place. It was announced on Tuesday 6 April that Making Cambridgeshire Count has been shortlisted in the MJ Achievement Awards 2010, in the 'Total Place Achievement of the Year' category. The category seeks to recognise innovative projects that show joint working across different parts of the public sector, with a benefit for residents either in lower costs or a better service or ideally both. Winners will be announced on the 24 June. This nomination is testament to the hard work that has been done by people across the Cambridgeshire Together partnership.

Fairness for all in Cambridgeshire - the equality and diversity consultation

Cambridgeshire County Council is committed to ensuring equality and promoting diversity across Cambridgeshire. This means making sure that the services we offer are equal and fair for all people, and that we recognise and celebrate the different cultures we have across the county. An online consultation, along with other targeted stakeholder activities, is being carried out to make sure that we know what communities across Cambridgeshire want and need. The consultation can be accessed at <http://tiny.cc/ffaCambs>. Responses from the consultation, feedback from other stakeholder activities, and implications of the Equality Act 2010 will feed in to a refresh of the Council's Single Equality Strategy and Action Plan this year.

Yours John Reynolds

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