

## **Financial situation facing the County:**

Next month the Coalition Government will be announcing details of its Comprehensive Spending Review for Local authorities. This will set out in more detail how much funding Cambridgeshire will have for providing services in the next three years.

Public services are facing an unprecedented period of retraction as Government funding is cut back as a result of general economic conditions, the need to resolve the deficit and political decisions on the role and scale of the state. Based on Treasury estimates, the County Council is currently planning for a potential reduction in its funding from Government of up to 40 per cent in real terms over the coming five years. Our ability to raise council tax rates and charges will also be severely limited.

This means that, in order to place the council on a sustainable footing for the future, the way services are currently delivered will have to be completely and radically transformed. In the future, the County Council will become both a commissioner as well as provider of services, working increasingly in collaboration with other public services, the community, and the private and voluntary sectors. Some services will end, and others become more targeted to those in the greatest need.

## **Cambridgeshire's resilience**

We cannot underestimate the potential impacts - 43% of people in employment in Cambridgeshire work in public services. Because the unique qualities of Cambridgeshire's economy - the knowledge base we have through the universities, our bio-tech, clean tech industries - we are well placed to weather the storm.

It's not the same picture everywhere in the county - there are particular issues in Fenland with deprivation and social cohesion. Clearly some areas will continue to need more support than others. We are already addressing the big society agenda which is already happening in the county. Starting soon we will be asking people in Cambridgeshire for their ideas and in particular their capacity to volunteer.

## **Councils committed to being as transparent and accountable.**

Cambridgeshire is showing its commitment to being open about its finances by publishing details of all spending over £500. From the week beginning Monday, September 20 Cambridgeshire County Council will reveal all its spending of £500 and over for July and August this year. Monthly updates of spending will follow.

Almost immediately after the general election, the Government asked all local authorities to prepare to publish this financial information by January 2011. As part of its commitment to be as open and honest as possible Cambridgeshire County Council is joining around 50 other authorities in publicising the information early.

The County Council is committed to being as transparent and accountable as possible. We were one of the first authorities to publish details about our senior management pay and we are in the first group of councils to put this information about spending over £500 on line. We have a good national record for managing finances and we are eager not only to publish this long before the Government's deadline of January but to eventually exceed Government expectations by publishing spending below £500 as well.

## **Primary school meals prices remain unchanged**

The price of a primary school meal will remain at £2 for the second year. Cambridgeshire Catering Services (CCS) - part of the County Council - will continue to provide a nutritious, value for money two-course meal, consisting of a main course and dessert, to Cambridgeshire pupils.

Over the last 3 years school meal uptake has seen a rise from 31.6% to 39.0% with over 15,000 meals served across the county every day - all meeting the Government's Food Based and Nutrient Standards. CCS aims to increase uptake to 42% during the next school year and by holding the price and maintaining the quality is confident that this goal can be achieved.

School meals are an important part of the whole school day and a nutritious and fulfilling school meal can give a child more energy for afternoon lessons, improve concentration and help prevent health problems in later life. With obesity issues regularly appearing in the news, we are working hard to increase school meal uptake and thereby encouraging pupils to eat a healthy, balanced meal at lunchtimes

## **Furious about BAM Nuttall's latest delay.**

Busway contractors BAM Nuttall have angered the Cambridgeshire public as the firm has announced they will not now finish building the Guided Busway until January -another one month delay. Councillors said that the contractor's attitude to completing the job was not good enough for a well respected national and international firm. The contractor has told the Council the extra one month delay is because they need to carry out an assessment and remedial works of an old railway bridge - a task which could have been done at any time over the last four years.

For the past 6 months BAM Nuttall's construction programme has shown the Busway would be completed in December. But despite reassurances from senior BAM Nuttall staff that they would complete the job before December they have now said it won't be completed this year. They have left simple tasks that could have been completed at any point over the last four years to the last minute and once again delayed this project for the people of Cambridgeshire. BAM Nuttall has always needed to assess and carry out remedial work to all the old railway bridges, we have been reminding them for the last 18 months, and now they have delayed completing of the job by one month because they are yet to do it. If BAM Nuttall fails to complete the route this year it will be outrageous.

The contractor was due to complete both sections of the Busway in February 2009 and has had damages of almost £14,000 a day deducted for late delivery - over £7 million so far. This extra one month delay will mean a further £420,000 will be deducted from BAM Nuttall in damages.

John Reynolds  
September 2010