

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 15th JANUARY 2012

KEEP SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER - Jan 5

The government announced just before Christmas that it was making available £20 million nationally to help keep people safe and warm in their own homes this winter. The County Council made a successful bid for some of this money, and has been told that it will receive £207,000 to help reduce death and illness caused by cold weather. The County Council is making the money available immediately and will be reimbursed when the government funding is received.

The money will be used to increase the level of practical support such as benefits advice, shopping services and emergency heating repairs for people who are vulnerable to the health effects of cold weather.

In addition, in periods of predicted severe weather, the money will be used to ensure that vulnerable people are contacted to check that they are safe and well, and that risks to their health are minimised by support from local authority and voluntary agencies.

By working even more closely together, health, welfare and safety agencies across Cambridgeshire can do even more than in previous years to support our communities. The government has recognised the good work that has already started and awarding this money to Cambridgeshire will enable us to further expand the services, support and advice we are able to offer to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL SERVICES WILL HELP REDUCE DELAYED DISCHARGES - Jan 5

Adult Social Care Services in Cambridgeshire have been given a £1.5 million government boost towards efforts to reduce delayed discharges from hospitals in the county. The Department of Health today announced a one-off £150 million grant to Primary Care Trusts in England, for immediate transfer to local authorities for investment in social services which also benefit the health system.

In Cambridgeshire, £1.45 million will be channelled to Cambridgeshire County Council via NHS Cambridgeshire. The two organisations already work closely together and in partnership with hospitals in the county to ensure that people are able to leave medical care as soon as possible.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Health and Adult Social Care Services in Cambridgeshire are already under pressure and the demand inevitably increases during the winter months, so this extra money from Government is very welcome. We already work very closely with our partners in the health sector and examples of new services being set up in Cambridgeshire to help ensure a smooth and rapid transition of patients from medical to social care include GP out of hours services, GPs working with acute trusts in Emergency Departments, rapid response services staffed by nursing and social care teams and increased work with private sector and voluntary organisations to reduce the number of people who need to go into hospital in the first place".

"This relationship between hospitals, GPs, NHS community partners, social services and the independent and voluntary sector is pivotal to ensuring that patients who are admitted to hospital only remain in beds for the time they require specialist acute care and are discharged out as soon as they are deemed safe to leave - this extra money will enable us to build on that existing partnership."

CHRISTINE IS BUSWAY'S ONE IN A MILLION - Jan 12

The millionth Busway passenger took a ride on Thursday, January 12, on the highly successful and record breaking transport facility opened in August last year. This is a massive milestone for the Busway and is ahead of business forecasts. Christine Chandler from Colne was picked as the millionth passenger as she took her father Len Burrow, the millionth and one passenger to Addenbrooke's from St Ives Park and Ride.

Christine, who is a regular user of the Busway since it opened, said: "We use the Busway regularly to go shopping or to the hospital. It is really convenient and means you don't have to go on the A14. It is really regular, reliable and efficient and has got us where we want to go on time. It was a complete surprise to be the millionth passenger and we are really pleased."

To celebrate this momentous occasion Bus operators Stagecoach and Whippet together with representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council were there to surprise them and hand over mementos of the occasion.

More than 200,000 trips a month are being taken on the worlds longest Busway since its opening in August 2011. The Busway is proving very popular as a fast and reliable way to travel and I was pleased to see our millionth customer ride the Busway."

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FASTER BROADBAND FOR ANOTHER 34,000 HOMES AND BUSINESSES - Jan 3

Another 34,000 Cambridgeshire homes and businesses will have access to faster broadband by summer 2012. Histon, Kimbolton, Woolley, Wansford, Bottisham, Crafts Hill, Sawston, Soham, Madingley, Melbourn and Somersham are among 51 East of England communities included in the latest roll-out plans for BT's next generation broadband service delivered over copper lines.

The BT investment makes available broadband speeds of up to 20 megabits per second (Mbps) more than double the maximum speeds previously available to most homes and businesses. It is in addition to the roll-out of superfast fibre-based broadband, which is expected to bring even faster speeds to two-thirds of UK premises by the end of 2014.

Cambridgeshire County Council is part of the partnership of councils, businesses and partners in health and education working together to bring superfast broadband to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to boost business and community wellbeing.

Welcoming the development, Cambridgeshire County Councillor Ian Bates, Cabinet Member for Growth and Planning, said: "Faster and better broadband is vital to the economic success of Cambridgeshire. In an increasingly competitive and technological world it is essential that local businesses and households have access to high speed communications. Broadband is a key part of our community infrastructure and will bring many benefits including increasing opportunities for people to work from home, reducing the need to travel to work so there is less congestion on our roads."

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DOUBLE BROADBAND SPEEDS WILL HELP BOOST BUSINESS GROWTH - Jan 12

Cambridgeshire County Council has welcomed the announcement that Virgin Media is to double broadband speeds for users of its cable network as a boost for business in the region. Virgin Media has announced that subscribers to the cable network's services offering between 10Mb and 50Mb will see their speeds at least doubled, with 100Mb customers getting up to 120Mb in a nationwide upgrade over the next 18 months.

The fibre-optic network currently passes by around 130,000 homes in the Cambridgeshire region including Burwell, Cambridge, Ely, Godmanchester, Huntingdon, Sawston, St Ives, St Neots, Wisbech and March.

Cambridgeshire County Council has agreed to invest in superfast broadband as part of a drive to encourage business and enterprise and support the prosperity and well-being of communities. The County Council is part of the partnership of councils, businesses and partners in health and education working together to bring superfast broadband to the majority of premises in Cambridgeshire by 2015.

Cambridgeshire County Council Leader, Councillor Nick Clarke said: "We welcome this move by Virgin Media, which supports our commitment to ensuring Cambridgeshire is open for business to attract investment, encourage enterprise, and create new jobs.

"Faster broadband is central to boosting the local economy, which in turn helps to improve the quality of life of our communities. We will be working in conjunction with commercial providers to improve the broadband infrastructure across the county, including our market towns and rural parishes."

Virgin Media chief executive officer, Neil Berkett, said: "As people are increasingly doing more online, and getting connected to the internet with lots of different devices, having a fast, reliable broadband service should not be a luxury. We want to make sure that consumers have access to the best value broadband service and that means a superfast connection."

Find out more about Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Broadband plans <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/economicandcommunitydev/ecodevelopment/broadband/default.htm> Or <http://tiny.cc/29dju>

NEW PORTAL OPENS UP MILLIONS OF POUNDS OF BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Companies are being given a massive boost and the opportunity for millions of pounds of business thanks to a new website launched by the County Council. Source Cambridgeshire is a new website that acts as a central point for businesses to see and bid for contract opportunities being advertised by public services in the county.

Local businesses are being urged to sign up for the site which not only helps companies bid for contracts but will provide savings for Cambridgeshire's councils and public services. This means that no matter what size the business is they have easy access to new opportunities. The portal is part of Cambridgeshire's drive to make sure the County is open for business and to provide opportunities for companies and therefore grow the local economy. In 2010/11 Cambridgeshire County Council supported 840 small or medium businesses in Cambridgeshire.

The site is a self service, interactive website where Cambridgeshire councils or public services register and place notices of procurement and contract opportunities. Businesses and other organisations can register and receive email

alerts for any procurement opportunities in their chosen area of business. The procurement opportunities can be anything from organisation seeking quotes, to full scale formal EU tender processes.

Cambridgeshire County Council Leader Nick Clarke, said: "Making it easier for companies and organisations to access and bid for contracts is not only good for business but good for Cambridgeshire public services. It means smaller businesses who have less resources can be on the same footing as larger ones when it comes to bidding for business from Cambridgeshire public services. Cambridgeshire is truly open for business and we are doing all we can do to help our economy thrive which in turn means jobs and prosperity for our communities."

Source Cambridgeshire can be accessed at www.sourcecambridgeshire.gov.uk or on the County Council's website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED ON CAMBRIDGESHIRE ROADS GOES DOWN

Initial figures which have just been released show that the overall downward trend in the number of people killed on Cambridgeshire's roads continued during 2011. Over the past 12 months, 23 fatal accidents occurred which resulted in 26 deaths, the second lowest total ever recorded and eight fewer fatalities than in 2010. The worst year for road deaths in Cambridgeshire was 1990 when 85 people lost their lives in accidents.

Agencies across Cambridgeshire have been working together to provide enforcement, education and physical road safety measures. All members of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Road Safety Partnership join forces and share expertise to help cut the number of casualties and deaths on the counties roads.

County Council Cabinet Member for Community Infrastructure, Councillor Steve Criswell, said: Improving road safety and reducing the number of people killed or injured on our roads is a top priority for the council and the reduction in the number of people who died on our roads is very encouraging and shows a very welcome continuing overall downward trend in the number of road fatalities. But we will not

rest on our laurels and will continue to work with our partners to ensure we do everything we can to further improve road safety.

SCHOOLS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AIMING FOR £1 MILLION MORE - Jan 3

Education chiefs at Cambridgeshire County Council are urging parents to apply for free school meals if their children are eligible. If they do, schools will receive an extra £600 in 'pupil premium' per eligible child next year - up from £430 in the current year. But the applications must be registered by 19 January in order for schools to benefit from the extra funding.

Latest figures suggest there are more than 2,500 children from families with a low income in Cambridgeshire who are eligible for free school meals but are not receiving them. This means schools in Cambridgeshire have missed out on around £1 million in pupil premium funding this year. The Council's Education Welfare Benefits Team is currently working hard to increase registrations by 19 January in order to increase funding to schools next year.

It also means, as families feel the pinch after Christmas, that many could save £400 a year per child if they are currently paying for school meals. Some children who take packed lunches could also benefit from eating hot, nutritionally balanced meals which may help them to concentrate in the afternoon. The pupil premium

scheme allows schools to use the funding to improve the achievements of pupils who receive free school meals. This could mean one-to-one tuition, cultural activities or extra teaching staff.

Next year's funding allocation for Cambridgeshire schools will be based upon the number of children who are registered for free school meals on 19 January 2012, as well as those who have received them at any point in the last six years. An allocation of £250 will also be made for children whose parents are in the armed forces.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Children from more deprived backgrounds often do less well at school than their peers, and the pupil premium funding is designed to help our schools to address this. Our schools in Cambridgeshire are already less well funded than most other schools in the country, and this extra money through the pupil premium is really needed to be able to provide the right support for children who need it."

Parents can apply for free school meals for their children online at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals . Parents can also call the Education Welfare Benefits team for more information or help with making an application on 01480 372307 / 08.

FULBOURN COUNCILLOR GIVES STAMP OF APPROVAL FOR POST OFFICE PLANS - Jan 7

News that the Fulbourn Post Office is to reopen after it was temporarily closed for more than a year has been given the stamp of approval by local County Councillor Nick Clarke. Post Office Limited announced this week its plans to re-open the facility as a Post Office Local from the Fulbourn Co-operative. The branch has been temporarily closed since October 2010 due to the resignation of the previous sub postmaster. It reopened in November last year and now, following the results of a public consultation, will continue to stay open as a trial.

Cambridgeshire County Councillor Nick Clarke, Local Member for Fulbourn, said: "This is very welcome news for Fulbourn which has been without this much needed community facility for far too long. I am glad that the Post Office has found a way of re-opening it and once again providing services. A Post Office is at the heart of local communities, especially in rural villages such as Fulbourn."

The Post Office will be trialling this new service over the next twelve months. During this time Post Office Ltd will be carefully monitoring the situation to make sure it meets the needs of the local community and provide a commercially viable alternative to the way it services are currently offered.

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PARTNERSHIP APPROACH KEEPS CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTRYSIDE OPEN Jan 6

Working closely in partnership with volunteers, parish councils, farmers, land owners, and outdoor enthusiasts, has enabled the County Council to keep the Cambridgeshire countryside open. The results of a condition survey show that the Council's Rights of Way and Access Team has been able to ensure nearly 80% of the path network in the county is easy to use, clearly signposted, free from obstructions and has well maintained bridges and gates.

The survey outcome is one of the best results in the country and work is ongoing within the available resources to further improve the network and to steadily increase the number of paths which are kept clean, clear and easy to use in Cambridgeshire. The Council is also one of the lowest spending authorities in the region with regard to Rights of Way, and puts its success in no small part down to work with other organisations and individuals across Cambridgeshire.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "The County Council is fully committed to keeping the Cambridgeshire countryside available to the public while at the same time doing everything we can within the resources available to us to enhance and develop our wonderful open spaces and landscape. A major part of our success is the close working with local people through the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme - two thirds of the county's parishes are involved in the scheme - local user groups such as the Ramblers Association and British Horse Society, and more than 50 farmers who help us maintain the paths and bridleways. We also have an army of volunteers who add so much value by their work and local knowledge."

Anyone who spots a problem on a footpath or right of way can report it Cambridgeshire County Council online at:
<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/roads/reportingafault.htm>

VIEWS SOUGHT ON REVISED SPECIAL NEEDS STRATEGY – Jan 9

Cambridgeshire County Council is updating its strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and / or a disability. The Cambridgeshire Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy is being updated to reflect the many changes and recommendations made at national level.

The Strategy describes to parents the ways the County Council, together with partners, will develop provision so that children who are identified as having special educational needs and / or a disability will have the best opportunity to achieve their full potential.

The draft SEND Strategy has been developed by colleagues across the County Council in conjunction with other partners. The Strategy will influence work across the Council and beyond. Members of the public are therefore invited to complete the online consultation, as an opportunity to influence the future of SEND services for children and young people in Cambridgeshire.

Officers will be consulting on the Strategy until 31 January 2012 using a variety of methods including an online questionnaire, special events and meetings. The draft Strategy is available at the link below. Anyone who works with young people with special needs and / or a disability or has a child with special needs or a disability, is asked to complete the questionnaire (link below) to shape the Council's SEND Strategy for 2012-2016.

Further queries about the Strategy or the consultation process can be directed to sen.consultation@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

SWIMMING WITH LOAN SHARKS CAN DAMAGE YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH - Jan 6

Officers from Cambridgeshire County Council and the Illegal Money Lending Team are about to launch a project designed to stop families from being bitten by loan sharks. This project is a result of the Cambridgeshire's Child Poverty Strategy which brings key organisations together to break the cycle of child poverty across the county.

The work of Cambridgeshire County Council is being supported by the England Illegal Money Lending Team, working in partnership with local Trading Standards officers to bring illegal money lenders to justice in the County. This specialist team will be launching a crackdown by investigating reports of illegal money lending and prosecuting offenders through the courts.

In the past the Team have secured convictions for drugs offences, blackmail, violence, rape and other offences linked to illegal money lending. They have already secured more than 190 prosecutions which have led to 117 years worth of prison sentences, written off almost £40million worth of illegal debt and helped over 16,000 victims.

Nationally there are an estimated 310,000 households borrowing from illegal money lenders, more commonly known as loan sharks. With a lack of paperwork, these criminals keep their victims in the dark about how much they owe and will charge exorbitant interest rates - in some cases in excess of 130,000% APR.

Loan sharks operate illegally; making their victims lives a misery. They often trap people into spiralling debt and resort to the most extreme methods such as violence, threats or intimidation to pressure victims into making repayments.

The Cambridgeshire County Council Cabinet Member responsible for Trading Standards, Councillor Mathew Shuter, said: "The Child Poverty Strategy is bringing together organisations to help families break the cycle of poverty across Cambridgeshire. I am really pleased that this work is being supported by the Illegal Money Lending Team who will ensure that loan sharks cannot prey on vulnerable families in Cambridgeshire. Illegal lenders not only rip people off with extortionate rates of interest but resort to the most despicable methods to enforce their debts. We are sending out a clear message in Cambridgeshire that this will not be tolerated."

"We would urge anyone affected by illegal money lending to call our confidential hotline on 0300 555 2222 as we can help."

To report a loan shark:

Call the 24/7 confidential hotline 0300 555 2222

Text 'loan shark + your message' to 60003

E-mail reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

Log-on to www.direct.gov.uk/stoploansharks

Find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/stoploansharksproject

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SPEEDING: NO - ONE THINKS BIG OF YOU

Cambridgeshire County Council Road Safety Officers have launched a new campaign targeting young male drivers who speed. The campaign, titled Speeding: no-one thinks big of you, is inspired by a similar campaign in Australia and aims to use peer pressure in a cheeky, subtle way to reduce young male driver and female passenger casualties.

Given the target audience, the campaign centres around information, advice and discussion on the Road Safety Team Facebook page and Twitter feed. This will be accompanied by posters, featuring students from Huntingdonshire Regional College, which depict young females waving their little fingers, pinkies, at guys who are speeding or driving dangerously to show off.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: In 2010 there were 923 road casualties aged 17 to 25 in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, which is higher than the national average. This casualty rate is also at double the rate for all other age groups. This campaign steers away from the hard-hitting campaigns used previously to target the young male driver audience and aims to stimulate discussion and give passengers the confidence to tell their friends to slow down.

The aim of this campaign is to encourage teenage girls to tell their boy friends/friends when they don't like their driving and show they are not impressed. We also want to make young male drivers aware that they don't impress people when they show off in their cars. □

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John Reynolds 15th Jan 2012