

## **Annual Report by County Cllr Peter Hudson April 2019**

It's been another incredibly busy 12 months. Still chasing the inevitable highway problems, gaining funding for new cycle paths, upgrading existing ones, stopping contractor parking in Woodside, finding funding for new pavements with hopefully some more to come to name but a few. Also, after successfully lobbying hard last year to achieve a new Child and Family Zone at the new Pathfinder School in Northstowe which would benefit the whole area, I'm really so very pleased to be able to report that our brilliant new Child and Family Zone is really going from strength to strength, with requests for more services and new groups coming in from our friends and neighbours in all the local neighbourhoods and villages.

In addition to this, I have continued to support and work with Parish and District Council Colleagues on a number of issues, as in the incorrect routes taken by HGV traffic from the Northstowe site, traveling through local villages in contrary to planning conditions, being the Chair of the Public Health Committee, and an active member of the Staffing and Appeals, Audit and Accounts, and GPC Committees of the County Council. I have also been asked again how many hours I spend on council duties; well, it's increased slightly over the past 12 months and now averages at around 50 hours per week

Once again, I am pleased to have received a large amount of correspondence from our friends and neighbours, some with requests for help on a number of issues that affect their everyday lives, some with general comments, and even some saying thank you! Over the past twelve months I have received 103 requests from residents for help (up from 84 last year) on issues such as, school placement appeals, home to school transport appeals, special educational needs requirements, parent and school difficulties, social care for the elderly and venerable adults, general counsel benefit entitlements, with 90 of these cases resolved to the complete satisfaction of our residents, the others were not for various reasons. As always, the subjects tend to be the same year on year, but this individual case work is so very satisfying and extremely rewarding. It's also great to see people within their own homes

### **Cycle Path Longstanton - Bar Hill**

The issue of a cycle path between Longstanton and Bar Hill has been asked and campaigned for, for well over 15 years. I took on the campaign about 6 years ago.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2018, I reported to the Parish Council that after 6 long and difficult years of heated discussions and campaigning, funding was at last agreed for a new cycle path to Bar Hill. I can now further report that Highways England, as part of the A14 upgrade, is funding the new cycle bridge over the A14 and into Bar Hill, and up to the first new roundabout on the B1050 (Northstowe southern access road). Sisk will then take on funding it around the new roundabout with the County Council funding it on into Longstanton. Even more good news is that they have also agreed to look at the possibility of extending it through the village and into Northstowe town centre. It has now passed onto the design/cost stage.

### **Community Wing at the Pathfinder School**

This had been on ongoing saga for so many many months. In the end myself, along with some very passionate residents of both Longstanton and Northstowe, insisted that enough was enough. The issues the dioceses of Ely had with other religious groups should not impact on the general community both existing and new. Therefore, without complete agreement, the County Council decided to go ahead and open the rooms.

Steady progress is being made and we are nearly there. Council Officers have been working very closely with the Community Development Worker to spend more time at the wing, enabling it to be accessed by the community in a drop in capacity. I think this will make a biggest impact for those people who contacted me who are not able, or want to hire the wing, they just want somewhere to pop into.

In terms of the formal opening, we are waiting for the last FM quote and contract to be confirmed then the wing will be ready to take bookings. I hope that to happen any day now –The plan will be to have a very soft quite launch to check all the new policies and practices work.

The discussions between both the County Council and SCambs legal teams with the Diocese regarding the arrangements after the land is transferred are still ongoing. Senior County Officers along with the County Council's legal team accompanied by the legal team from South Cambs., will be meeting with the Archdeacon at the end of April to see if a compromise can be reached.

### **Community project funding**

Many people are willing to do something for their community but need some inspiration to start a project. The County Council's Innovate & Cultivate Fund offers grants for community initiatives which help deliver the Council's priorities and have compiled some ideas to get budding projects started.

The new Cultivate 'Seed' Fund projects – Timebanks, Men's Sheds, Good Neighbour Schemes and Dementia Friendly Communities – are all successful schemes that can help people to remain independent and active within their community, encourage volunteering and complement Council services.

I recently paid a visit to [Ramshed](#), the Men's Shed (which also welcomes women) in Ramsey. The project promotes greater social activity, improved mental health and better physical wellbeing for residents who may be retired or not in work. Any resident groups, voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector organisations based in Cambridgeshire can find more about the funding from the [website](#)

### **Applications for secondary school places are up again**

This year the County Council received nearly 6,700 applications for secondary school places - an increase of more than 300 compared to the last academic year. A total of 6,691 applications were received by the deadline. Of these, more than 5,990 (89.5%) resulted in children being offered a place at their first preference school compared to 5,561 last year. A further 449 (6.7%) children have received the offer of a place at their second or third preference school. The County Council dealt with significantly more applications for secondary school places in the county this year and expect this trend to continue for the coming years. The County Council is planning for this by working with existing schools to increase their capacity, and to plan for new secondary schools in the areas where demand is greatest, with a planned investment in secondary school places of £200m between 2019-20 and 2023-24.

### **Designing Libraries of the Future**

The Library Service has teamed up with CIVIC, a national charity specialising in animating communities, to lead the way and design the libraries of the future for the country.

Recognised for its innovative and open mind-set, our Library Service offers a unique network of physical spaces across a huge breadth of community settings.

Our libraries are an ideal test bed for new ideas and to develop a family of library models that are replicable and scalable beyond Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

CIVIC have united a team of national and local experts, supporters, partners and potential funders around this major project and have spent the past few months working with the Business Intelligence team and Library Service to identify five possible models of libraries and a shortlist of pilot locations.

They will soon be embarking on an exciting journey to engage with the pilot communities and start co-designing the libraries of the future that reflect the diversity of communities and contexts. This will form a blue print for all councils across the country to use in the future.

### **Investment programme delivers additional funding for frontline services**

The purchase of a purpose built student accommodation block in Cambridge will allow Cambridgeshire County Council to plough up to £1.9m a year back into vital frontline services. The Council's investment of £38m in the 251 bed Brunswick House on Newmarket Road, is the first acquisition in its strategy to build a portfolio of investments that both support its objectives and help to safeguard the future of vital services for people across the county.

The Council has a strong asset base (county farms, etc.) and is involved in the long lease of buildings for student accommodation elsewhere (at Castle Court and North Cambridge Academy) but this is its first venture into direct ownership and operation - a relatively small investment in terms of the balance sheet, but a sizeable income stream to support public services and investment in the Cambridgeshire economy.

Four new energy schemes at a total cost of £30.6M, which are expected to generate a total net income of £77.4M to return to front line services over their 25 year life. These include the development of smart energy schemes at the Trumpington and Babraham Park and Ride sites, where the sale of electricity and provision of grid services is expected to generate £7m for Trumpington and £24.5m for Babraham over the next 25 years. The other two schemes at the closed landfill sites are at Stanground and Woodston.

### **County Council Budget**

The Full County Council met on the 5th February to approve the administration's budget and set council tax for 2019/20 in the context of its 5 year business plan. The overall objective is to continue to protect and invest in vital services whilst using service transformation, efficiency, investment and commercialisation to offset cuts in government funding. **We are on our own, as The County Council now receives no general funding from the Government**. The transformation of the way the County Council works is a key factor in delivering best value for money and to support this the budget includes an increase of £4.764m into the transformation fund; we used a £1.436m surplus built up in this fund to balance the 2019/20 budget without the need to make unpalatable cuts to services that local residents need and value. The County Council has so far invested £8m from this fund into initiatives to transform services or manage demand, which has returned a £40m in reduction to costs. The Council will also carry forward the £9.1m remaining balance of the smoothing fund that was

created last year which will continue to act as a contingency, as it did recently when £3.4m was used to safeguard valued children's services in the face of rising demand.

The Council's commercial projects to date are due to return a profit of £11.2m in 2019/20 including £1m from the Soham solar farm which met its annual £1m income target 2 months ahead of schedule. The money derived from commercial activities is a key element of the funding required to support delivery of front line services and this month saw a proposal to generate solar power at Babraham Park & Ride. The project would involve putting carports over parking spaces to support solar panels. The Council has completed a high level business case to support a planning application in 2019 with construction starting in 2020. Cambridgeshire County Councils' plans for commercialisation and investment are set to return more than £58m to support frontline services over the next five years. The County Council will **continue to invest in vital services aimed at vulnerable adults & children and increasing funding on highways repairs, which means:**

- £45 million additional spending planned for adult and children's services over the next five years.
- £18 million additional spending planned for highways improvements in the next five years.

### **New County Council working model 2020**

The new proposed working model for the County Council and how it services the residents of the county, and how much more accessible it will be to all the residents of the whole county of Cambridgeshire in the future is gathering pace.

The plan is to enable all of us to access both County Council Officers and services locally wherever we may live within the County, and not having to travel to a main building such as Shire Hall. The new administrative building was the subject of discussion at the time with Longstanton Parish Councillors, some agreeing that it should be built in Northstowe, whilst some saying that it should not with some saying that existing buildings as in SCambs District Council, should be shared. Therefore, no single consensus was able to be formed with the closest directly affected Parish Council to both phases 1 and 2.

So, it was decided that the new administration building, which will hold less than 10% of the present Shire Hall employees, some of which because of joint working with Peterborough, already travel between Peterborough and Cambridge several times per week, will be located at the Enterprise Zone in Alconbury, alongside the Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership, which are already located there. The remainder will be working in local hubs around the county to enable all residents to use the County Council easily without having to travel large distances to one building. These hubs will include such places as Cambridge, Northstowe, Cambourne, Wisbech, Whittlesey, Soham, Ely, March, and all other areas around the county.

When this paper came to members, I automatically gave a spirited defence of Northstowe in quite a few pre full council debates and also in the actual full council debate. I really felt that Northstowe was the right place. I came home to what will only be a 5-10 minute walk to the new town centre, and decided that I need to get out and seek the thoughts of other people before the main debate in Full Council.

So, I walk up Longstanton High St. stopping to chat and asking the question, also on the school run at both Northstowe and Longstanton, I also asked residents in Oakington including their school run, some were like myself, in favour, and some really had no particular opinion. However, some said absolutely not, and this figure grew. I spoke to people in the Black Bull, then went over to the Pavilion. The majority said *“why waste valuable space in what is really a smallish town centre on boring council offices? We would prefer, a cinema, shops, pubs/restaurants, coffee shops, or even a bowling alley”*

I also spoke to some residents in Over, with, most being not really concerned, but they were all very keen for easier access to County Council Services that the new local hubs will provide.

I sat outside the Longstanton Pavilion on a lovely sunny evening talking to some parents watching their children play, a gentleman looked at me and said *“we want a town centre that is great to visit, one we would want to visit, I would like to say to my wife, lets pop over to the town centre for a coffee, a café culture would be great, also, why do we need another council building when we are already getting one?”*

That is correct, the town centre is already getting a circa £17million Civic Hub containing a health centre, along with County Council services such as school nurses, health visitors, a new Family and Child Centre, a new library, along with community rooms, with County Council Officers to advise us and help us access County Council services.

So, I go into the main debate with all these views to work with, views that are not the same as mine, but views that are just as valuable, and views that should be respected. It is sometimes difficult to except others views, but just because they differ from mine, that makes them no less valuable to me or our community. I respect all our neighbours and friends' views and act upon them whenever and however I can as I did in the main debate.

I would just like to add once again a very big thank you to our Parish Clerk for her very valuable help and support she gives us all.

**Peter Hudson**

County Cllr. for Longstanton, Over, Northstowe, Oakington and Westwick.