

County Councillor Monthly Report - Sawston & Shelford Division

(includes Sawston, Little and Great Shelfords, Stapleford, Babraham, South Trunton, Hauxton, Harston, Newton and Haslingfield)

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Making Connections update

Following the publication of the results from the 2022 public consultation on the GCP's proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone in Cambridge, a revised proposal has been drawn by the GCP officers taking into account extensive feedback from residents of Cambridgeshire.

The timetable for consideration of these revised proposals is currently as follows.

- Thursday 7 September: non-decision making meeting of the GCP Joint Assembly (the pre-scrutiny body of the Greater Cambridge Partnership)
- Thursday 28 September: meeting of the GCP Board
- Wednesday 11 October: special meeting of the County Council Highways & Transport Committee.

Cambridgeshire County Council is the highways authority, and is the only body with the powers to agree to charge for use of the public highway.

Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools

Fortunately as of the start of this month all but three of Cambridgeshire's schools have been surveyed and no RAAC has been found. The Council has no concerns about the remaining schools but at the time of writing each requires a survey to rule out RAAC.

Following assessments and surveys, the County Council has also been able to confirm that none of its public buildings have been found to contain RAAC.

RAAC is a lightweight, bubbly form of concrete usually found in roofs and occasionally in walls and floors. It looks like standard concrete but is weaker, less durable, deteriorates over time, and is also prone to collapse when wet. The problem has been known for a long time, but the Building Schools for the Future rebuilding programme was scrapped by Michael Gove in 2010. Attention returned to the use of the material in schools in 2018 when the roof of a primary school in Kent collapsed 24 hours after signs of structural stress began to appear.

RAAC elsewhere

RAAC has been causing issues in a number of hospitals including Hinchingsbrooke and especially the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kings Lynn where last October the number of wooden and steel props required to hold up the building had risen to 2,482. The hospital has been promised a rebuild estimated to cost £862M but this will not be open until 2029 at the earliest.

Childminders and restrictive covenants

A council motion successfully proposed to the County Council by our colleague Cllr Firouz Thompson in Northstowe has prompted change at national level. The motion drew attention to the fact that many new developments had covenants placed on homes so that they could not be used for childminding. This was leading to shortages of childminding capacity in many places.

This motion has attracted national interest, and the relevant Government minister has now written to developers as well as housing associations and landlords, asking them to better support prospective childminders and remove these barriers to parents seeking to return to the workforce.

Cllr Thompson found that while in 2019 there were 641 childminders in Cambridgeshire, by January 2023 this had reduced to 456, a drop of 17 per cent. Additionally, the data shows that the number of childminders operating in new developments is significantly lower than those within surrounding villages, despite demand.

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund

A reminder that this fund is open until 24 September, for bids of up to £40,000 for capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshirepriorities-capital-fund

Libraries of Sanctuary award

Libraries throughout Cambridgeshire have been awarded Libraries of Sanctuary status. This national award celebrates libraries that work hard to demonstrate hospitality, solidarity and welcome to new arrivals in the area. The title was awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, a nationally coordinated

network of organisations and services, including councils, universities, theatres and libraries that welcome and support refugees and people seeking asylum.

Carbon footprint

The Government has recently published new data on the greenhouse gas emissions of each local authority area for 2005 to 2021. This shows that the carbon footprint of the whole of Cambridgeshire was 6.78M tonnes CO₂e in 2021. Transport is now the highest emitting sector in the county.

Work is also still under way collating data on the County Council's own organisational carbon footprint for the financial year 2022-23. This will be presented to the Environment & Green Investment Committee later in the year, alongside further details of the county-wide emissions.

Weeds

We are aware of growing complaints about weeds in various parts of the district and across the county. The County Council's current Highways Operational Standards state that the Council will apply weed killer using a targeted approach at agreed locations identified on the basis of risk, rather than cyclically as before.

This policy affects about 30% of the highway network in Cambridgeshire, as only kerbed urban areas were previously cyclically treated for weeds.

The County Council's policy remains to remove hazardous weeds, or weeds causing safety issues or nuisance. Where the use of chemical weed killer is part of wider maintenance activity it is still carried out—for example weeds should be cleared before slurry sealing footways or surface treating carriageways.

A mid-season review of the policy has already been programmed in, and we will certainly be reporting back residents' and parishes' concerns.

Winter gritting

Once again the County Council is inviting gritting volunteers for the winter season 2023-2024. Under this scheme, parish councils decide which routes in their area are important to the local community and agree them with the County Council. Local volunteers then grit these as required in freezing weather.

Parish councils looking to join the scheme should submit their completed form by 31 October 2023. Each volunteer will need to submit a form, including those who have volunteered before. The form is required annually to ensure health and safety standards are being met. Paper forms are also available on request.

http://cambridgeshireself.achieveservice.com/service/Community_gritting_registration_form

Further information about the scheme is available online.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-andparking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/helpwith-gritting-and-clearing-snow/>