

Monthly update for parish councils: March 2011

County Council and Cabinet meetings

There was a **Council meeting** on 29th March.

We had a new Councillor join us after the March North by-election. We received questions and petitions from the public related to bus service reductions. We will have more over the next few years. One of the items was to adopt the newest transport plan, which was done. A motion failed to remove the £1m from the budget that is used for the guided bus.

We had reports from both the Police and the Fire Authority. The Police lost 126 staff last year, no frontline officers. It still only costs £57.87 for a Band D property to support the Fire Authority. We also heard about the merger of the Fire Control centres of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

Sue asked two written questions: one about the proposed B service from Orchard Park, not stopping on Histon Road, which combined with the Citi 8 reduction to a 20 min service, is likely to increase congestion at rush hour. As usual the Council says it has no control over the bus operator. The second question was about school transport for Cottenham Primary School, asking for "due process" to be followed.

There is a **Cabinet meeting** on the 5th April.

This will include decisions on the Network Service Plan (NSP) about carriageways and footways. Local Parish Councils will soon have a copy of the document (search on www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk).

Highways Policies and charges are expected to be approved, with an emphasis on local priorities - "a more flexible approach will be required to enable communities and encourage third parties to invest in Highway works". This covers defects, grass cutting, road adoption (no commercial or industrial estates).

The Cabinet discussions will also include Early Years Funding formula review and "106" funding. They propose to spend money on real-time passenger information in Histon and Impington. Further topics include social working for families and sustainable transport fund.

Environmental Services

Bus subsidy cuts have resulted in many calls for reinstatement of services. The next tranche of subsidy reductions will happen in autumn 2011, and is expected to affect daytime services more. Another upshot is that some ticket prices have doubled (e.g. to Cambourne). This we suspect will have an effect on congestion in Cambridge and surrounding villages.

Children's services

Many of the Village Colleges in our area are now considering Academy status; no school wants to be the only non-Academy school in the area and accept a reduced budget.

There will be changes to Education Other Than at School (EOTAS): the idea is to keep as many children in mainstream school as possible, but there is real fear that this may not be the best course of action for all children.

There have been cuts to the County Music Service, so that the County will longer fund Cambridgeshire Youth Orchestra or tuition. There was hope to attract direct government funding, and concern has been expressed about the ability to make future bids for grants.

There is a big reorganisation of how social work teams are organised, with a significant number of staff having to reapply for their jobs in a "unit" model.

Early Years funding formula: there has to be some target changes to allow nurseries to meet the need for places for 2 year-olds. This is influenced by a Government ruling.

Councillors have noticed an increase in casework following 26% cuts in the Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Services (CREDS) budget.

Local Issues

Work is still continuing on the Histon B1049 cycleway.

We wish Cottenham Community Centre all the best at their opening ceremony, which will be attended by Andrew Lansley MP. The centre is a credit to the village - and Sue declares an interest as a regular user. (www.cottenhamcc.org)

Forthcoming meetings and events

4 Apr 2011	Traffic Management Joint Area Committee - cancelled
5 Apr 2011	Cabinet
6 Apr 2011	Cottenham Community Centre official opening 10am
5 May 2011	South Cambs District Council elections
10 May 2011	Cottenham Library meeting at CVC 7-9pm
17 May 2011	Council Meeting

Both this monthly report, and the ones for previous months are on our website www.chilibdems.co.uk.

Sue Gymer on behalf of Sue Gymer and David Jenkins
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