

County Councillor Monthly Report - Sawston & Shelford Division

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

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June 2023

Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund

This fund consists of £1.5M left over from the previous administration's £5M Communities Capital Fund. £1M will be made available for community capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets, while supporting the council to achieve at least three of its strategic ambitions.

- Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.
- Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.
- Health inequalities are reduced.
- People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.
- People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.
- Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.
- Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

The fund will open for a single round of applications during the 2023/24 financial year, with an upper bid limit of £40,000. Cambridgeshire based voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations will be eligible to apply, as will district, town and parish councils, and businesses if they can evidence the public benefit of their project.

The remaining £0.5M will be reserved for the County Council's own community based assets, where this will support the council's commitment to decentralisation.

Home Upgrade Grants

Cambridgeshire has been awarded £11.5M over two years to improve energy efficiency in homes which are not on mains gas. More information, including eligibility criteria, at actiononenergycambs.org/funding

Smart journeys

The new Smart Journeys team is now in place working with developers of sites at Northstowe, Alconbury Weald, and Cambridge Science Park to promote active travel throughout the developments.

Disposal of vapes and metal recycling

Following a number of fires, an information campaign is being planned about the safe disposal of vapes and the hazards of fires in collection vehicles and waste plants arising from the batteries sealed inside these items. There is currently a six week campaign of bus advertising, radio and social media across the whole of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough promoting the need to recycle all metals.

Biodiversity and green spaces

The Tree & Woodland Strategy is now out to tender, including assessment of tree canopy cover for the whole county, and more detailed analysis on County Council land. The strategy will also include length of hedgerow on County Council land, amounts of carbon sequestered, and areas for future tree planting.

Work is also ongoing with Natural Cambridgeshire on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire, with a formal launch imminent.

Low carbon heating for council buildings

Air source heat pumps have been installed at 22 council buildings to date, replacing fossil fuel heating systems. A further five new projects are also now in progress, supported by grant funding, and the County Council is applying to the Low Carbon Skills Fund for grants towards design for the next batch of sites.

Autonomous vehicle trials

Connecting Cambridgeshire will be supporting the Greater Cambridge Partnership to deliver two autonomous vehicle projects, one running services around the West Cambridge campus, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, and between Babraham and Trumpington Park & Rides; the other looking at the feasibility of autonomous transit to support developments to the east of Cambridge.

East West Rail

East West Rail is carrying out a new round of engagement following the latest route announcement in May. It is apparent that the preference for Southern route has been dictated by the economic, rather than financial or environmental considerations. Cambridge Biomedical Campus is seen as a strategically important economic hub driving the Government decision-making.

Some headline statements have been made as part of the announcement regarding the engineering solutions of the route, however the detail of these is evidently not there and will unlikely to be completed before the statutory consultation in 2024.

It is important to make our strong and coherent community voice heard at any opportunity related to EWR; to highlight issues and potential detrimental impact on our communities, landscape and biodiversity and seek answers from EWR. We hope the Parishes in potentially affected villages will promote two forthcoming in-person public engagement events by EWR:

- 22 June 2023 2pm – 8pm Eversden Village Hall 4 Chapel Road, Great Eversden, CB23 1HP
- 26 June 2023 2pm – 8pm Harston Village Hall 20 High Street, Harston, CB22 7PX

Sustainable Travel Zone / Congestion Charge

The public response to the Making Connections (Sustainable Travel Zone / Congestion Charge) consultation has now been published. More than 24,000 people responded to the consultation, which proposed measures to transform the bus network alongside better walking and cycling infrastructure that would be funded in the long term by the phased introduction of a road user charge.

The key findings and the wide-ranging views—both in favour of and against the proposals—are contained in a paper to the Greater Cambridge Partnership’s Joint Assembly which meets on Thursday 8 June. The headlines are below.

- Over 70 per cent of people were in favour of the future transport network, with more buses to more locations, cheaper fares and longer operating times supported by better walking and cycling infrastructure to give people faster, cheaper and more reliable travel alternatives to the car.
- 58 per cent of respondents opposed the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) as the means for delivering the transport vision. Opposition increased with age from 35 to 64, with 55-64 year olds the most likely to oppose. Those who lived outside Cambridge were also more likely to oppose.
- 34 per cent of people supported the STZ as proposed. Support was highest among the youngest and the oldest respondents, who are more likely to find it most difficult to access education and healthcare due to the limitations of the existing bus network. Support was highest in the centre and west of Cambridge.
- Around half of those who opposed the STZ did support the vision for better buses.
- The views from organisations such as business, healthcare and others were broadly supportive of the plans but with caveats about the impact on staff or those who were vulnerable.
- Additional representative opinion polling was carried out which showed opposition and support for a road user charge was more balanced.

The reasons for supporting or opposing varied but covered a variety of areas.

- Those who supported the proposals were keen to get more frequent bus services, would be able to cycle more safely and generally were positive towards the idea of a charge to tackle climate change and reduce congestion.
- Those who opposed felt the exemptions didn’t go far enough, and perceived a charge to be unfair, in particular on those travelling to Addenbrookes, and also believed there would be a negative impact on jobs.

With a large number of free text responses in the survey to supplement the ‘closed questions’, a lot of detail is now available about what people feel could be positive amendments to the scheme. These included changing the rate for cars, changing the hours, amending the discounts and exemptions, and altering the boundaries.