

County Councillor Report for Parishes – December 2022 – Cllr Anna Bradnam

County Council Budget for 2023/24

This text is taken from an officer report which went to Children and Young People's Committee on 29 November and will go to other Committees in December. It sets out the financial difficulties the Council is facing due to historic low Council Tax revenues and inflationary pressures.

"The Council's Business Plan sets out how we will spend our resources to achieve our vision and priorities for Cambridgeshire, and the key outcomes we want for the county and its people. This paper provides an overview of the updates to the Council's financial position since Committees were last consulted on the draft Business Plan for 2023-28 [in October 2022]. The paper sets out the evolving context in which the Business Plan is developed, further savings identified, the changes to key assumptions impacting financial forecasts, and next steps required to balance the budget and agree the Council's Business Plan for 2023-28. The Council has a legal requirement to set a balanced for 2023-24.

1.2 On 17 November, the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered an Autumn Statement that updated on national economic projections and set out the government's approach to taxation and public spending over the medium-term. This followed a tumultuous period following the fiscal event in September 2022 under the previous government which caused a worsening of the country's economic outlook. The Autumn Statement confirmed that the country was facing strong economic headwinds with a public spending gap of £55bn over five years, which the Chancellor outlined plans to close equally through public spending constraint and taxation.

1.3 The economic situation comes on the back of many years of under-funding compared to other councils. The recent Census results confirm that Cambridgeshire has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country and has been managing disproportionate increases in demand for services which have not been reflected in the revenue grant system. The Chancellor did announce several further grants to support social care authorities, but balancing this were changes to business rates policy, the minimum wage and funding received for the now cancelled rise in National Insurance. Section 2 below sets out more detail from the Autumn Statement.

1.4 This report builds on the information provided previously to this Committee and sets out the latest financial position regarding the Business Plan for the period 2023-28. A number of Business Cases have been developed which provide further details of the proposed changes to our budget, and these will be reviewed by their relevant Service Committees in December, prior to being reviewed by Strategy and Resources Committee in January for endorsement to full Council in February 2023.

1.5 The [forecast] **budget gaps** over the medium-term previously presented to Committees [in October] were, in £000s:

2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
28,624	26,367	16,812	17,384	18,762

1.6 Since then, work has been ongoing to refine estimates and identify mitigations to reduce the budget gap, including savings and income generation schemes. Despite some further pressures identified, and a continuing challenging inflationary environment, the budget gap for 2023/24 is now estimated as £12.9m, and a cumulative budget gap over the five-year draft Business Plan of £86m:

In 000s:

2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
12,886	25,398	17,977	13,053	14,333

So the County Council still faces a budget gap of about £13 million for 2023/24 and work goes on to identify savings and reduce spend, whilst maintaining services as far as possible.

Transport

GCP - Making Connections: A Consultation on City Access, Public Transport and a Congestion Charge

No apologies for including this a second month running – it is very important that YOU give feedback on aspects of the proposals that you think might affect you. The Greater Cambridge Partnership 'Making Connections' consultation runs until 23 December 2022. This is about a completely different way of running bus services, more active travel links and a congestion charge for Cambridge. We are being asked to share this information as widely as possible, and to encourage everyone to respond. Points of local detail are vital and in their best form these can only be provided by local residents based on their everyday travel needs.

The proposals are a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change how we travel in Greater Cambridge and the wider area, relieving pressure on the road network and responding to air quality, cost of living and climate crises; and also, creating workable public transport and active travel links in more rural areas where currently, costly private vehicle transport is the only way to get to jobs, education and other essential daily travel needs.

The survey, plus information about the proposals, including maps, frequently asked questions, dates of public meetings etc. can be found at:

<http://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/mc-2022>.

Proposals include:

- From as early as mid-2023, to transform the bus network through more services to more locations, with cheaper fares at £1/£2 per journey.
- Alongside the bus network, there is a proposal for more investment in new sustainable travel schemes, such as better walking and cycling links.
- From 2027/28, a Sustainable Travel Zone will be introduced, in the form of a road user charge on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council as the Highway Authority. Vehicles would pay to drive in the Zone at certain times.
- There would be discounts, exemptions and reimbursements for some, including those on low incomes and blue badge holders.

People's views are being sought, in order to develop this step-by-step plan for better, cleaner, safer transport.

Have your say

You can complete the survey online or contact the GCP by post, phone, email or social media until midday Friday 23rd December. Find out more about the ways to respond online: www.greatercambridge.org.uk/mc-2022.

There is a North Area Community Forum webinar on 5 December, 6-8pm.

Cost of Living – (apologies if this duplicates information in District Councillor Reports)

Milton Warm Hub – All Saints, Tuesdays in December, January and February, 10am-4pm

Cambridgeshire ACRE and South Cambs are working with communities all across the district to open Warm Hubs to help people struggling with fuel cost or just wanting an opportunity to get together. There are now 20 up and running across South Cambridgeshire, with another 7 on the way.

Milton's Warm Hub will open on Tuesday 6 December

Libraries across Cambridgeshire are offering a "Warm Space" for anyone who needs it during the winter months.

Help for Households campaign – social tariffs

The government has worked with a range of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to deliver low-cost broadband and phone service packages, called social tariffs, for those on low incomes. Social tariffs are available for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits, with some providers offering deals from £15 a month.

Warm Home Discount scheme reopened

The Warm Home Discount scheme will provide a discount of £150 off electricity bills for three million low-income households this winter. Most households will receive the discount automatically. The government has launched a new online tool, to make it easier for the public to check if they are eligible for the discount. The online tool will guide customers through the eligibility criteria in England and Wales, asking questions about electricity supply, the benefits they receive and characteristics of their property. All customers will receive a letter between November and mid-January 2023 confirming their eligibility and the payment will be made automatically through energy suppliers by March 2023. The government is also writing to customers who may be eligible, advising them to use the tool linked below to check eligibility, as well as to use the helpline for particularly complex cases.

<https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme>

Anglian Water

Anglian Water offer a range of financial assistance, including discounted tariffs, assistance schemes if you've fallen behind with payments and affordable payment plans. Call Anglian Water's specially trained Priority Services team on 0800 232 1951.

Housing Issues

If you rent a home from a private landlord and you are concerned about mould or damp which have not been resolved by your landlord, we would urge you to seek help from the Council. In South Cambridgeshire, the District Council has a role in ensuring that homes in the private sector and the Council's own properties do not

contain health hazards. Most properties within the private rented sector in the district are in good condition, but the Council's Environmental Health team will investigate any complaints. Private Sector and Housing Association tenants can make a complaint about the condition of their home by emailing env.health@scams.gov.uk. The Council has the power to take the appropriate enforcement action if there are issues that need to be resolved. This action could include writing to the landlord to ensure the issue is resolved, but the Council can also serve a legal notice to instruct works to be carried out.

The Council manages around 5,500 Council homes and takes reports of mould in any of them extremely seriously. Do not hesitate to contact Bridget if you have an unresolved issue in your Council house.

Six Free Trees

For the third year running South Cambs is offering free trees to parish councils across the district to help provide homes and food for wildlife and combat climate change. The Six Free Trees campaign has seen 390 trees planted across South Cambridgeshire since it was launched in 2019.

Parish Councils have until 21 December 2022 to apply.

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/free-trees-for-a-cleaner-greener-south-cambridgeshire/>

White Ribbon Day – ending male violence against women and girls

On Friday 25 November a flag-raising ceremony took place at New Shire Hall to show the County Council's support for survivors of domestic abuse. The raising of the White Ribbon flag marks White Ribbon Day in the UK, which takes place annually on 25 November. The charity aims to end male violence against women and girls.

A new leaflet explaining how to support a friend or family member who is experiencing domestic abuse is being sent out to a range of businesses, doctors, dentists, places of worship across Cambridgeshire.

The charity offers support to people of any gender or sexuality across

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and can be contacted on freephone 0300 373 1073 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm) or by emailing DASSReferrals@impakt.org.uk.

Wishing you a Very Happy Christmas

I hope you and your families have a very Happy Christmas and a trouble-free, warm and peaceful New Year in 2023.

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact me as County Councillor or Judith, Paul or myself about District Council issues with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can!

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