

Melbourn Parish Council February 2021 – District and County Councillor’s report

County Council: council tax set for 2021-22

Most of the County Council budget is already committed to essential statutory services such as adult social care, looked after children as well as highway maintenance. The scope for radical new ideas is very limited. This year’s budgetary process has been overshadowed, inevitably, by the Covid pandemic which has required much flexibility from council employees, with extra costs, partially offset by extra grants from central government.

Council tax increase for 2021-22 will be 1.99% for general expenditure and 1% for Adult Social care. For people living in the Band D benchmark property, the increase amounts to £40.59 per year, or £3.38 per month. County Council tax accounts for 70% of our overall council tax bill, the rest being levied by Fire, Police, District Council and Parish Council.

District Council: council tax and budget meeting 23 Feb

Report to follow.

Foul water drainage

During the January flooding we were alerted to a number of neighbourhood hot spots, including residential properties affected by an Anglian Water foul sewerage system clearly at or beyond capacity.

Cambridgeshire Highways has taken the matter up with Anglian Water on our behalf and will be reporting back to us shortly. Please can we encourage anyone concerned about foul sewerage issues on their property to contact Anglian Water on 03457 145145.

We have been promised a site meeting with Anglian Water to discuss area infrastructure, after the current flooding event has dissipated.

No date yet for gulley emptying...

We're waiting and chasing. Susan is meeting senior officers next week and should get a date then.

Byway 10/Footpath 24 between Melbourn and Bassingbourn

60 tonnes of planings have now been secured by County Highways for use along Byway10/Footpath 24, to alleviate access problems caused by impassable mud and ruts and directly affecting residential properties along the byway. Depositing the planings and levelling them out will take place between February 17-19.

Ploughed over footpaths

Any ploughed over footpaths should be reported on the Highways reporting site:
<https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

Fly Tipping

South Cambs reports that there has been no significant increase in fly tipping since the introduction of pre-book visits to County’s Household Waste Centres. Tipping is incredibly annoying especially as we all pay for it to be collected via our Council Tax. Officers always sift through the rubbish and very often find personal information they can use to track the perpetrators. South Cambs always

prosecute. If you see fly tipping, please do report it straight away - it's easy to report fly-tipping on-line:

<https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/REPORTENVIROCRIMEWASTEINYOURAREA/launch>

Covid: Rapid Flow Testing

These rapid tests are for key workers and people who cannot work at home without Covid-19 symptoms, who are known as 'asymptomatic'.

The County Council is offering these tests because we know that around one in three people who are infected with Covid-19 have no symptoms and could be spreading the disease without knowing it. Broadening testing to identify key workers showing no symptoms will mean finding positive cases more quickly, which helps break chains of transmission.

Tests will be offered at no cost to the public and the process of taking a test takes on average 15 minutes from arrival to departure. The site serving you is at The Hub, High Street, Cambourne, South Cambridgeshire, CB23 6GW. The site will be open 8am to 8pm, Monday to Saturday. To book a test, people need to visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting

The council is also reminding everyone who takes a test of the support that we can offer to anyone who needs help to isolate. More information about this support is available at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/selfisolationsupport

Census 2021

This year sees Census 2021 on March 21st. Prepare for a blizzard of publicity! Please reply as soon as you can as otherwise you will be faced with constant reminders and potentially a knock on your door asking for your completed form.

Rail User Group meeting

Our next Rail User Group takes place April 6th, 7:30PM. Please contact us if you'd like the link to join this meeting on your computer.

Passenger Benefit Fund and Meldreth Station

We'll be seeing a few improvements to Meldreth Station shortly, as a result of the Passenger Benefit Fund – a sort of financial compensation to stations affected by the 2018 timetable meltdown. Again, the bureaucracies involved here are dazzling, and in the end, while rail user feedback was gratefully received, it was the Dept for Transport that decided how the funds could be allocated. We understand that toilets will be refurbished and that we'll see improvements in platform seating and waiting shelter – though no detail as yet). In any case, at last we seem to have action coming up.

Timetables are changing on 22nd February

From GTR:

Train services are being reduced to better match anticipated demand in the months ahead, and to ensure services are as reliable as possible at a time when colleagues may need to self-isolate or shield.

The plan focuses on maintaining services earlier in the morning, later in the evening and at peak times, based on feedback from key workers and stakeholders. Train services will change across the

network, so as always, it is important that customers check journeys at www.nationalrail.co.uk before travelling.

King's Cross to Cambridge – stopping service

- The half-hourly Thameslink stopping service between King's Cross and Cambridge will be reduced to hourly in the section between Royston and Cambridge outside of peak and school times. This will mean an hourly service at Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton outside of busy times.

Foxton Travel Hub Car Park

Continuing local concerns that the Foxton Travel Hub, approved as a Greater Cambridge Partnership scheme last summer, could emerge as not much more than a gigantic car park were put to the Greater Cambridge Partnership in a recent local meeting. The challenge was put to make this very significant investment work as a true 'travel hub', with all the connectivity the term implies.

While the approved scheme is for 900 car park spaces, the GCP has indicated a reduced scope of 500 spaces in the first iteration.

Both the A10 Corridor Cycling Campaign and the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership have actively participated in the 'non-motorized user group' discussions on the detail of pedestrian access between the car park and the station, in order to provide the knowledge and experience of local users. Final design proposals are awaited.

A public consultation on the Foxton Travel Hub ahead of Planning consideration is expected in March. We'll be sharing detail on this at our next Rail User Group.

Thakeham proposed new town - update

With regard to the proposal for a new town of 25,000 houses across nine South Cambridgeshire village, including Melbourn, by Thakeham developers: The South West Cambridge Action Group (SWCAG) submitted a number of Freedom of Information requests as part of its campaign against the development. The results make concerning reading. It is clear – as Thakeham itself has admitted – that the company wants to develop the town using some mechanism other than what everyone else is doing, which is submitting a site to South Cambs as part of the Local Plan process. Thakeham wants to run the process 'concurrently,' deploying national mechanisms too, although exactly what mechanism they intend to use is still unknown.

In last year's budget, the Chancellor announced the setting up of a Cambridge Development Corporation, but did not reveal any details, including where exactly the new town would be situated. There has been no engagement, nor any timeline published. SWCAG's concern is that Thakeham and this "DevCo" are perhaps the same thing. So SWCAG asked. Worryingly its Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has been denied, on the basis that information revealed would be a 'distraction' and that 'it is not in the public interest to disclose this information at this time'. The FOI request was for information relating to a Cambridge 'Development Corporation' – a central government vehicle for creating new towns that bypasses normal planning processes.

It will not have escaped your attention that the Thakeham proposed new town also sits on the approximate route of East West Rail's first attempt at the Bedford-Cambridge section. So SWCAG asked for details of that relationship using FOI. The response was bland except for the following

extract from an email from Thakeham to EWR which runs “We are in advanced discussions with Homes England to join us as our promotion and delivery partner”.

All information is posted at swcag.org.uk. If you’d like to join the email update list, please write to info@swcag.org.uk