

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT AUGUST 2024

Apologies for the absence of a report for July. I was extremely busy with the General Election campaign, and many meetings were cancelled reducing the amount of business to report on.

ASSETS & PROCUREMENT

Old Shire Hall

The County Council's Assets & Procurement Committee has agreed to enter into an exclusivity arrangement with a preferred bidder for a freehold sale of the old Shire Hall building in Cambridge. The move comes after the previous preferred bidder pulled out of a proposal for a leasehold arrangement, and a new marketing exercise was undertaken. The Committee also agreed to make arrangements in the event that contracts are not exchanged by 9 October.

Council-owned companies

The Committee has also agreed to establish arrangements for strengthened oversight of companies in which the council has an interest as owner, and to recommend the council's Constitution & Ethics Committee to establish a shareholder sub-committee to consider how this should be done.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Household Support Fund

The Household Support Fund in Cambridgeshire closed to new applications on 26 July as the national scheme finishes at the end of September. The July closure is to ensure demand is managed and the fund does not overspend.

In April 2024, Cambridgeshire County Council was awarded over £3,580,000 to support households in need and help with the rising cost of living. The scheme has experienced significant demand, with large numbers of applications being submitted every day both directly and through partners.

The council's Household Advice and Support Team will continue to process applications, with the current processing time being approximately three weeks. If funds remain after all outstanding applications have been processed, the scheme will briefly reopen for new applications.

Although the scheme is being discontinued, advice is still available to those struggling with the cost of living. Help with utility bills, housing support, emergencies and benefits, and the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme from Cambridgeshire County Council can be found on the council's website.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living

The Government offers help and advice with living costs, childcare and maternity costs, managing money and debt and guidance for those over 60 or those who have a disability or health condition.

www.gov.uk/cost-of-living

The closure of the Household Support Fund does not affect the holiday supermarket voucher scheme for families in receipt of free school meals.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Wisbech incinerator

Fenland District Council's application requesting judicial review of the Government's decision to grant planning permission was unsuccessful.

Sunnica

The outgoing Government delayed four times making a decision on the Sunnica solar farm application. The incoming Government approved the application in its first few days, despite the recommendation of the Examining Authority that it should be refused. The objector group and the 'host authorities' (Suffolk and Cambridgeshire counties, West Suffolk and East Cambridgeshire districts) have been considering their responses.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Weed treatment

The County Council's chemical weed treatment programme is under way, within built-up areas in villages and towns with a 40MPH limit or below. Treatment will take place twice a year as a minimum.

Chemical weed treatment is applied directly to any weeds in the gullies of roads and at the back of footways abutting a building, wall, or fence line. A period of about three to five weeks is typically required for the weed treatment to take effect. After this, road sweepers are deployed to remove dead weeds. A second programme of treatment will take place in October. This will help to get the weeds under control before the next growing season.

Seven areas of the county have confirmed that they do not wish to be part of the chemical weed treatment programme, so they have been excluded. The County Council is working with these areas—Cambridge, Caxton, Duxford, Lolworth, Morborne, Burwell, and Girton—to appropriately support their alternative treatment regimes.

Ely Road and The Brook Sutton

The County Council has been replacing drain covers and ironworks along the main route through Sutton with more durable covers. The Council has also been carrying out crack sealing of the road surface, to stop water pooling and freezing in the cracks in winter and further splitting the road to create more potholes.

20MPH schemes

The Highways & Transport Committee has agreed to proceed with a 20MPH scheme for parts of Huntingdon, and to review the impacts of the 20MPH schemes in twenty-four months.

Maintenance work on old A14

Important maintenance work is beginning on the A1307, known locally as the old A14, between Swavesey and Huntingdon.

Since the County Council took over responsibility for the road from National Highways in February, there has been a temporary 40MPH speed limit in place between Fenstanton and St Ives due to safety concerns. The road has been inspected and drainage works are needed here. From 29 July one lane will be closed in each direction for these works. They are expected to take four weeks and the lane closures will be in place 24/7 on both the eastbound and westbound carriageway. Once this is complete at the end of August, if the work has been successful, the 40MPH speed limit on this section will be removed.

Meanwhile the Godmanchester to Huntingdon section is currently restricted to a temporary 40MPH speed limit due to safety concerns with the barriers. The council expects to start work on the barriers on Sunday 15 September. This will also involve lane closures in both directions and the work is expected to take three months to complete. In the meantime, the 40MPH speed limit will remain in place for safety reasons.

Road resurfacing works will also be taking place overnight along the A1307 from 27 August onwards, for a period of three weeks, weather permitting, in a variety of locations. Road closures will be necessary, and signed diversion routes will be in place. All this work is being co-ordinated, and will be done together wherever possible to minimise disruption.

PLANNING

Pymoor enforcement update

Following an extensive investigation, on 16 November 2023 an Enforcement Notice was served on the owners of the land behind Corkers Crisps in relation to the importation, depositing, processing and exporting of inert waste materials and the raising of the land with waste without planning permission.

An appeal was then lodged, and on 14 February 2024 the Planning Inspectorate confirmed the start date of the appeal. County Council officers have submitted all relevant information required and await further information on the appointment of an Inspector and the next steps.

Since then, a number of local residents have raised with me the daily convoys of FDS lorries from the site along Black Bank and out towards Welney. The County Council's enforcement team is aware of these movements.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Combined Authority Board has decided to proceed with proposals for a bus franchising scheme, in the hope of improving bus services in Cambridgeshire.

The Combined Authority has been advised that more further education provision is needed in the present FE 'cold spot' of East Cambridgeshire especially in sectors including health and care. Current activity should be scaled up and existing facilities expanded.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will be in the school Community Room on Monday 5 August and Monday 2 September 6:30-7:30PM.

Please note that these dates may be subject to change.

I will try to attend some of the various coffee mornings in Sutton, Witchford, and Coveney, and the Book Café in Little Downham, but this will be subject to summer holiday plans as they develop.

I can also be contacted

- by email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- on Facebook
- by phone on 07930 337596

Best wishes to all residents of the Sutton division for the remainder of the summer.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division