

County Councillor's Report - June 2017

County Cllr Peter Hudson

Our Local Highways Officer has been busy arranging for pot holes to be repaired.

At the County **Council's** annual meeting, the first one since the election, members of the majority group were appointed as the chairs and vice-chairs of all the committees with the exception of Audit & Accounts Committee which, with its scrutiny responsibility, was deemed to be more appropriately chaired by a member of the opposition. The agenda also included some constitutional changes but, as previously reported, the committee system, at least in principle, has to persist for at least another two years.

The agenda for the first service committee to meet, **Highways & Community Infrastructure** [H&CI], was fairly light. The agenda plan though is one that I shall keep to hand as this is the committee that looks after road maintenance and such things as the Local Highways Improvement [LHI] scheme. You will recall that this initiative invites local community groups to apply for up to £10,000 towards a proposed highway improvement, subject to the applicant group contributing at least 10% of the total cost. Until recently time spent by officers administering and delivering schemes through the initiative has not been attributed to its £607k annual capital budget and has been subsidised by other areas of the capital programme. As part of the Council's 2017/18 Business Plan, Members approved a savings target of £100,000 per year for both 2017/18 and 2018/19 against the LHI initiative and the newly introduced Privately Funded Highway [PFH] schemes initiative on the basis of achieving full cost recovery. Following a review changes will be proposed in a report which is scheduled to be presented to H&CI at its July meeting. At that time Members will be asked to consider changes and whether to approve their introduction.

The agenda plan also shows for the October meeting a decision item on Library Service Transformation. The Council is taking a refreshed approach to the Library Transformation programme as a successor to the Community Hubs programme. This change represents an opportunity to consider and develop a more radical and yet sustainable programme of library service transformation. The revised approach will retain the trusted 'brand' of the Library Service whilst continuing to develop the Council's network of libraries as places where citizens can access a wide-range of different services and activities within their communities. Since the previous library service strategy was agreed in 2015, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] has published 'Libraries Deliver' which sets out the ambition for public libraries for the next five years and the Council intends to use this national framework as the basis for transformation of the service.

Economy & Environment Committee's agenda included member consideration of a report on Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment that the County Council is required by both national and EU legislation to produce. One of the outputs of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is the identification of Flood Risk Areas. The process of selecting the areas is undertaken at a national level based on European criteria. The areas are selected based on comparing the probability of flooding against the potential consequences it would have in an area. Updated flood risk mapping is used for this purpose together with records of population and national and local receptors [hospitals, schools, critical infrastructure etc]. In Cambridgeshire there are many areas at risk of surface water flooding. However the Flood Risk Areas focus on those locations where flooding could have the most significant

impacts on large populations and public services based on national criteria. South Cambridgeshire is not one of the 3 areas designated for the county of Cambridgeshire.

The **Combined Authority's** first meeting under its new chairman on 31 May started with James Palmer signing the declaration of acceptance of office as Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The constituent councils have appointed their members on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Audit & Governance Committee, both of which are politically proportional. Additionally, the chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee must not belong to the same political party as that of the Mayor and there must be at least one independent person [not a councillor] of the Audit & Governance Committee. Indeed, the Combined Authority Board has appointed the independent person to be that committee's chairman. Portfolios for the Combined Authority have now been confirmed. The Leaders of the County Council and SCambs District Council hold the Fiscal and New Homes & Communities portfolios respectively

Both **Children & Young People** Committee [C&YP] and **Health** Committee considered an update report on the 0-19 Joint Commissioning of Children's Health & Wellbeing Services. The report itself underplayed the success that the new structure has achieved but with the benefit of having the Head of Service at the meeting, Health Committee members were able to elicit that there has been a big reduction in the numbers on waiting lists. That evening at the MJ Awards the unit was highly commended in the Reinventing Public Services category.

The cyber-attack on the NHS and the British Airways flight disruptions are yet two more examples of the vulnerability to which we are exposed as we become ever more dependent on computer connectivity. The increasing number of us who rely on the internet for a range of needs including email communication, armchair shopping and banking need to be ever vigilant about cyber-security [on which Cambridgeshire Constabulary is one of the leading forces in the country]. There is a wealth of advice available to individuals on <https://www.getsafeonline.org/> or small businesses can find similarly helpful advice at: <http://www.actionfraud.police.uk/small-businesses-know-your-business>

After many years of waiting Cambridge North Station opened on 21 May providing really good connections with the busway and its popular and well used cycle way. The current schedule of services has received some criticism but there is no doubt that this new station provides an alternative for many to driving through congested city roads to get to Cambridge station. Good news too from the **Greater Cambridge City Deal** [GCCD] who's Board announced the locations of the first two Greenways: Waterbeach and Fulbourn.

A workshop, independently run on behalf of the GCCD to look at the 8 options for a new Park & Ride site was well attended by a mix of residents, councillors, County Council transport officers and their equivalent from Addenbrookes as well as Andy Campbell and one of his colleagues from Stagecoach. The over-long introduction provoked some sceptical views on the purpose of the workshop but, once everyone settled down to work in their groups, the atmosphere was positive. Although the purpose was not to identify a preferred option at this stage, it did appear that there was a good deal of consensus about the merits or otherwise of the various options.

Launch of new solar farm in Soham will help to energise our future

A NEW 12MW solar farm built by Cambridgeshire County Council was officially launched in Soham on Monday (June 19).

With 45,000 photovoltaic panels across 70 acres, the solar farm will generate enough electricity to supply more than 3,000 homes each year – and has the option of sheep grazing to keep the grass low. It will also avoid the release of 123,000 tonnes of CO2 over its lifetime.

Subject to completion of final commissioning, this is the first Local Authority project in England to receive Contracts for Difference (CfD), a finance incentive for the energy generated, and will create £1million revenue a year from an initial investment of £9million.

The success of the solar farm has inspired the County Council's ambitious Corporate Energy Strategy, which can change the way services are designed and change how they manage their buildings and land assets to generate income, reducing both energy usage and carbon emissions. As a society, we need to move towards energy sustainability and self-sufficiency where possible and Local Authorities can lead by example by altering not only the way energy is supplied, but how it is used.

“When I talk to our residents, they are rightly keen that we spend our money wisely and by finding a way to create income, these extra millions can be spent on much used frontline services. This County Council solar park project is a great investment as it means we are producing renewable energy and income while reducing the need either to make excessive savings or ask our residents to make up the shortfall through additional taxes. This is just one example of the many things that we are looking at doing to make the best use of our assets.”

In the future, Cambridgeshire's Corporate Energy Strategy will support the delivery of more projects and will:

- generate income and make savings for the Council;
- identify how to reduce energy consumption through service delivery redesign and policy development;
- attract investment into energy infrastructure on the Council's assets which can benefit the broader community;
- facilitate low carbon energy infrastructure to support transport, housing, waste management and smart community projects; and
- work with all partners (public and private sector) and the local community to develop projects

Cambridgeshire County Council owns more than two hundred public buildings, 240 schools, the largest local Authority County Farms Estate in England and Wales at 13,400 hectares and manages over 2,700 road assets. They also run significant services across Cambridgeshire including transport, waste disposal, street lighting, adult and family services and education.

Peter Hudson