

Cambridgeshire County Councillor's Report to Parish Councils February 2018

Council voted to approve the 2018/19 budget after the usual tribal debate - lightened somewhat this year by the leader of one of the opposition parties voting in error to support the budget. In the main there was agreement on the decision to raise the general council tax precept by 2.99% and the adult social care precept by 2%. The main disagreement was over the proposal that the funds raised from increasing general council tax in excess of those required to balance the 2018/19 budget [£3.65m] should be allocated to a smoothing reserve. The creation of such a reserve is an acknowledgement that, although a robust, balanced budget has been set for the coming financial year, significant challenge remains in respect of closing the budget deficits in the longer term.

Provisional council tax precept rates of increase for each of the next five financial years were set as 2.99% [2018/19]; 1.99% [2019/20] with a return to zero for the 3 years 2020/23. Additionally, the assumption was made that there will be a continuation for those last 3 years of the 2% allowed by Government for adult social care and that the County Council will levy that amount.

The County Council is the third lowest funded, upper tier authority in England and faces the challenge of responding to the need created by a very rapid growth in the county's population. Its programme to increase efficiency, generate additional income and manage demand for its services will continue supported by additional transformation investment, where required. In his written statement to Parliament confirming the final local government finance settlement 2018/19 [delivered after the County Council's meeting] the Secretary of State [SoS] for Housing, Communities and Local Government confirmed that there would be an extension for a further 3 years of the capital receipts flexibility programme. This scheme gives local authorities the freedom to use capital receipts from the sale of their own assets to support transformation and unlock efficiency savings. It is this freedom that has allowed the County Council to set up its new **Innovate and Cultivate Fund** for community initiatives [details were included in January's report]. The SoS also announced an additional £150m for an Adult Social Care Support Grant in 2018/19 stating that it would be allocated 'according to relative needs' - more details to follow when I have them. This he said brings the total funding to which councils have had access to £9.4bn over 3 years and he confirmed that there will be a green paper this summer setting out Government proposals for funding reform to secure a resilient and sustainable system for the future.
Council Meeting agenda pack: <http://bit.ly/2nXjC9S>
SoS Statement to Parliament: <http://bit.ly/2EavDQo>

The Council's **Commercial & Investment** Committee continues to pursue opportunities for creating new revenue streams to support service provision. Most of the debate on its housing programme is carried out in private session. However, following a request from one member of the committee, it published for its meeting at the end of January a Programme Highlight Report summarising basic details of the Council's housing development pipeline. This is also the committee that is leading on the options for a move of the County Council from its current home at Shire Hall. Current indications are that it may set up a hub outside Cambridge, possibly in one of the new settlements at Alconbury or Northstowe with spokes to each district. Future use of Shire Hall following any such move is not yet determined but members are intent on protecting the historical and archaeological significance of the site.
Agenda pack: <http://bit.ly/2BSy9NI>

At its January meeting the **Greater Cambridge Partnership [GCP]** Joint Assembly received a presentation from Steer Davies Gleave on the Rapid Mass Transit Options Appraisal. The general response was enthusiastic about the study's findings. Whilst there was some anxiety expressed regarding financial sustainability and sources of revenue funding for subsidies, Assembly members felt that there was a key role for the GCP to play in the development and delivery of the elements of the network that lie within the Greater Cambridge area.

Members of the GCP Joint Assembly also considered the report on the findings of the Ely to Cambridge A10 Transport Study and proposals for next steps. Among concerns expressed was one about land take and compulsory purchase should any dualling include diversion from the road's current alignment. The Joint Assembly supported the recommendations to the GCP's Executive Board that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority [CPCA] should have responsibility for approving the study's recommendations and taking them forward for consultation. Members' view was that the GCP should take forward and deliver the proposals identified for modal shift [walking, cycling and public transport improvements] and aligning the public transport improvements with the Cambridge Mass Rapid Transit Options Appraisal findings. Agenda pack/decisions [Joint Assembly]: <http://bit.ly/2slj4jR>
Agenda pack [Board]: <http://bit.ly/2BnvDOi>

At its January meeting the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority [CPCA] was also asked to note the findings of the Mass Rapid Transit Strategic Options Assessment and as well as a recommendation that the Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro [CAM] project be carried forward for further development. It approved £600,000 to develop a Strategic Outline Business Case and Options Appraisal Report for this and agreed to liaise with the GCP to ensure that current and future plans for high quality public transport corridors are consistent and readily adaptable to the emerging proposition for a CAM network.
Agenda pack and decisions: <http://bit.ly/2nZMwqa>

Changes to the policing model for Cambridgeshire have now been agreed and will be rolled out from 30 April 2018. Its focus remains to protect the most vulnerable and target the most serious offenders. The new model focuses on putting more officers on the frontline and allows for funding of an additional 50 officers. The commitment to neighbourhood policing and working with communities to reduce crime and improve safety remains. There will still be access to their local policing team for every resident and there will be an identified police community support officer [PCSO] for each area. The previous six district areas have been reduced to two, one each for the north and south. This change is designed to reduce supervisory and senior management posts thus freeing up resources for the frontline. Two new hubs will be created: a Demand Hub to merge contact and crime management functions and a Missing, Exploited and Trafficked Hub tasked with protecting children most at risk of harm in these three areas. Community action teams similar to the current Rural Crime Action Team will respond to local problems and challenges and every district council area will have an enquiry office function. The force will continue to have specialist teams for serious and organised crime, cyber and fraud and surveillance [to tackle crime gangs]. The first phase of the model will go live from 30 April.

I look forward to receiving any questions or comments that you have about these or any other matters either at your meetings or by email.

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