

# Cllr Lorna Dupré

## MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2020

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### Coronavirus

For accurate and up-to-date information about coronavirus (COVID-19), check regularly on the government web page (updated daily) at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

For information about how to protect yourself and others from contracting coronavirus, useful information from the World Health Organisation is at

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

In summary:

- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
- Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Stay at home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
- Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority, or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

If you have reason to suspect you may have coronavirus do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Ring 111 instead for advice.

It is disappointing that at the time of writing there has been no real community leadership from the county council on this, as it does have a Health Committee and holds the remit for public health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. I have submitted a motion to the council asking it to take a lead.

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### Local Highways Initiative bids

The county council's Highways & Infrastructure Committee is being asked to approve the recommendations of the East Cambridgeshire panel which met in January to consider around twenty bids.

Both schemes submitted by parishes in the Sutton division are recommended for approval:

- Sutton: mobile vehicle activated speed sign
- Witchford: footway widening

It is noticeable that the scores for schemes in East Cambridgeshire were very much lower than for schemes elsewhere in the county. The top scoring bid in East Cambridgeshire scored 3.50, whereas the top scores in all the other districts were 4.10 or above. The lowest scoring bid recommended for approval in East Cambridgeshire would have failed in Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire or Cambridge. It is not clear to me whether the schemes put forward elsewhere in the county were of greater merit, or simply that the East Cambridgeshire panel was more austere in its judgements.

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### **Other highways works**

The council's Economy & Environment Committee is being asked to confirm the remaining £250,000 needed for the coming financial year to complete the connection of the Witcham Toll to Sutton cycleway to the new Co-op.

A large number of schemes countywide have *not* been recommended for funding this year, including a crossing on the Brook in Sutton near the school.

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### **Lancaster Way and A10/A142 roundabouts update**

The Combined Authority's Transport Committee is receiving a report on this project at its meeting this month. As is so often the case, the estimated costs of the scheme have risen to £2M in total, and the Combined Authority is being recommended to plug the gap of just under £1M. There are however two still unknown costs relating to gas mains and final design.

The final design is due to be signed off no later than 18 May, and the report states that work must start on site in early June. I have written to the chair of the project board to ask him to clarify when Witchford Parish Council will be consulted as promised in the 11 weeks remaining to sign off of the final design.

The report also recommends that in the event of further cost escalation, the work on the Lancaster Way roundabout should be sacrificed in order to ensure the work on the A10/A142 roundabout proceeds within budget.

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### **Ely North rail junction improvements**

Speaking of cost escalation, the estimated cost of the major railway upgrade required at Ely North has risen to £500M, twenty times the original estimate.

These works are needed to unlock rail capacity across the region. They are overseen by a project board of partners working with Network Rail, and the Combined Authority is currently committed to making a contribution of £3.3M.

Publication of the current business case is still awaited, along with a decision by the Department for Transport on the funding. The Department is already committed to funding of £200M. Members of Parliament in the county are being asked to lobby ministers in support of the project.

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### **Winter gritting costs**

I have been continuing to work with council officers to get to grips with the projected £463,000 overspend in winter gritting this year. A closer inspection of the figures, and a mild winter, suggest that this overspend may be substantially less than predicted for 2019/20. However, we are now clearer about the various increased costs which are contributing to a much higher average spend. One of the largest of these is the 'standby' cost of staff being on call for night gritting duties, which has risen very substantially due to a shortage of such staff.

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### **CAM consultation**

A consultation has been launched into the needs and benefits of the Mayor's proposed CAM metro, and the potential route alignments for tunnelled sections under Cambridge. The consultation will remain open until Friday 3 April. I have written to the consultation organisers to express my disappointment that none of the public exhibitions or information points associated with the consultation will be taking place in East Cambridgeshire, despite the large number of East Cambridgeshire residents who travel regularly into Cambridge and would have views about public transport in and around the city.

<https://cam.consultationonline.co.uk/public-consultation/>

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### **Welney Wash consultation**

As part of its barrier banks works, the Environment Agency plans to install a removable barrier on the Welney Wash road where it crosses the Middle Level Barrier Bank. A short concrete support wall will be built for it, and a concrete slab for the barrier to be attached to while it is in use.

While this work is being done in 2021, the Welney Wash Road will need to close for between four and six weeks. The Environment Agency is now asking the public for views on the best time of year to do this work.

A public event will take place on Wednesday 18 March from 3:30 to 7:30PM at the William Marshall Centre, Hurn Road, Welney. In addition, an online survey

about the works will be available from Thursday 12 March until mid-May.

[tinyurl.com/welneyworks](https://tinyurl.com/welneyworks)

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### **Hundred Foot Bank closure**

A request has been made for a one-day closure of Hundred Foot Bank on Wednesday 20 May from 9:30AM to 3:30PM for level crossing works at the railway bridge between Willow Cottage and Primrose Cottages.

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### **Mepal bridge**

Residents near the bridge have requested another meeting to discuss ongoing noise issues with the bridge joints. The relevant highways officer and Skanska contractor are arranging another site visit to assess the issue.

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### **Sutton Gault footbridge**

Council officers are now looking to re-decking the Sutton Gault footbridge with new timber decking with boarded sheets over the top to ensure the decking will last. They have requested a target cost from the contractor to enable them to press ahead.

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### **Witchford mapping**

At the request of Witchford Parish Council I wrote to the county council's definitive mapping team, who have reprioritised the parish council's applications to record the width of Dunham's Lane and Granny's End Drove before development takes place. These applications are now numbers 1 and 2 in the waiting queue and will be dealt with as soon as a case officer becomes available.

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### **CUSPE policy challenge**

Last month I attended a meeting at Jesus College Cambridge, to co-present with council officers two questions in this year's CUSPE Policy Challenge. The idea behind the scheme is that county council officers and councillors pitch practical policy-making questions for Cambridge University students to research and come back with answers and recommendations. Students choose the ones they are interested in.

The two questions I co-presented were

- How can we evaluate the success of work that aims for socially valuable systemic change?

- What are the policy and regulatory changes needed to minimise carbon emissions across all sectors in Cambridgeshire by 2030, and which public sector bodies have the statutory powers to implement them?

We are waiting to hear whether any students are interested in taking up either of these two research questions.

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### **County council budget**

The county council has set its budget, with a council tax rise of 1.59 per cent, plus two per cent for adult social care. I was disappointed that my group's alternative budget proposals were defeated, particularly the proposals for £0.5M extra for local highway repairs, and money for public transport and youth provision.

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### **Special educational needs funding**

I reported last month that the county council had applied to the Government to request permission to move 1.8 per cent of the main schools budget to the 'High Needs Block' to help meet the extra cost of providing for the increasing number and proportion of children needing extra help.

Permission was denied, and the county council therefore approached the Schools Forum (its local consultative body) to ask them to approve a transfer of 0.5 per cent of the main schools budget—the largest proportion it is able to move without requiring Government permission.

The Schools Forum rejected this proposal by the narrowest of margins, eight votes to seven. This means that the council will have to address the £6.6M shortfall in funding for children with special educational needs without a contribution from the main schools budget. Proposals for how to do this will need to be put to the county council's Children & Young People Committee before going to public consultation.

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### **Ely Library**

I recently attended the 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations of Ely Library, along with two other county councillors, library staff past and present, Peppa Pig, and local Ely poet Wendy Cope.

While there, I took the opportunity to meet with staff from Cambridgeshire Skills at their base in the library. I have been asking questions about the adult learning and skills offer in East Cambridgeshire since the news last summer about the major reduction in provision at Ely College.

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## Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee which I chair held a very interesting debate about housing. Some members felt that the Combined Authority should be choosing to invest in 'lifetime' homes with higher accessibility standards, and in homes with lower carbon emissions.

We were surprised to hear that the Combined Authority keeps no record of the accessibility standards or carbon emissions of the properties in which it invests. The committee has asked the Combined Authority's Housing Committee to consider these suggestions.

Over three months on from agreeing to establish a Climate Commission, the Combined Authority has still not managed to appoint a chairman, let alone the commissioners. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee has asked for a report to its next meeting later this month about the recruitment process and the effect on the twelve-month timeline for production of the Commission's report.

## Pause for thought

"The National Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey estimated 32 per cent of children ([around] 21,000 0-5 year olds) in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are living in a household where an adult has a moderate or higher mental health problem."

(Report to Children & Young People Committee, March 2020)

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## Meet Your Councillor

- Friday 6 March, 10:00-11:00AM, Book Café, Village Hall, Little Downham
- Tuesday 10 March, 6:30PM-7:30PM, Sutton, School Community Room
- Monday 30 March, 6:30PM-7:30PM, Witchford, St Andrew's Hall
  
- Friday 3 April, 10:00-11:00AM, Book Café, Village Hall, Little Downham
- Tuesday 14 April, 6:30PM-7:30PM, Sutton, School Community Room
- Monday 27 April, 6:30PM-7:30PM, Witchford, St Andrew's Hall

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## Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division