

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT AUGUST 2020

COVID-19

While the Government has postponed a number of planned relaxations of lockdown nationally, with local interventions in place where necessary, COVID-19 in Cambridgeshire remains at a fairly low level generally.

There were 35 new laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in Cambridgeshire in the week 20-26 July, the most recent reporting period. This does not mean we can afford to let up on the basic public health measures of washing hands, wearing masks, and socially distancing.

One of the most challenging issues in the coming weeks will be preparing for return to school, with school transport arrangements among the most problematic. Council officers are working with maintained schools on their plans, and liaising with academy schools. The Government is set to review school opening arrangements again on Tuesday 11 August.

I am currently liaising with the Council about the possibility of extending its Library At Home option for housebound residents while the mobile library service is not running, to cover residents in rural areas who cannot get to a library. This would require sufficient volunteers to provide this option.

Obesity

The Government is launching a comprehensive obesity campaign driven in part by COVID-19 and by the opportunity to build on some of the lifestyle changes resulting from the pandemic. It launched its *Tackling obesity: empowering adults and children to live healthier lives* Strategy on 27 July.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group is concerned about the impact of obesity on diabetes and cardio-vascular disease. It is investing considerable funding in improving services related to prevention and the management of obesity. It has launched a Body Mass Index *BMI Can Do It* campaign for residents and organisations across the system to rise to the challenge of losing 1 million kilos.

Council officers will be working with members of the Health Committee to address the complex challenges of obesity. This will include considering how to influence issues such as cycle routes, and access to affordable healthy food.

COVID recovery planning

The Health Committee had the opportunity in early August to ask questions of Jan Thomas, the Accountable Officer at the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough

Clinical Commissioning Group, about COVID recovery in the NHS. A letter from NHS Chief Executive Sir Simon Stevens has set out priorities for the ‘third phase’ which are:

1. Accelerating the return to near-normal levels of non-Covid health services, making full use of the capacity available in the ‘window of opportunity’ between now and winter
2. Preparation for winter demand pressures, alongside continuing vigilance in the light of further probable Covid spikes locally and possibly nationally.
3. Doing the above in a way that takes account of lessons learned during the first Covid peak; locks in beneficial changes; and explicitly tackles fundamental challenges including: support for our staff, and action on inequalities and prevention.

Let’s reorganise local government again!

As if COVID-19 and Brexit weren’t enough, the Government has decided it would like to embark on a process of reorganising local government for the umpteenth time. Its aim is single-tier local authorities of at least 300,000-400,000 residents, doing everything that is currently done by both district and county councils.

For Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (assuming Peterborough isn’t split off to form part of an authority with parts of Lincolnshire, Rutland, or Northamptonshire), this would suggest a possible new council covering Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire, and East Cambridgeshire, with a second council covering Peterborough, Fenland, and Huntingdonshire. But this will run and run. It might also of course put off next year’s elections for another year.

Full Council meeting

The County Council held a full council meeting in July, with four motions up for debate:

1. A motion on Black Lives Matter received consensus support—as similar motions also did at Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
2. There was almost unanimous support for a motion opposing the building of an incinerator in Wisbech. Members of the County Council’s Planning Committee had to sit this one out, because although the proposed incinerator is currently large enough to be decided directly by the planning inspectorate and not by the Council, if the plans were amended and it reduced in size, it could end up being small enough to be an application to the County Council, and Planning Committee members would have to have been careful not to form a view in advance.

3. A motion supporting calls for the Government to establish a Trade & Agriculture Commission to ensure the UK's future trade policy does not undermine British farming's high environmental and animal welfare standards was sadly voted down ...
 4. ... as was a motion asking the County Council to work together with agencies including Public Health England and district councils to produce an independent report on excess care home deaths in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between March and June 2020, including how and where the infection arrived into care homes from, and the lessons learnt.
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BP roundabout works

The roundabout works at the A10/A142 BP junction at Ely have continued to cause problems for many local residents, including serious financial losses for one very worried small business that has contacted me. For villagers in Mepal, Witcham, Coveney, Wardy Hill, and Little Downham the works have resulted in increased traffic, inappropriate traffic, and inappropriate speeds.

County Council officers have said that no spare MVAS speed signs are available; that though a weight limit could be put in place under a temporary traffic regulation order the police would not enforce it; and that traffic calming cannot be installed under an experimental traffic regulation order, but would have to be subject to the usual twenty-one day consultation period and objections would have to be resolved which would take a long time. I am continuing to liaise with council officers about any potential solutions.

Road resurfacing programme

Meanwhile I have been in communication with the Council's highways department to seek to minimise other roadworks in the BP area that might worsen the traffic situation still further. Permission was refused for works on Grunty Fen Road this year, used as an alternative route while the BP works are in progress; and the A142 resurfacing at Mepal was committed to be a weekend in the school holiday only.

Lancaster Way consultation

As soon as the BP roundabout works have been concluded, attention will move to the Lancaster Way roundabout. A consultation on the proposed design has opened, and closes on Friday 18 September. The proposed changes include:

- Widening the road to accommodate two lanes of entry on to the A142 Witchford Road arm of the roundabout.
- Extending the two-lane approach on Lancaster Way further into the business park.
- Widening the road to accommodate two lanes of entry on the A142 Witchford Bypass approach.

The final design recommendation presented to committee in November. The changes have been acknowledged to make matters worse for walkers and cyclists. The consultation is at

<https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/lancaster-way-consultation>

Co-op path Sutton

I have written to the County Council in support of a path for walkers and cyclists from the top of Church Lane Sutton to the new Co-op on the south side of Ely Road Sutton. It is not yet clear whether this will make it into the second tranche of funding from the Government's fund for active travel.

Granny's End Road Witchford

Consultation has opened into Witchford Parish Council's application to record the width of Granny's End Road in Witchford under Section 53 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. This follows the consultation for a similar recording of the width of Dunham's Lane. The consultation closes on Friday 4 September.

New Road (BOAT7) Witchford

Work is still ongoing to agree the access road for the new development behind 1-7 Sutton Road Witchford. An amended plan (REV12) has been received. The Local Lead Flood Authority needs to approve the culvert; the S278 agreement needs to be signed; and the developer needs to provide a programme of work for the road. The Council is encouraging the consultant to work with the existing residents to ensure the work is done expeditiously but appropriately.

Mepal old road

I became involved when Skanska staff decided to obstruct the public highway that forms the old road alignment between Sutton Road Mepal and the A142 crossing. The dumped stones prevented access by walkers and other road users. They were eventually cleared and a promise made to barrier off a section of the road where materials could be delivered and stored without blocking the road.

Broadband contract extension

The County Council has agreed to apply to Government for a proposed extension to its Superfast Broadband (SFBB) contract, using funding clawed back from excess profits made by BT Openreach on the scheme, along with an application to the European Regional Development Fund. The SFBB contract is currently in its fourth phase, which will provide at least a 30Mbps connection to a number of properties in the Sutton division.

The following table shows the last set of figures I was given (which unfortunately does not include Witchford, which I have requested) about the parishes in the Sutton division, including the number of premises, the number unable yet to receive at least 30Mbps speeds, the properties included in Phase Four, the properties to be covered by County Broadband, the properties to be covered by Air Broadband, and the remaining properties which would still be left with speeds below 30Mbps by 2021. I have requested an update of these figures.

Parish	Premises	<30Mbps	Phase 4	C Bb	Air Bb	Rem
Coveney	174	80	26	0	11	5
Little Downham	1159	252	58	0	77	61
Mepal	377	5	0	0	0	0
Sutton	1822	220	75	0	0	7
Wentworth	112	12	0	0	11	5
Witcham	217	37	2	0	16	9

Note: some premises were included in a previous phase which had not concluded when these figures were provided.

Openreach

Following the operation of an apparently rogue Openreach team in Witchford, who have neither been providing the legally required information about their intentions to the District Council's planning department nor responding to enquiries, I have taken this up with the Connecting Cambridgeshire team at the County Council who are trying to use their contacts to track this matter down.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Board has extended loans and interest-free periods to five housing schemes in light of COVID-19, three of them in East Cambridgeshire.

Work continues on seven options for the A10, six of them including dualling, with a public consultation planned for later this year.

The Board has agreed—some think prematurely—to set up a Special Purpose Vehicle to oversee the development of the CAM metro project.

The Board has approved Market Town Masterplans for Ely, Soham, and Littleport, drawn up by consultants. £1M per town will follow to implement the Masterplans; the Overview & Scrutiny Committee asked whether there will be flexibility in allocating this funding as communities have not really been involved in developing their own Masterplans but this remains unclear.

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee also quizzed Mayor Palmer at the end of July about correspondence between himself and the Ministry regarding its expectation of reforms to the governance of the Combined Authority.



Meet Your Councillor

Sutton ward district councillor Mark Inskip and I will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 11 August
- Tuesday 8 September

Please contact Mark at mark@markinskip.org.uk to book your timeslot.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division