

County Councillor report to Buckden Parish Council, Tuesday, January 12th, 2021

Given the Christmas holiday period and the impact of the pandemic, there is not much to report from the County Council as such. Many council staff have been redeployed to help with the crisis.

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The main item for County Council decision over the next few weeks will be the budget for 2021-22 and the decisions are expected to be taken on Tuesday February 9th which is also the date of the next Buckden PC meeting, so I may be able to give you 'hot news'! The key issue, as already reported to you, is how to balance the council tax rises against the increasing demand for services.

Education

Schools, as you know from the national press, have had a very uncertain and difficult time. One of the tricky decisions due to come up at the Schools Forum next Friday will be the level of funding for the increasing number of children with Special Needs. The sums allocated to this heading by central government are inadequate and so consideration has to be given to transferring money away from mainstream classes to Special Needs.

Flooding

Responding to messages about flooding has been one of my main Christmas holiday activities. The District Council set up several village specific meetings to discuss what had happened. I attended the one for Brampton but there wasn't one for Buckden. It made me realise that water management, especially with a river flowing through the area, is complex in terms of 'who does what' when there is heavy rainfall. The recent County Council decision to reduce or eliminate routine gully clearance has proved to be a bad idea. I am willing to join in any local discussion with you and share what I have been learning over the last few weeks.

Covid

Below is the most recent information I have about Council services in these unusual circumstances. You will know most of this already but it might be useful to have all the links and telephone numbers in one place in case you come across somebody in the village who needs special help. I'm not sure the links will work from this document but if not, you can access them from www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Council services to continue during lockdown – With the new lockdown under way, the majority of services at Cambridgeshire County Council will continue to operate as usual. However, in compliance with national safety guidelines some of our services will have restrictions in place and these are detailed below.

Coroners - The Coroners service for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is continuing to operate as normal. Inquests are continuing to be held remotely (via Skype) and in person. It is recommended that people attend inquests remotely where possible.

For more information on the service including contact details and forthcoming inquests visit [here](#)

Household Recycling Centres – All nine HRCs in Cambridgeshire will remain open as usual during lockdown with safety measures in place, however customers are advised to avoid unnecessary visits.

For more information, including opening hours and booking timeslots visit [here](#)

Libraries – All libraries in Cambridgeshire are open, with safety measures in place but operating a restricted service. Customers can use the Select and Collect service to choose and pick up titles, as well as using computers by appointment, with bookings limited to those using public services only.

For more information about library services and opening hours visit [here](#)

Registration Services - Following the lockdown announcement, marriage and civil partnership ceremonies can only take place in exceptional circumstances (such as one party with a terminal illness meaning very short life expectancy) and both council's registrations teams are in the process of contacting all couples with a ceremony booked in January and February to discuss options.

In Cambridgeshire, the county's registration service is open for certain pre-booked appointments only:

- Deaths that took place in Cambridgeshire (these are conducted by telephone)
- Births that took place in Cambridgeshire
- Notices of marriage or civil partnership (ceremony must be booked first – these can be booked for late Spring onwards)
- Citizenship ceremonies

Copy certificates, for events previously registered, can be ordered online.

For full details about Cambridgeshire registration services and / or to book visit [here](#). If you are unable to book / order on-line then please call 0345 045 1363.

Clinically extremely vulnerable urged to shield and seek support if they need it - Residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who have been identified by the NHS as clinically extremely vulnerable are being urged to shield once again, following the announcement by the Prime Minister of a further national lockdown.

Everyone is being asked to stay at home as much as possible and to only leave home if it is essential to do so. However, people who are clinically extremely vulnerable and therefore at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus are being urged to take extra steps.

They are being asked not to leave home to go to work, school, college or university, to limit the time they spend outside their home and only go out for medical appointments, exercise or for essential reasons.

Letters have been sent to all clinically vulnerable people from the Department for Health and Social Care informing them how to stay safe. People will also receive a follow-up letter from Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council with information on the support available in the local area.

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, is urging people who are clinically extremely vulnerable to stay at home as much as possible.

“We know how difficult it can be to reduce contact with others for a lengthy period. So, it is understandable that you may feel upset by the recent announcement to shield again. But please remember these measures are in place to reduce transmission of coronavirus and to protect you.

“Rates of the virus have been rising across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and we know that the new variant which is much easier to catch has been detected in the county. So it is really important that you stay at home as much as possible if you are clinically extremely vulnerable.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel, with the new vaccination programme being rolled out. But it will take time for this to reach enough people and have its full impact, so for now please remain at home as much as possible, where you are the safest.”

You can read the full guidance on shielding on the government website, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>

Help and support continues to be available to anyone who is self-isolating through the network of support hubs run by the county, district and city councils.

Contact details for your local support hub are as follows:

- Huntingdonshire District Council area: <https://www.wearehuntingdonshire.org/>
- 01480 388388

If you are not sure which is your local hub, contact the countywide coordination hub via www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/coronavirus or call 0345 045 5219.

The national NHS Volunteer Responders service is also still available, and support can be accessed via <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk/services>, or by calling 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week).

Vaccine scam warning - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership (CAPASP) are warning residents to watch out for fraudulent text messages from scammers posing as the NHS, claiming to offer Covid vaccines.

Scammers have been active throughout the pandemic, exploiting the resultant fear and confusion for their own gain. This recent scam has seen residents being sent a text message which includes a blue link, which takes them to a fake webpage with NHS branding. The resident is then asked to ‘confirm ownership of address’ by providing their bank details.

Scammers claiming to be from NHS are also telephoning residents, instructing them to press a key to confirm they'd like to receive the vaccine or asking for bank details as affirmation to receive the vaccine.

Please remember that your surgery or the NHS will administer your Covid vaccine free of charge – do not give out your bank details to pay for a vaccine or to confirm your address.

For genuine COVID-19 related advice including vaccination information, visit www.gov.uk and www.nhs.uk

Coronavirus: what you need to do

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday 5 January, national lockdown rules apply in England. You must stay at home. This is the single most important action we can all take

to protect the NHS and save lives. You must not leave your home unless necessary. Stay two metres apart from anyone not in your household or bubble.

For more information about the national lockdown, visit <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

There are three simple actions we must all do to keep on protecting each other:

- Wash hands – keep washing your hands regularly
- Cover face – wear a face covering in enclosed spaces
- Make space – stay at least two metres apart – or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions

Peter Downes, January 8th, 2021