

County Council report to Buckden Parish Council, March 10th, 2021

The last few weeks have been so extraordinary and issues have been developing so rapidly that I am simply reproducing for you the latest news on three 'hot topics'. By the time the meeting takes place, who knows what might have happened? I may be able to give more details at the meeting.

1. Flooding

Report from CCC officer:

Subject: Update from the Floods Investigation Team

Dear Councillors,

I am mailing to update you on the latest flood risk situation and actions across Cambridgeshire. I would like to thank the team for supplying the following information:

The number of reports we are receiving related to the flooding in December and January is slowing now so we are hopeful we have captured most of the information. The total number of flood reports received by the Flood Risk team now stands at 760. This includes both internal and external (garden/highway) flooding. Where reports relate to highway related issues, we have forwarded them on directly to highways

We have attended 12 community flood meetings (Godmanchester, St Ives, St Neots, The Offords, Brampton, Houghton/Hemingfords, Ramsey, Alconbury, March, Swavesey, Broughton, Buckden) to discuss the recent flooding and identify any required actions

We held an extraordinary meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership on 3 February 2021 and the next meeting is scheduled for 2 March 2021.

We have commenced discussions with the Environment Agency regarding the best way to start setting up flood groups and writing flood plans. We are aware that communities across the county are at different stages e.g. some already have groups, some have started but stalled and others don't have anything. We will therefore be adapting the approach accordingly and this local engagement will be a key part of our plans moving forwards.

The formal flood investigations are in their early stages and we are currently recruiting additional resource to enable us to deliver these effectively and efficiently

Anglian Water have offered to meet to discuss the issues around new development and planning responses

Thanks to the information provided by residents and members we have developed a database of locations where we understand additional watercourse maintenance is required. We plan to write to all relevant landowners in the coming weeks to remind them of their riparian responsibilities and we will assess as to the appropriateness and extent of any enforcement action

We would like to thank all members that have continued to send through details of flooding that has occurred and we would request you continue to make us aware of any flood related issues in your area

Our intention is to provide regular updates like this to you over the next few weeks, either weekly or fortnightly depending on what has progressed. However please contact us on floodandwater@cambridgeshire.gov.uk if you have any other questions.

Kind regards

Quinton Carroll

2. Covid

Please note – this information is correct at the time of publishing.

Tuesday, 2 March 2021

Self-isolation support totalling almost £1million helping residents reduce spread of Covid-19 –

Almost £1million has been awarded to residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to support them to self-isolate and reduce the spread of Covid-19.

Since the scheme launched last October, almost 2,000 claims from people requesting financial support to self-isolate have been approved totalling £996,500.

The scheme was due to expire at the end of February, but the Government has announced that it has been extended until the end of June to allow councils to continue supporting everyone who needs assistance to self-isolate. It has also been expanded to include parents who need to have time off work to look after a child who is self-isolating. Parents will be able to apply for this support soon and further details will be provided by councils in due course.

People who need to self-isolate are able to make a bid for funding from The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which is run by Peterborough City Council and each of the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire. Those who don't meet the criteria are also able to apply for a discretionary payment of £500.

In addition, hundreds more people who have not been eligible for funding have received help in other ways via the network of support hubs. These hubs are run by the district and city councils and supported by the Countywide Hub which is run by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council.

Councillor Steve Count, Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, said: "Hundreds of families across Cambridgeshire have been supported to self-isolate since the financial scheme launched last October and it is great news that this support will continue. For some people, financial assistance is the only way they feel able to self-isolate when needed, which is why the scheme is so vital.

"Rates are reducing in most parts of Cambridgeshire, but to ensure that trend continues we have to make sure we all continue to self-isolate when asked to by NHS Test and Trace. There is no better way to break the chain of transmission."

"There is light at the end of the tunnel, but we can only reach that light if people continue to self-isolate when they are told to. If you need support, please get in touch, whether it's financial assistance or something more practical you need help with, such as food or medicine collection or dog walking."

Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council and the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire have a range of support available to help anyone to self-isolate.

This support includes:

The Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme which is run by Peterborough City Council and each of the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire, which entitles people who meet certain criteria to a one-off payment of £500 if they lose income as a result of not being able to work. This payment can be made available on multiple occasions if a person comes into contact with people who test positive a second or even third time

For anyone not eligible for the government support – a local discretionary fund which offers financial support to make sure people don't suffer financially.

The network of support hubs run by the district and city councils which can support people with grocery shopping, medicine collection, dog walking, befriending services and in many other ways.

To be eligible for the Test and Trace Support Payment Scheme people must meet all the following criteria:

- You have been asked to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace because you have tested positive for coronavirus or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive
- You are employed or self-employed
- You cannot work from home and will lose income as a result

- You are claiming at least one of the following benefits: Universal Credit, Working Tax Credits, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Pension Credit or Housing Benefit.

If you do not receive one of the above benefits you may still be eligible for a discretionary payment if you are going to suffer financial hardship by isolating.

NHS Test and Trace ID number, bank statement, and proof of employment or self-assessment returns will need to be provided.

Details of both schemes are available at www.peterborough.gov.uk and www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

People can also contact their local support hub via their local council or by calling 0345 045 5219.

Dr Liz Robin, Director of Public Health for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, said: "The Government has published its plan to gradually loosen the restrictions on our lives in the coming weeks and months, but the Prime Minister has made it clear that can only happen if a number of measures are achieved. One of those is controlling the rate of transmission of the virus so that this does not risk a surge which increases pressure on NHS hospitals. We can only achieve this if people continue to follow lockdown and social distancing rules, and also make sure to access testing - either because they have symptoms, or because they are going out of their homes regularly and therefore may be more likely to have the virus without knowing it.

"The rapid testing that we are offering across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, both in workplaces and in the community, is an important way to help reduce rates of Covid-19 and ensure that we can all get back to doing more of what we used to enjoy. If you are leaving home regularly for work, volunteering or training, please access a test twice a week and help us drive down rates of infection."

To find your nearest site and to book a test

visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting or www.peterborough.gov.uk/rapidtesting

3. "Audit report completed on the tenancy of Manor Farm Girton"

The circumstances surrounding the way in which the Conservative Deputy Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council acquired a tenancy for a farm owned by the County Council have been under examination for over two years now, with the report being held up due to an investigation by the police.

Now that the County Council is finally in possession of the report, completed by external auditors, the report may be made available to the public.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, said: "It has taken far too long for this report to be completed." It was Cllr Nethsingha who raised the initial complaint but she has yet to receive a copy of the full report.

She said: "The issues raised in this case are extremely serious, involving concerns about both the council's financial management, the financial loss to residents and the relationships between Councillor Hickford and officers of the council. There were accusations of bullying, and we need to know the outcome of this investigation. "Now that this report has been finalised, the public have a right to know what happened. If those initial concerns have been upheld, that would have major implications not only for Councillor Hickford, but for the whole Conservative Leadership of the Council. There are serious public interest matters at stake here, and the public need and deserve answers."

Late news - Cllr Hickford has resigned as a councillor. (see below)

26 February 2021

Cllr Roger Hickford - Resignation.

On Tuesday February 23rd I received a long and complex report which was the culmination of the Manor Farm Audit. The subject of the report largely concerns the Deputy Leader Cllr Roger Hickford's occupancy of Manor Farm, Girton as a tenant of Cambridgeshire County Council's Farms Estate

The contents of the report are confidential at present, for legal reasons in order for the Audit and Accounts committee to fully consider and discuss the matter. But having read the report I had two meetings with Cllr. Hickford to consider implications for the Council, outside of the remit of the committee.

Subsequent to those meetings Cllr Hickford has asked me to accept his resignation as my Deputy leader and as a member of the Council with immediate effect.

I have accepted his resignation and confirmed this to Chief Executive Gillian Beasley.

I have also thanked Cllr Hickford for his years of service in his role as a Councillor and the support he has given me over the years as my deputy leader.

Cllr Steve Count - Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Buckden specific

I am working with parish councillors on the traffic implications of the Silver Street development, the proposed improvements to the cycle path into Brampton and the water attenuation measures for the Lucks Lane development.

The current requirements in terms of social distancing etc make it very difficult for me to carry out my normal expectation in terms of local casework but I am always pleased to be copied in to correspondence and, if appropriate, I can give my support or guidance, albeit remotely!

Contact me on 01480 509471, peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Peter Downes March 2nd, 2021