

District and County Councillor's Report – September 2022

Cost of Living

Many people are now feeling the pinch of the cost of living crisis. The South Cambs magazine this month there is a 2 page spread of information that may be of use, as well as content on the website that points people towards support available – including with energy bills or ensuring that people know what they are entitled to (Universal Credit, childcare costs, Disability and Carers benefit etc) and then encourages them to claim these entitlements – specifically aimed at Local Council Tax support and Discretionary Householding payment. <https://www.scambbs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/>

City Access Consultation

A 'Sustainable Travel Zone' road user charge has been put forward by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (the body currently implementing the upgrades to the A1307) for private vehicles between 7am and 7pm on weekdays. The plans are part of a package to improve public transport, reduce congestion in the city and help the environment through lower emissions.

A £5 congestion charge to drive into and around Cambridge is being considered as part of a 'once in a generation' plan to shake up how people travel during the working week.

Whilst driving in the city could be more expensive, the GCP has revealed plans to make buses cheaper. Flat fares have been proposed to be introduced. In Cambridge a bus ticket could cost £1 to travel in the city with a ticket in the wider 'travel to work' area (where we are) to cost £2.

This is still very much a proposal at this stage and will be publicly consulted on when/if the plan is adopted on September 8th. What this could mean for us, is cheaper, more frequent bus travel. We would like to hear your thoughts on this, as we represent the views of the electorate here, so please do let us know.

4 Day Week Trial

The District Council has announced that they are going to trial a 4 day working week, initially for 470 office workers. The trial will run for three months from January 2023. Detailed planning is underway to improve working practices and to support staff to work more efficiently. It is expected that productivity will be maintained or bettered, detailed performance measures will be put in place to judge the success of the trial. If the trial is successful, it will be extended for a further one year, then reviewed again. If it is not successful, they will revert to the 5-day week.

South Cambs will be the first public sector authority to run a trial. Evidence from the private sector shows that productivity tends to increase, job satisfaction, job retention and recruitment all improve. That is what is expected to be achieved, but it is a trial and we will wait to see the outcome.

The Council has already dramatically changed the way it works, due to Covid, and continues with most people working from home. This is the next step, but it will only be fully adopted if it can be shown that it works. The project is being managed by their own senior staff so there will not be a big bill for consultants. The expectation is that around £1 million can be saved if staff retention and recruitment improves leading to a reduction in reliance on expensive agency staff.

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

Recycling of Electrical Items

South Cambs has installed 8 new pink recycling banks for small electrical items such as hairdryers, toasters and phones. These are all over the District and Cambridge, these being the locations:

- Gwydir Street car park, Cambridge
- Lammas Land car park, Cambridge
- Abbey Pool car park, Cambridge
- Chesterton Road public toilets, Cambridge
- Morrisons car park, Cambourne
- Tesco car park, Bar Hill
- Village car park, High Street, Melbourn
- Tesco car park, Fulbourn

Free access for Community groups to Wimpole Hall

Wimpole Estates is offering local community groups free admission to the estate and its facilities, recognising that National Trust membership can be expensive and exclusionary. Each pass issued under this initiative will be for up to 16 people. If you know of any groups that may want to take them up on this offer, please write to wimpoleforeveryone@nationaltrust.org.uk

20mph Schemes

A County Council working group is finalising criteria for assessment of 20mph applications. It has already decided to remove the requirement that existing speeds in an application area should already be 24mph or lower. Fourteen 20mph applications from this year's Local Highways Improvement (LHI) bid have been moved from the LHI process to be the first cohort of schemes to be developed under this new budget.

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