

Meldreth Parish Council January 2022 County and District Councillors Report

Virtual decision-making for local councils

The Local Government Association is lobbying government to reinstate provision for meeting virtually where councils feel the need to. Like parish council meetings in numerous villages, County and District Council meetings have been either cancelled or run with reduced numbers of people attending and some members attending remotely.

Household Support Fund

Reminder – please help spread the word. This fund aims to help those struggling to pay for food, energy or other essential items this winter. Cambridgeshire County Council has been allocated £3.58 million as part of the Government’s Household Support Fund to help people who need financial support.

The Household Support Fund itself is a new one-off grant, which is live until 31 March 2022. This usually provides £49 (for a family) or £29 (for an individual) to cover food or household energy costs, but more funding may be available for people who can demonstrate a higher need – for instance for higher costs of filling an oil tank or buying a new cooker. To be eligible for the Household Support Fund residents will need to earn less than £17,940 or receive any of the following: Income Support; Income-based Job Seekers Allowance; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Pension Credit; Universal Credit; Working Tax Credit.

Details of how to access the scheme are available here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund>

South Cambs District Council - support for local businesses

A range of support is available for local business via South Cambs District Council, which can help link up with government grants and mental health support, among other things. Please see the SCDC Business page as this support is regularly refreshed and updated:

<https://www.scamb.gov.uk/business/>

Covid in schools – staff impact

Case numbers in schools before Christmas broke records week after week, as parents and children will know all too well. In the first January week of return to school, about half of all cases of Covid in schools across Cambridgeshire represented staff. Melbourn Village College reports huge support from community volunteers who have been supporting the administration of Covid testing for students.

Road and pavement resurfacing

As you will have seen, a key section of Meldreth High Street pavement has been resurfaced at last. Unfortunately, the extent of resurfacing work hasn’t been as much as we’d hoped, due to funding being stretched, but we’ll be lobbying for further work in the new financial year.

Civil Parking Enforcement and 20 MPH schemes

The Jan 25th County Highways committee will look at Civil Parking Enforcement and 20 mph scheme funding and principles – more information to come.

Health and social care reforms and local communities

A major reorganization of health and social care is happening now, with legislation in the process of passing through Parliament. This directly impacts the County Council which as Local Public Health and Social Care Authority will become part of the ‘Integrated Care System.’

The reforms include raising money through the National Insurance contributions that working people pay; widening eligibility for County-funded social care from about 4% of the population now to an estimated 14% in Cambridgeshire (which must be paid for of course); and requiring the local NHS (our local GPs, hospitals, etc) and the Local Public Health and Social Care Authority Cambridgeshire County Council to collaborate and integrate, and think at a ‘neighbourhood’ level. Prevention is a constant theme – how can we live better and avoid getting sick in the first place? How can we give children from birth the best chance of a healthy life? What more can local communities be doing to play a part?

Some of the principles seem overwhelmingly positive but other aspects of the reforms are daunting. These are huge bureaucracies and whatever new money is raised will be directed first to the enormous Covid-induced waiting lists. That will take time to work through.

Nevertheless, from July this year it will be a legal requirement for ‘Integrated Care Systems’ to be up and running with the basics in place. This means that all of these organisations, already working to deliver vaccinations, tackle waiting lists and attract new staff to a depleting workforce, also need to find time to reflect and prepare for new obligations under the Health and Care Bill.

Within this overall framework is an important opportunity for social support community groups to play a role. For example, the local community has worked together during the pandemic to support vulnerable people. Something we’ll be seeing in the coming months is support to set up small local enterprises providing social care, as the County Council aims to develop a local social care workforce – more information to come. Part of Susan’s County Council role is chairing the ‘Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board’ where the NHS and Integrated Care Systems formally come together.