

County Councillor Report for Parish Council meetings in April 2022 - Cllr Anna Bradnam

Introduction In May 2021, I was immensely proud to be re-elected as your County Councillor, to serve you for another four years. The Conservatives lost overall control and the Lib Dems, Labour and Independents formed a Joint Administration (JA) with a formal Agreement, Policy Framework and Committee structure.

Lib Dems	20
Labour	9
Independent	4
Join Administration	33
Conservatives	28
Total	61

I sit on the Planning (Minerals and Waste) Committee and the Environment and Green Investment Committee, with a particular interest in flooding issues. I also chair the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee. The County Council moved from Shire Hall in Cambridge to Alconbury in the autumn but not for Full Council meetings, as the 'Multi-Function Room' is not big enough to accommodate Covid social distancing and realistically does not appear big enough for full meetings even without distancing. The Annual Meeting of the Council in April 2021 was held at Duxford Imperial War Museum and full council meetings during 2021 have been held in Sports Halls and Leisure Centres.

The JA needed to review the Council it had inherited and invited a peer challenge review from the Local Government Association which reported back to us in Spring 2022. We also implemented the findings of the Independent Remuneration Panel unaltered.

The Council's Chief Executive retired during the year and we appointed a new Chief Executive, Stephen Moir, for Cambridgeshire County Council. This is part of the process through which we have been separating out many of the previous administration's joint staffing structures, to enable our officers to concentrate on Cambridgeshire priorities.

Strategy and Resources

The new Council inherited a budget gap of £22.2 million for this year (21/22). We managed to balance the budget this time but the budget gap is set to rise to £86 million by 2027 and our peer challenge team identified this as an issue of 'significant magnitude'.

The Council increased Council tax in February 2022 by 1.99% for general services and 3% for adult social care. This was not done lightly, recognizing the increased bills families are facing, however, those most in need are likely to pay a lower council tax increase. We put £14 million into a 'Just Transition' Fund to tackle inequality, improve lives and care for the environment.

We commissioned an independent review of 'This Land' the Council's development company, set up under the previous administration. This found unusual accounting practices and shortcomings which must be corrected immediately or within three months. The Council owns 33,000 acres of farmland and the JA wants to make use of this asset not just for rental income but towards our environmental and climate change ambitions.

Adults and Health

The new administration decided to combine the work of two separate committees to link health provision and adult social care. This anticipated the launch of the government's Integrated Care System across health and care providers in Cambridgeshire and we welcomed Jyoti Atri, the new Director of Public Health into post. The Covid pandemic has been devastating in terms of loss of life, emotional and mental impact on families and the workforce and where work is done. International recruitment has been impacted, first by Brexit then by Covid. The Council has worked with partner agencies to support residents but the removal of all precautions now in England has been followed by a surge in cases.

The Joint Administration has worked to incorporate health into all its policies. We are investing in 'Care Together' supporting local care initiatives and have rolled out the Real Living Wage to social care workers. We have increased support for unpaid carers and made the Direct Payment option available to more people.

Children and Young People and Corporate Parenting

The committee concentrated on supporting families over the school holidays by funding vouchers for those eligible for free school meals through 2021/22 and has been guaranteed for 2022/23. We also provided a Holiday Activity and Food Programme for families on related benefits. The number of children eligible for FSM in Cambridgeshire has increased significantly since March 2020. The Council has run a recruitment drive to engage more foster carers, to ensure more of our children and young people in care can be placed with families inside the county. The national shortage of HGV drivers has presented problems for home to school transport and school catering. A review of admission arrangements for all own admission authority schools has been agreed and we are proposing a review of the increasing need for specialist educational places.

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion (CoSMIC)

This committee has supported communities through Covid, made provision for refugees from Afghanistan and now Ukraine, assisting EU citizens in obtaining settled status and other services including libraries and mortuaries. It also drew up a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy and provides the Household Support Fund which helps people in financial hardship with essential costs.

Environment and Green Investment

Has been exceptionally busy this year, being responsible for Climate Change, renewable energy, planning for flood resilience, biodiversity, waste, antiquities and digital infrastructure and broadband. Waste has been contentious with unpopular commercial applications for incinerators at Wisbech and Woodhurst, very expensive odour control measures required at the Amey facility at Waterbeach and uncertainty over the government's intentions around extended producer responsibility, deposit return and recycling. Plans to upgrade the recycling centres at March and Milton are in their early stages.

The Council's project to switch the community at Swaffham Prior from oil to a renewable community heating system is progressing well and has attracted £3.2 million from the government. We've also put solar panels at over the parking at New Shire Hall, Alconbury and over Park&Ride sites. As gas and oil boilers in schools have become due for renewal we have replaced with ground and air source heat pumps. We have run a group buying scheme with Solar Together for homeowners wanting to invest in solar panels and battery storage. At the same time a commercial application from Sunnica for the biggest solar farm in the country (stretching from Burwell to Red Lodge) has met concerted opposition from residents. The Council is a consultee to this process.

The committee worked on two very important strategies this year; a revised Flood Risk Management Strategy and an updated Climate and Environment Strategy.

The Climate Change and Environment Strategy set a more ambitious target than before, working with local businesses to achieve net zero carbon by 2045. The Council publishes its carbon footprint report every year and Covid meant that in 2021, with less travel and less construction our carbon footprint reduced. We recognize this is unlikely to be sustained in 2022. We invested £109k in winter 20/21 for urgent repairs to biodiversity sites and on an audit of the County's land. We also contributed (personally) to the Queen's Green Canopy initiative to mark the Platinum Jubilee.

The Council has responded to a number of strategic planning applications including North East Cambridge, Northstowe and the Anglian Water Wastewater Treatment Plant relocation.

We are in the process of developing a new heritage website for Cambridgeshire and we have produced a new Digital Connectivity strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Constitution and Ethics

In 2018 we – then in opposition – blew the whistle on the award of a council tenancy in Girton to the then Deputy Leader Roger Hickford. The JA was committed to publishing the review. Independent investigators found Mr Hickford had broken the councillor's Code of Conduct in seven different ways including using his position to gain personal advantage. He resigned before the election in 2021.

We have adopted a new Parental leave Policy for standing councilors and also agreed a change to standing orders that means councilors cannot propose motions to full council that the council is due to decide or be consulted about. This does not hinder councillors from speaking out or campaigning about an issue but avoids such motions being used improperly to set council policy before an application comes to the planning committee for impartial judgement.

Highways and Transport

The Joint Administration is taking stock of the many challenges it has inherited from the outgoing administration. Lack of regular maintenance of some 100,000 roadside gullies contributed to flooding in winter 20/21. These are now being mapped and cleared. 50,000 potholes were repaired and £1.7 million was spent on new road re-surfacing to end Feb 2022. A further £1.4 million has been set aside for pot holes, paths and other improvements and the money set aside for paths and footways is starting to be used as you will have seen on path re-surfacing. We have set aside £250,000 for communities to bid into for 20 mph zones in 21/22 and a further £400,000 for 22/23. We are reviewing policy on heavy goods vehicles in villages. We have been focusing on Active Travel, aiming to improve infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians. We have undertaken a full review of fatalities and road safety.

Under the Local Highway Improvement bids, only 14 of the 43 projects submitted by parishes in South Cambridgeshire were funded and unfortunately neither Horningsea nor Waterbeach's road narrowing proposals came above the cut. Horningsea came 26th and Waterbeach came 32nd.

As mentioned above we have set aside funding which we hope parishes will be able to bid into for 20 mph schemes. Network Rail consulted on its Ely Area Capacity Study in early 2021 but have not fed back. Traffic in Cambridge is expected to increase by 30% in the next ten years and there is a serious lack of funding for public transport, which is desperately needed to provide links from our villages for those without cars. The Greater Cambridge Partnership has been consulting on ways to reduce congestion in Cambridge and one option being considered is congestion charging. The consultation is ongoing.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

A new Mayor was elected in May 2021. He has scrapped the Cambridge Autonomous Metro. A new Chief Executive was appointed and the Combined Authority now has offices in Huntingdon.

LOCAL ISSUES

GCP Waterbeach to Cambridge - Following protests from Waterbeach residents, the GCP removed the Eastern route from the options it was taking forward, leaving (we thought) only the Western option which runs north and west of Landbeach along the Mere Way. Residents of Landbeach were furious when the GCP also took forward a central option, which would cut across open fields through the village and threaten the peaceful view from the medieval Tithe Barn. We await the outcome of deliberations

A10 – despite the reduction in traffic caused by people working more from home during the pandemic, the A10 has seen a lot of disruption this year. Firstly to install a commercial gas main and then for the works to improve the existing cyclepath between Milton and Waterbeach, required as part of the Waterbeach New Town approval. The speed limit has been reduced to 40 mph and the junction at Car Dyke made safer for cyclists and pedestrians. Works to install a Toucan crossing to Waterbeach Road have also started. The path is being widened northwards to Denny End Road first and then the very narrow section from Car Dyke Road southbound will be widened towards Milton.

A14/A10 junction roadworks, cones and north bound lane merge.

The dedicated lane from the A14 to the A10, having finally been cleared of cones is now working really well and road markings on the roundabout have been refreshed. Gas wells on the perimeter of the landfill site had to be modified and fenced so they could continue to be monitored safely.

Mere Way Cycle path – now that the A10 works are under way, works on this route have re-commenced. Like the A10 path, this section 278 project is a negotiation between designer and the Highways Authority. A design has been submitted to County Highways and we await the results of the Road Safety Audit, at which point there will be an opportunity to comment.

Histon Road and Milton Road – The GCP-led Histon Road Bus Prioritisation Scheme is now complete and the Milton Road project is due to start Spring 2022.

Waterbeach Station Cycle Parking - Govia Thameslink Rail installed a two-tier cycle rack in place of the Sheffield stands, as part of the delivery of the Passenger Benefit Fund, which was set up to compensate passengers for the inconvenience and disruption caused by the last timetable roll-out. Whilst doubling the capacity was welcomed, the two-tier racks are not useable by women (me!) nor would they be for children or for heavier electric bikes and do not have locking points. After a demonstration on site, GTR agreed to install some additional covered Sheffield, which have been installed near the footpath to the platforms.

East West Rail – the non-statutory consultation was completed June 2021.

At present only the southern approaches to Cambridge are being considered as EWR's preferred options, the northern route have been discounted so far. The following document explains why:

[EAS060_TechDoc_Appendix_Master_DIG-1.pdf \(eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com\)](https://eastwestrail-production.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/EAS060_TechDoc_Appendix_Master_DIG-1.pdf)

Page 50 onwards assesses the northern route, p 59 gives an illustrative map of the area between Landbeach and Milton and subsequent pages describe the difficulty of 4-tracking the line, over the River Cam and under Newmarket Road, with associated domestic and commercial demolitions required. A comparison of data is given on p99.

Nevertheless – I fear that, having received no objection to a route that was not on the table, EWR may re-instate the northern route, saying there was no objection to it. EWR have been advised very clearly that residents in the north would be outraged, if having not been consulted on the northern route, some evidence submitted during this pre-consultation made them change their preference to the northern route. SCDC Cabinet approved a response to the consultation on 24 May. You can see the officer report and response here: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 24/05/2021 10:00 \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/2021/05/24/public-pack-agenda-document-for-cabinet-24-05-2021-10-00)

Chisholm Trail – the new bridge over the railway has been installed and the jetty path under the railway and pedestrian bridge has opened. A dangerous bollard has been removed.

Voi electric scooters and electric bikes (a Combined Authority initiative) are popular and well-used but are a nuisance if parked thoughtlessly across pavements or near dropped kerbs. On 30 March the original trial was extended to 30 November to gather more information on their impact, although I note there is nowhere on the website to report a complaint. Since October 2020 evidence suggests in Cambridge alone, 639,000 have taken place with 1,670,608 km ridden. It is estimated that 210,880 car journeys were replaced in that time and some 112.6 tonnes of carbon avoided.

County Council's Coronavirus (Covid-19) Walking and Cycling Schemes

A Tranche 1 scheme delivered in Milton without consultation in May 2020 has now been removed. The southbound cycle lane on Cambridge Road, left too little space for vehicles to safely pass each other and caused dangerous last-minute avoidance actions. Milton Parish Council objected and it has now gone.

Verge Maintenance

In March 2021 the County Council acted on the advice of the Wildlife Trust and Natural England and resolved to reduce verge cutting frequency to twice a year. This being to extend flowering, to help our insect populations and biodiversity. Maintaining safety of road users remains a top priority and more cuts are being carried out at areas which have bends in the road or where visibility is a problem. Verges will be cut

immediately if there is a report of visibility being obscured. I have requested cutting at the junction of Waterbeach Road and the A10. I note daffodils have emerged along the line of the gas main on Car Dyke Rd.

Anglian Water – Relocation of the Wastewater Treatment Centre

The proposed move to Honey Hill has caused huge concern for residents of Horningsea and Fen Ditton. With District Council colleagues I have attended briefings and meetings, wherever I have been invited, to support residents and seek the least possible harm. I asked for direct access to and from the A14 to avoid the impact of traffic through the villages during construction and operation, also retention and early planting of screening trees from the outset to avoid visual impact. District Council colleagues and I were interviewed alongside other candidates by the Save Honey Hill Campaign, to give our views on the project for the website. Currently comments to the Phase 3 Consultation are being accepted until 27 April 2022. I have also submitted comments to be incorporated in the County response to the consultation.

Solar energy generation at St Ives Park and Ride site

Cambridgeshire County Council's micro-grid project to generate power by installing solar panels at its P&R sites at Magog Down and St Ives Park and Ride site is now complete.

Flood Action Plan – The County Council, which is the Lead Local Flood Authority, has recently published its' Flood Risk Management Strategy and since this is a living document, I have asked that Landbeach be included in the list of wet-spots. This is being progressed currently.

Milton Household Recycling Centre

The planning application for the expansion of Milton Household Recycling Centre was validated a few weeks ago. It's on the website at <https://planning.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/online-applications/> (search for CCC/21/259/FUL). The Neighbour Consultation expired on Wednesday 23 March.

The Household Recycling Centre currently sits within the red line boundary of the landfill site and is subject to the same planning consent timescales as the landfill site, which is due to close in 2026. Applications are being submitted a) to re-draw the landfill site boundary and revise the restoration profile for closure in 2026 but also b) to redevelop the HRC in its own re-drawn red line boundary, so it can continue beyond 2026. Plans are being brought forward to redevelop Milton Household Recycling Centre (HRC), to replace the current facility. The upgraded HRC, aims to offer increased capacity to meet the needs of the county's growing population, while also meeting best practice operational and health and safety standards."

Covid – remain vigilant

I note that with the removal of all precautions the number of cases in South Cambridgeshire did surge dramatically at the beginning of April to over 10,000 cases, higher than at any time over the last two years but has levelled off somewhat as we approach the end of the month. Now that a majority have been vaccinated and boosted, symptoms are proving less severe, although not for all.

Police and Crime Commissioner - I am the Country representative on the Police and Crime Panel.

The Commissioner, Darryl Preston announced more resources to tackle crime in rural communities as well as domestic abuse and stalking. Prevention support will be provided to a wider range of offenders including children and adolescents who abuse parents or carers and persistent stalkers.

Darryl said: "Victims of domestic abuse and stalking can be left traumatised by their experiences long after crimes have taken place. It's vital we need to do everything we can to tackle these most devastating of crimes."

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