



Lina Joseph
Cambridgeshire County Councillor

Annual Report

Overall

A very big difference this year to last year is that the County Council is now back under Conservative control following the election last May. This means that after four years of the Council being in “no overall control”, and the inevitable affects that brings, the Council can now get on with business in a more effective manner.

Budget

The County Council did make efficiency savings in the last year of £32m as per our business plan. However, we had even greater than predicted pressures from our “demand led” services such as Adult Social Care and Looked After Children. This left a gap in the budget of around £4.5m at year end. The Council continued with the 2% Adult Social Care precept, but for the first time in three years the Council raised Council Tax by 2.99%. This will cover the budget shortfall and also allow for some funds to be put into a “smoothing reserve” for the next two years where we can see upcoming budget pressures.

Government continues to reduce the amount it gives to County Councils. Our Revenue Support Grant (RSG) is down from £15m to just under £4m, and taking into account other grants no longer being given, we are down £13m overall from government funding for this coming financial year. This is in conjunction with still being the fastest growing county by population, and an ever increasing demand on our services.

Highways

The Council is aware of the concerns regarding the condition of our roads, and in particular the number of pot holes. Last year we invested an extra £2.5m from our revenue budget for road repairs and maintenance. So this is not a one off funding, but every year an extra £2.5m so we can plan our maintenance going forward to include the extra funding. This is on top of the funding we already put in, and the extra funding from government for following their recommended HIAMP program. This has been the worse winter for roads in the past few years, and the number of pot holes increased dramatically. The Council is repairing more pot holes than before, and has invested in two machines (dragon patchers) which can repair pot holes much quicker than our maintenance/repair groups can. Now the weather is milder, the number of outstanding pot holes needing repair is falling. There is still much to do with regards trying to keep our road system from getting worse with the limited funds available.

Government has also recently committed to further investment for road maintenance, mainly potholes. Cambridgeshire has been allocated over 1.6m.

This year has been a successful time for my parishes regarding the Local Highways Improvement bids. I made sure to make recommendations towards the schemes presented. I believe others are in the process of working with officers for future schemes and I will be supporting them also along the way.



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Park & Ride

As of 1st April the £1 charge at the Park & Rides was removed. This proved to be an unpopular charge. Patronage did fall, but when looking at the situation holistically, the funds received did pay for the upkeep and rates for the car parks. It was an election pledge to remove this charge, and we are pleased to be able to deliver it.

Libraries

Cambridge County Council is fully committed to retaining its libraries, unlike some other top tier councils. There has been much work and many workshops to see how we can modernise the library system and make it work and fit for purpose. We acknowledge that libraries are a community asset, but that as a social space many are still underused. We are investigating how libraries can benefit the wider community. As from the 1st of April CCC introduced a small fee for using the computers – the first half hour is free, then a fee of £1 per hour after that. This doesn't apply to anyone using a computer for the new Universal Credit.

The new Communities & Partnership Committee is proving its importance to community safety and resilience. The committee has four main areas of its delivery plan.

Community Resilience Tackling Deprivation Economy & Skills Partnership Working. The White Ribbon campaign is now well on the way to gain Accreditation in November. The campaign is aimed at tackling violence and domestic abuse. There is now a full 2 year programme in place.

Greater Cambridge Partnership

This year has been a very challenging one for infrastructure and transport network. Still more to come. I have been liaising with parishes regarding busways and greenways. I very much hope that residents have been able to appreciate that I am listening to their concerns and that I will do everything I can for them to be represented amongst key people.

I will keep working with my parishes in order to obtain the best result for everyone. I will keep pressing for a review of the Cambourne to Cambridge busway, Greenways projects across South Cambridge and various other ones.

Commercialisation

The Council's commercialisation program is vital for much needed revenue and income for the future. The housing development program is well under way.

Finally, I would like to say that I am very honoured to serve as your representative and I feel very lucky to be the councillor of this division.

Lina Joseph