

## **County Councillor report - Sawston & Shelford Division**

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**October 2021**

### **Covid-19: new guidance for schools**

The Directors of Public Health and of Education in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have recommended that secondary schools reintroduce measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

The advice comes as three Cambridgeshire districts feature in the table of those with the fastest rising COVID-19 rates of all 333 English local authority areas.

This advice covers the next three weeks until half term and includes:

- Secondary schools to reintroduce face coverings in communal spaces, but not in classrooms. Primary school staff may wish to consider the same arrangements
- Social distancing for staff within school buildings, including in shared spaces such as staff rooms. It is also recommended that staff meetings are held virtually if possible
- All visitors to schools must wear face coverings in school buildings
- All non-essential events where parents visit schools are moved to virtual
- Secondary schools should promote and monitor uptake of twice weekly LFD testing and COVID-19 vaccinations for all staff and pupils. Primary school staff should also be doing this and staff need to be reminded of its importance.

### **HGV driver shortages**

The shortage of HGV (LGV) drivers means the County Council is facing challenges in both home to school transport and school catering. These difficulties are being managed but are adding still more pressure for staff on top of Covid.

### **Gully Cleansing**

The frequency and regularity of the gully clearance programme had been reduced under previous administrations. Our new administration has sought to remedy that by assigning new resource and budget to implement a 24 month rolling programme to clear all gullies across the County.

This will not solve the problems overnight, and the frequency and severity of storm events means that our historical drainage systems are going to be found inadequate more often. The capacity of those gullies has been found lacking twice already since July and in December we had the third highest rainfall event since records began.

We are also increasing the collaboration with the District Council over the scheduling of road gutter cleaning, so that is done ahead of gully cleaning, rather than after. We also approved a grant aid programme for helping people with riparian responsibility for ditch maintenance, so that the whole drainage system is more effective.

### **Local Highways Improvement (LHI) schemes**

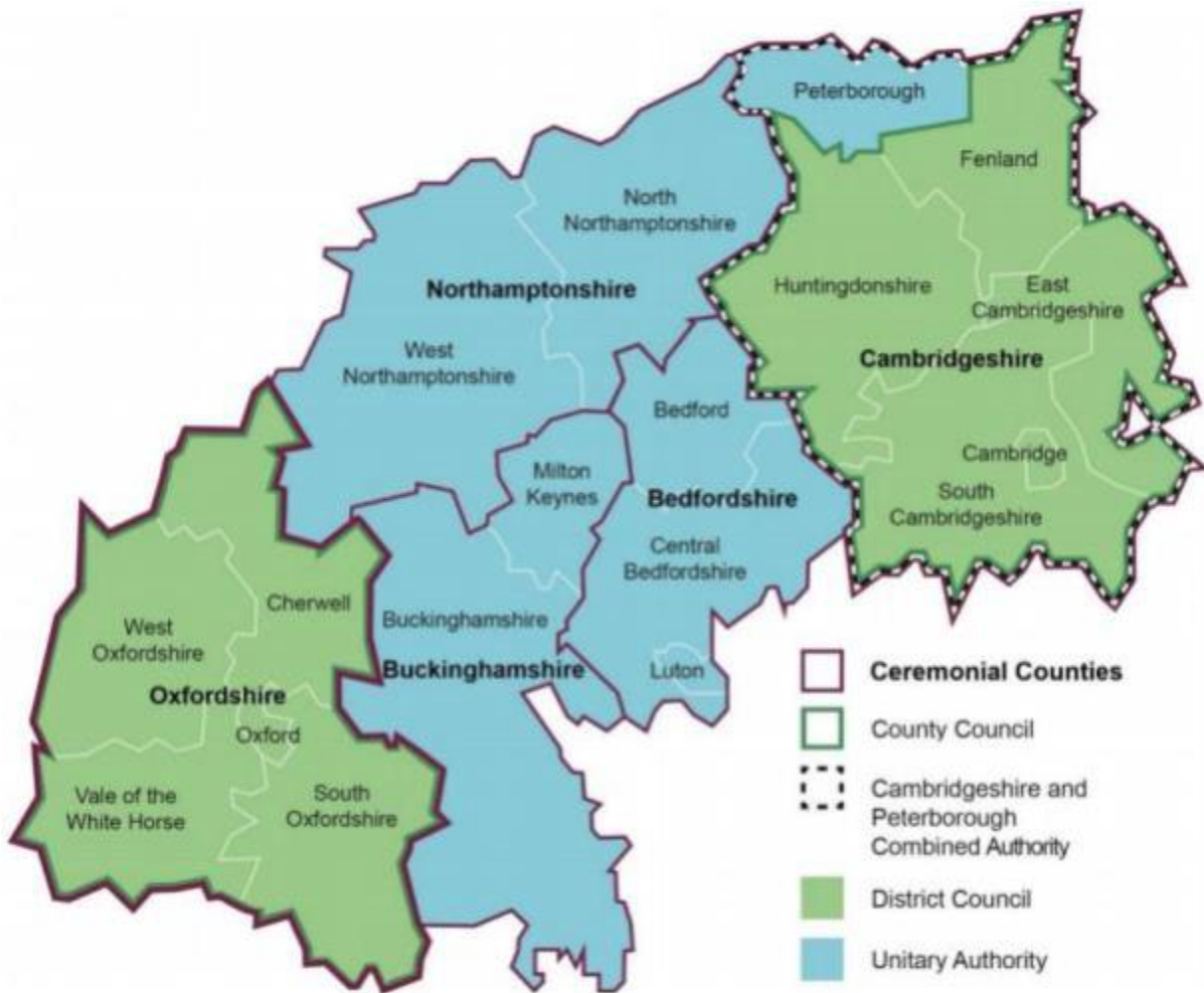
New deadline for the current round of applications is Thursday 14 October. We are very supportive of all our parishes applying for LHI funding. Please reach out if you need help or advice.

Currently we have approved and progressing works on LHIs in Harston, Newton and Babraham.

### **OxCam Arc consultation**

The County Council is responding to the Government consultation on the principles of the OxCam Arc, an area of proposed growth from Oxford to Cambridge. This is a Government initiative, not a County Council one. The amount

and detail of information within the consultation is not sufficient to respond with any detail or certainty. The Council is engaging in the Government process, but this should not in any way be construed as endorsement of what is being put forward.



The Council's response says that any growth must be led through the Local Plan process and justified by need, and should enhance and complement existing communities. It should demonstrate how it will help achieve the county's net zero carbon aspirations, and contribute to maximising positive health and wellbeing outcomes for all. Water management should be considered early on. New growth areas should facilitate opportunities for public transport, and active travel should be prioritised.

### **This Land**

A review of This Land, Cambridgeshire County Council's arm's length property development company will be complete by November. This Land pays commercial rates of interest on the loans of approx £113m advanced to it by the council and the expected net income council is due to receive in the current financial year is £6m.

### **County Council Biodiversity**

The new administration takes Biodiversity very seriously. Councillors have agreed the investment of a further additional £109k in seasonally dependent biodiversity projects to speed up progress on our climate change commitments.

The need for extra resources in year has been identified as a result of recent increased use of public open spaces (including several council owned scheduled monuments) as more and more people have taken to the outdoors to enjoy what the county has to offer during the pandemic.

The requested £109k is to be used towards staff capacity and to undertake urgent and seasonally dependent site repairs and maintenance, plus beginning a biodiversity audit across the council's land which will help with the countywide 'doubling nature' agenda and the council's commitment to 20% biodiversity net gain.

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