

County Council and local updates from County Councillor Linda Oliver

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Schoolchildren's drop off/pick up point at The Green Within the County Council's 2009/2010 budget it is expected that there will be additional capital funds made available for minor highway improvements. It has been agreed that the Whaddon site should be included in the list of bids that are to be put forward for this additional funding. However, this, does not guarantee that the funding will be allocated but the site will be considered in competition with other bids. It is indeed a step in the right direction.

Cambridgeshire highways maintenance/potholes Special highways maintenance teams have been set up to tackle the many pot holes that the cold weather has created on the county's roads. Many roads have suffered because water has frozen in cracks, expanded and caused pot holes. Reports of potholes have quadrupled compared with last year.

To report a pothole, large or small, do phone the County Council's helpline on 0345 045 5212

Cambridgeshire is at the top of 388 local authorities with particular areas of improvement in regulatory services such as trading standards and planning. The Audit Commission makes regular inspections of councils and assesses their effectiveness, efficiency, performance and management capabilities. Cambridgeshire County Council's rating as the most improved council in the country was based on its performance over the last three years. In order to drive up service quality, councils are set challenging targets for all areas of activity and 86% of Cambridgeshire's performance indicators have improved, way above the national average.

Advice and assistance in the current economic climate The credit crunch has been with us for a while and, undoubtedly, will remain for sometime yet. A website has been launched www.weatherthestorm.org.uk which flags up national and local initiatives to help communities through the recession. These include:

- How communities can save money by setting up fuel clubs
- How businesses can delay paying tax
- How businesses can take advantage of a £500 Business Link voucher
- Money saving hints and tips

The distribution of a £500,000 voluntary and community sector (VCS) rescue package from Cambridgeshire County Council is being co-ordinated. £200,000 has been given to Cambridgeshire Citizen Advice Bureaux (CABx) and Advice for Life, who run the Law Centres in Cambridge and Huntingdon, to increase their capacity in dealing with the increasing number of people using their services. This will enable CABx and Advice for Life to deal with up to an extra 2,000 cases over the next 12 months (until March 2010).

Cambridgeshire's Trading Standards has been recognised as a leading light in the UK for cutting regulatory red tape to help the communities and businesses it serves. It has been awarded the nationally recognised Beacon Status. Only three authorities in the country have been awarded this status.

The Beacon award now means the Council is a national exemplar in better regulation. Cambridgeshire now will be sharing best practice with authorities across the country to enhance regulation nationally, and working with Government bodies to influence the policy agenda.

Congestion in and around Cambridge and Government funded improvements to roads and bus services The County Council continues to make representations to central Government and the Transport Minister urging the removal of the condition that congestion charging must be introduced before Transport Innovation Fund funding is provided. In our local villages the TIF funding could assist in the provision of improved bus services.

The Transport Commission, which is looking at ways of tackling congestion in and around Cambridge, is nearing the end of the phase where written evidence is being requested and it is commencing public hearings with interested parties. The Commission's website has received over 600 responses to questions the Commission have posed so far and these can be viewed at www.cambstransportcommission.co.uk.

Councillors' allowances in the light of the current financial climate councillors have unanimously agreed to freeze their allowances until 2010. Councillors from all parties have agreed to forego the 2.7 per cent increase in the annual allowance due in April 2009.

Police/Neighbourhood Panel meeting Reminder that the date has been changed to Monday 20th April at Melbourn Village College - meeting starts at 7.30 pm (doors open at 7.00 pm).

14 March 2009