

District Councillors' Report – January 2023

Cambridge connections - towards a better bus service

Proposals for a sustainable travel zone in Cambridge are intended to improve local bus services in, and around, the city. The 'Making Connections' consultation on the proposals, which include a congestion charging zone in Cambridge, closed on 23 December 2023 and the responses are now under consideration.

'Making Connections' proposes a low bus fare (£2) and doubling the current timetable. A Cambridge congestion charge (implemented after an improved bus network and new active travel links are established) would fund the bus network into the future. Initial set-up investment in a bus network would come from the Greater Cambridge Partnership, a temporary body set up to disburse government funding for this growth area. The government funding concerned is contingent on a commitment to road charging, hence the plans for some form of congestion charging in the city.

Responses to the consultation submitted by the Cam Vale Bus User Group made the following points, which seem likely to have been echoed in other responses:

- Bus services should be redesigned, rather than long-standing routes and services being simply increased and replicated as is proposed, in order to attract new users.
- New multiple daily links to all local rail stations should be introduced, properly synchronized with train services
- Direct links should be provided to Cambridge from all villages for morning and evening commutes. Nb. At present getting to Cambridge from Sawston involves up to 29 stops
- There should be integrated single ticketing to protect low overall journey costs
- Traveller confidence must be gained through reliability, good availability of timetables in a variety of formats, with real time information and contact number for emergencies
- Passengers should be served by shelters and seats at bus stops, & toilets at transport interchanges

£2 bus fares this winter

Sawston residents can get a flavour of cheaper bus journeys over the next few weeks through the Government's Bus Fare Cap scheme. This has been introduced on most single fares (including Child and Student fares) on bus journeys across England, including local Stagecoach routes and the Cambridge Park & Ride services. The scheme runs until 31 March 2023 to help people with the cost of travelling to work, education, medical treatment and shopping over the winter months. It will also encourage more people to make local journeys by bus, helping to reduce carbon emissions. It will be interesting to see whether the lower fare attracts new bus users in practice.

Cost of living support

As inflation and the cost-of-living tick upwards, South Cambs District Council has collated information on available financial and social support from a variety of organisations. There is

a huge amount of helpful advice for everyone, from young families to pensioners, to be found at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/>

Cooking and staying warm

In late November the Council launched a new emergency [Go Fund Me](#) campaign which will help finance the response to the cost of living crisis in South Cambridgeshire.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has kick-started the initiative to help provide more vulnerable residents, hit hardest by the cost of living crisis, with lower cost options such as electric blankets and slow cookers, to keep warm and cook.

In the first stage of the scheme, the Council has written to people who receive a 75-85% Council Tax discount as they have been identified as potentially in greatest need of support. This group may be expanded depending on the number of donations received. People eligible will have three weeks to claim the support offered by completing an online form. A phone number is provided for those without internet access to call and go through the form with a member of Council staff.

If more budget becomes available from donations, the scheme will be expanded to more people on lower brackets of council tax discounts. The funding the Council has pledged could see around 400 people supported with free electric blankets and slow cookers but even more can be done if donations are received. At the time of writing, public donations had reached £1,273. If you could help out too, it's easy to donate at

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/scdccostofliving>

Bulky waste collection change - sofas and chairs!

A recent directive from the Environment Agency has meant that, as from 1 January 2023, upholstered items likely to contain persistent organic pollutants (POPs) can no longer be disposed of in landfill. This means that the Council has had to make changes to the way in which it deals with such items. At the time of writing:

- Padded seating (any furniture item with cushioning or padding such as sofas, settees, sofa beds, dining / office style chairs, futons, pouffes, floor and seating cushions, beanbags etc) can still be accepted at household recycling centres.
- The Council is working on solutions to the collection of such items as bulky waste.
- Other aspects of bulky waste collection remain unchanged

If you have a sofa or other padded seating that you want collected as bulky waste, please check the [County Council website](#) for the latest information. In the meantime, residents are being encouraged to consider reuse options such as Gumtree. This situation also affects commercial waste collectors, who are similarly bound by the new restriction. If using such a service, residents should ensure the operator has an appropriate waste disposal licence and that they have retained reliable contact details, so that they do not inadvertently contribute to fly-tipping.

Wishing all residents a happy and successful New Year

Cllrs Libby Earle and Brian Milnes
6 January 2023