

County Council – 17th October 2023

Public Question Time

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
1.	Councillor Stephen Thompson JP, Chair, Haddenham Parish Council	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Do you feel you now have enough information on which to make the potentially life-saving decision, that carries overwhelming public favour, on the downgrade of the A1421?
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Councillor Stephen Thompson JP, Chair, Haddenham Parish Council	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
2.	Ms Anne Miller, Carbon Neutral Cambridge	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	<p>This question is on behalf of Carbon Neutral Cambridge.</p> <p>We were disappointed to hear the PM's announcement on 4 October that the Northern part of HS2 will be scrapped. However, we hear rumours that some of the funds may be diverted to enable the long delayed upgrade to Ely Junction.</p> <p>Carbon Neutral Cambridge very much supports the Ely junction project, because of the decarbonisation benefits of taking freight off the roads and onto rail (especially if that rail line is electrified) and the opportunity an upgraded junction gives to improve passenger</p>

			<p>services across our community. These are vital measures, both for the prosperity of our region, and to help avoid climate breakdown.</p> <p>We would like to know what promises have been made about any funding, what are the implications of these promises, and possible timescales.</p> <p>In general what is the County Council planning to do, to accelerate progress on the Ely junction upgrade?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Ms Anne Miller, Carbon Neutral Cambridge	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
3.	Mr James Reader	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	<p>My 18 year old daughter has been resident at Meldreth Manor/Orchard Manor educational/residential care home since September 2021.</p> <p>As parents, we make the journey from Watford to Meldreth twice a week. Recently we have decided to venture outside the grounds and take our daughter for a walk in the community – pushing her wheelchair along the pavements of Meldreth’s High Street.</p> <p>Despite our daughter weighing a tiny 32kg, the journey with her wheelchair has proven ‘dangerous’ at best. Caring staff at Meldreth Manor/Orchard Manor confirm that they struggle even more with heavier residents and sometimes have to avoid walking away from their grounds altogether.</p> <p>The pot-hole equivalents and chronic camber towards the roadway are impossible to avoid when pushing our daughter’s wheelchair along the High Street. With occasional pavement parking and cars driving within a foot of the kerb, which in places is nearly flush with the road, an accident is simply waiting to happen.</p>

			<p>Any wheelchair-user should be able to safely access the community and I raise a question on behalf of my daughter who cannot talk/communicate with you directly (and all her fellow wheelchair users both at the home and living within the wider community, of course).</p> <p>I understand that in practice potholes on the roadway are given priority, both in terms of budget and immediate action. I put to you that wheelchair wheels on a pavement that has only seen piecemeal repair over the past 20 years presents an equivalent priority – council funds surely need to be applied to re-lay the High Street pavement to i) remove pot holes and ii) lessen the camber so wheelchairs are not drawn towards the roadway and cars driving extremely close-by.</p> <p>I struggle to believe that this issue is of such long-standing, particularly in a community that hosts a school/home for wheelchair-bound children. The Council are sitting on a timebomb, waiting for a tragedy to happen...where a wheelchair gets dragged into the roadway and the user hit by an oncoming car...or a wheelchair topples and the fragile user falls to the ground. Surely this is reason enough to action immediate repairs/renewals and balance the books in years to come. Any upcoming road closures for planned road repairs would offer an 'economies of scale' opportunity for the urgently needed pavement repair.</p> <p>What plans have been made to prioritise repairs to the footway along High Street, Meldreth?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Mr James Reader	To be provided at the meeting.

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
4.	Mr Antony Carpen	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	<p>Following her resignation from Cambridge City Council, Sam Davies MBE wrote on her final blogpost the following:</p> <p>"it is more apparent than ever that, without a major overhaul of local government structures, financing and powers, our council will struggle with relentless demands to maintain current levels of service and protect residents' quality of life."</p> <p>(See https://sam4qe.com/a-new-chapter/).</p> <p>With the above statement in mind, and following the launch of the CambsUnitaries campaign at https://www.cambsunitaries.org.uk/:</p> <p>"Please could the County Council make a statement on what its policy is regarding any possible overhaul of local government structures and systems for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - in particular including what the Council understands as being the processes ministers require for prospective local areas to bid for permission/support to undertake a possible restructure."</p> <p>For reference, I digitised my copy of the 1995 report that led to Peterborough City Council separating from Cambridgeshire County Council - you can read the report at https://archive.org/details/951201-localgov-review-hunts-peterboro-hmso-1995</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	Mr Antony Carpen	To be provided at the meeting.

No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
5.	Ms Jenny Williams	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Given the failure of the GCP's Making Connections proposals to achieve the political support needed to make progress, and given the County Council's ultimate responsibility for highways and transport across the county, will the County Council commit now to a timescale to bring forward revised proposals to urgently tackle congestion and air pollution in Cambridge and raise the money to fund the significant expansion in public transport we desperately need?
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee	Ms Jenny Williams	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
6.	Mrs Sarah Hughes, Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	<p>At the September meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board, Cllr Lucy Nethsingha spoke eloquently about how a lack of public transport and active travel facilities limits people's life chances and increases inequality. She spoke about how older people cannot access healthcare because there isn't a decent bus service, and then went on, stating her position as Chair of Skills to say that alternatives to driving are even more important for young people, who may not be able to have any choice about their future; all that's available to them is what's in their village, because they can't afford to drive. She said:</p> <p>"Driving is just unaffordable for an enormous number of people who are under 25 or 30, and by neglecting our public transport system, and not investing sufficiently in our active travel, we will be making sure that those young people do not have the opportunities that are available in other parts of our system..."</p>

			<p>However shortly after this meeting, political support for the Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) road charge collapsed. The STZ would have put in place a mechanism to fund a much-expanded bus service for the long-term and improve active travel into the future.</p> <p>The problem is not, therefore, understanding the importance of buses and active travel, but rather having the political will to do anything to fix the current problems.</p> <p>The Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance would like to ask a) when the County Council will take action to put in place schemes that will generate sufficient long-term funding for Cambridgeshire to have the bus service and active travel facilities it requires to ensure everyone gets the same chances in life, and b) what forms these schemes will take?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	Mrs Sarah Hughes, Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance	To be provided at the meeting.
No.	Question from:	Question to:	Question:
7.	<p>Ms Anna Williams, Camcycle</p> <p>[Roxanne De Beaux, Executive Director, Camcycle presenting]</p>	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	<p>Two years ago, the UK government made a legal commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels. How seriously is this council taking its part in achieving this commitment? There are zero mentions of the climate crisis in any of the papers or motions brought to this meeting, or acknowledgement that this matter is a key driver behind aspects of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, the proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone in Cambridge, the move away from a Predict and Provide method (now rejected by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation) and the worsening state of peat soil affected roads in the county.</p> <p>Acting now would bring a multitude of benefits to our region. For example, the council's net zero vision says that delivering net zero by 2045 would mean 'Our health will be</p>

			<p>better, and we will have easy access to sustainable, local transport and green space'. One of its strategic priorities is 'enabling and encouraging use of low-carbon transport'. Its action plan says the council will 'work in partnership with our strategic transport partners to ensure policy and new schemes promote the travel hierarchy and contribute to carbon reductions'.</p> <p>However, partnership working appears to have broken down at almost every level of transport strategy and the government's latest walking and cycling statistics show that cycling levels in Cambridgeshire are lower than they were 5 years ago. For example, in 2022 only 20.4% of residents cycled at least once a week compared with 26.1% in 2017, a fall of 22%.</p> <p>Camcycle would like to ask if the county's policies on carbon reduction from transport are little more than warm words? When will it take significant action on improving walking, cycling, and public transport in our region and giving people in every district a choice of high-quality and sustainable methods of travel?</p>
	Response from:	Response to:	Response:
	Councillor Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of Strategy, Resources and Performance and Leader of the Council	Ms Anna Williams, Camcycle	To be provided at the meeting.