

District and County Councillor's Report – December 2024

Residents Parking Scheme Consultation

There is a consultation opening on October 31st and running until December 12th on proposed changes to the County Council's policy on Residents Parking Schemes. This is to attempt to make the policy marry up with the new Civil Parking Enforcement officers (traffic wardens) that have been operational in South Cambridgeshire since February this year. Some people approach us about implementing residents parking schemes in specific areas. If you, or anyone you know, feel strongly about this policy, please do comment - <https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/residents-parking-scheme-policy-review>

Kingsway Solar Farm

The proposal by Downing Renewables/Kingsway Solar for a very large new solar farm on the land between Balsham, West Wratting and West Colville, has been at the 'informal consultation' stage for the last month and thank you to everyone that has engaged with this process.

The next stage of the process, once Kingsway Solar have digested all of the initial feedback, will be that they will hold a 'formal consultation' which will be asking for much of the same responses to the proposals, should they be more detailed, that they will present at this point. Again, we encourage everyone to engage with this process, as the scheme will impact everyone in this area, directly or indirectly.

You can see the details of the proposal, so far, on the Kingsway Solar website - <https://kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk/>

It's worth reiterating that, given the size and scale of this scheme, the ultimate decision to approve, or not, will be made by a central government planning inspector, rather than any of the local planning authorities. This will be a major development covering a very large part of our countryside, if it does go ahead, so please do engage if you have any views on this proposal.

Local Highways Officer Update

Our local highways officer (LHO), Bradley Southwell, has now moved to cover a different area of Cambridgeshire. This leaves our area without a permanent LHO and the workload is being covered by a collection of other officers until a permanent appointment can be made. The message is keep reporting highway issues via the County Council website.

Local Government funding

On 28 November the Government published its Local government finance policy statement 2025 to 2026. This lays out the principles for the funding of local authorities for the financial year starting in April.

There will be no change to the council tax cap, which will remain at three per cent for core council tax, with a two per cent adult social care precept. The cap for the police precept will be £14, and £5

Councillors Henry and John Batchelor

for fire and rescue authorities. There will be no cap for Combined Authorities, or for town and parish councils. There will be a number of changes to grant funding. And in 2026/27 the Government plans to 'radically simplify the local government funding landscape'.

Local government reorganisation

Proposals to review local government arrangements are coming over the horizon yet again. In particular, all-purpose unitary councils are likely to replace the two tiers of county and district councils; and we are likely to see more directly elected Mayors in parts of the country which currently do not have them. There will be endless debate and consultations, and it is not clear to us that local government will necessarily be better as a consequence.

Pension Credit

A reminder that anyone wishing to qualify for a 2024/25 Winter Fuel Payment must apply for Pension Credit by 21 December 2024.

Pension Credit information at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/pension-credit

Happy Christmas

As this is our final report of 2024, we'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and we look forward to working with you all again in 2025.

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