

County Council and local updates from County Councillor Linda Oliver

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County Council budgets and forward planning: the County Council has already commenced its financial planning for the coming financial year and five years ahead. Forecasts show that the Authority will be £113 million worse off in five years' time and therefore officers and Members are considering how to make (allowing for inflation) a 35 per cent cut in funding through to 2015. This in turn puts sizeable pressures on parish councils who are now shaping their budgets too in order to set precept for the coming financial year. A perfect example is highways improvements schemes where CCC funding is being channelled to sites where personal injury accidents have taken place and not to sites for accident prevention schemes. Difficult times ahead! It is becoming more frequent that a parish council provides funding for a small local scheme.

The County Council has been named Transport Authority of the Year and is therefore ahead of every other local transport authority in the whole of the UK; quite an achievement.

Over the last eight years, bus passenger numbers in Cambridgeshire have risen from 15.1 million to 24.2 million while the Park and Ride service in Cambridge has seen more than four million users during the past year. The judges praised the vision and courage shown in developing many projects including the Guided Busway.

The Mechanical Biological Waste Treatment Plant in Waterbeach has now opened. The £42 million recycling plant is the first of its kind in the country and will sort and recycle much of the waste that normally ends up in landfill from people's "black bag" rubbish. The massive, hi-tech treatment plant is the length of three football pitches, houses giant shredding machines called Terminators, and the latest mechanical sorting equipment which removes material for recycling before turning the rest of the waste into compost like material for use on non-food crops or a fuel. At the moment just over half of the County's domestic waste is recycled or composted. This new facility, combined with improved recycling centres, will mean Cambridgeshire will massively reduce the tonnes of rubbish that ends up in landfill and reduce costs. The Government taxes every tonne of waste that ends up in the ground. This tax is currently £40 a tonne and will increase by £8 a tonne year on year. Cambridgeshire leads the country in using this technology and with the county's population expected to grow by 100,000 by 2021, it's essential to stay ahead.

Recycling and composting: the latest Government figures just out show Cambridgeshire County Council as one of the top authorities of its type for recycling and composting in the country. Figures, just released by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), show that the County Council, is one of the top 'disposal' authorities in the country – re-using, recycling or composting 51.99 per cent of its waste.

In essence, the more we all reduce, reuse and recycle the lower our taxes will be.

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