

‘Devolution Deal’ accepted

A new ‘Combined Authority’ for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with a directly-elected Mayor

After consultations, debates and votes in all the councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough i.e. Huntingdonshire, Fenland, East Cambs, South Cambs, Cambridge City Council, Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council, it has been agreed that a new tier of local government will be created from May 2017. The government insisted that we must have a directly-elected mayor so you will be asked to vote for a mayor in May 2017.

The mayor will chair a committee comprising the Leaders from each council. They will decide on developments which affect the whole area e.g. housing, roads, transport and also other matters including Further Education.

The Combined Authority will receive an extra grant from central government of £20 million per year for the next 30 years, (not indexed). There will also be a welcome extra £170 million (over five years) for more affordable houses, particularly in Cambridge.

The Lib Dems believe that this deal is *not* a good idea

* The creation of yet another tier of local government in a time of national austerity is a waste of money. The Mayor will be paid £70,000 a year and the cost of the mayoral office and staff will be £881,000 per year. The election will cost £765,000 every four years.

* The extra money being offered sounds generous, but when you allow for inflation over the next 30 years, deduct the running costs and spread it over seven councils, it amounts to less than an extra 1% spending power.

It’s time for a more radical reorganisation . . .

After taking part in the discussion about the ‘Deal’, the Cambs County Lib Dem group members are more convinced than ever that it is now time to move towards a more radical re-structuring of local government.

The councils should be spending less on bureaucracy and more on providing the services people need and expect.

We believe there should be a serious examination of abolishing all the seven councils, to be replaced by two unitary authorities (Peterborough and N-W Cambs, Cambridge and S-E Cambs).

If you would like to read a more detailed discussion of our views on the present and future of local government round here, please visit our website: www.huntslibdems.co.uk/localgovernmentfuture

That was the year that was!

As 2016 draws to a close, many people have told us that they cannot recall a year in which there has been so much bad news.

Who would have thought that we see humanitarian convoys being deliberately bombed? Or 9 year old children being used as suicide bombers? Or an MP murdered by a right-wing extremist? The suffering brought to us daily on TV news bulletins has been heart-breaking.

It has also been the most astonishing year we can remember in political circles. The June referendum in the UK and the presidential campaign in the US plumbed new depths in terms of the use of deliberate misinformation.

The use of simple slogans and emotional appeals devoid of any factual basis was more common than at any time since Germany in the 1930s. The subsequent increase in racist and personal hate crime has been extremely distressing.

In spite of all this gloom and doom, we must continue to work hard with you to make the world and our local area better for everybody.

So we very much hope that 2017 will be a much better year and we wish you and your loved ones all the best.

Patricia, John, Peter

We are available on the first Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Scout HQ behind the shops. At other times, please contact us directly:



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Local topics

Burglars about - beware !

Four dwelling burglaries took place in Brampton on Tuesday 22 November. These offences occurred during the daytime or early evening at Glebe Road, Orchard Lane, Willow Close and Cranfield Way. The houses were entered by forcing entry to the rear. Anyone who believes that they saw or heard any suspicious people or vehicles, or who had a visit from any cold callers in the last few days, is asked to call Huntingdonshire burglary team on 101, email hunts.burglary@cambs.pnn.police.uk Crime prevention and security advice can be found at <https://www.police.uk/crime-prevention-advice/burglary/>

We have been working on:

- *trying to get some compensation for a resident whose garden was damaged by a district council grass-cutting contractor
- *trying to get contractors working in the Buckden Road area to clean up the mud they keep dropping on the roads and footpaths
- *trying to ensure that valuable new cycle paths are not dangerous for cyclists and residents
- * reminding people, tactfully, that parking on footpaths is not allowed and, when unavoidable, must leave space for wheelchair users to get by.

Community-Led Plan

We are delighted to see the way the Community-Led Plan proposals are developing and full details are included in the most recent edition of the *Brampton Magazine*. We are pleased to help by delivering with this Focus a leaflet on behalf of the Community-Led Plan team in connection with the Good Neighbour Scheme.

56 New Homes For Brampton Park Golf Club

An outline planning application for 56 homes, up to 40% which will be affordable was approved by Huntingdonshire District Council Development Management Committee in November. The site is the area of land at the front of the golf club next to the garden centre. The golf club will not be affected by this planning application, unless there are some very badly sliced shots from the 18th tee!

The application was supported by Brampton Parish Council. There continues to be an acute shortage of affordable housing in Brampton. House prices and private sector rents are continuing to rise more quickly than average earnings, making it difficult for young people to get a foot on the housing ladder. Currently the cheapest 2 bedroom terraced house on the market in Brampton has an asking price of £185,000 and the average private rent charged for a similar sized property is likely to be in excess of £725 per month.

Huntingdonshire District Council

The District Council had announced an increase in parking charges for its Town Centre car parks. Councillors rejected this unanimously so they are now going to develop a wider ranging parking strategy for Huntingdonshire. We'd like to hear your thoughts about what more could be done to improve parking issues.

Good news: the District Council is offering free car parking in the run-up to Christmas. Monday to Friday from 3pm until 23rd December in all of its town centre car parks. Please take the opportunity to support your local shops if you can. #Shoplocal

HDC is seeking views on a draft policy which would be used to identify areas that might be suitable (or unsuitable) for wind farms. You can submit your views online at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk by 16 Jan 2017.

Cambridgeshire County Council

We continue to grapple with the impact of central government policy on local government services. In 2013-24, the support grant from Whitehall to Cambridgeshire was £86 million. Next year it will be £15 million; by 2019 it will be £0.

Cambridgeshire spends just over £500 million per year on local services (excluding schools). Broadly half comes from grants and charges, half from council tax. 62% of what we spend goes on adult social care and care for children. Costs and numbers in these areas are rising. As government starves us of funding and caps what can be raised through council tax, we will be able to help fewer people. Officers are working hard to find more economical ways of meeting the demands and pressures. If you would like further details on how this might affect you and our community, please write to peter.downes@cambridgeshire.gov.uk for a fuller briefing. PD

National perspectives

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement has been well covered in the national press. It tended to confirm that much of what had been dismissed as 'Project Fear' by Leave campaigners may very well come about. If you would like to know more about the Liberal Democrat reaction to the Autumn Statement, please see the special article on-line at www.huntslibdems.org.uk. You can join the Liberal Democrats and support our fight back, as many others are now doing, via the national website: www.libdems.org.uk