

Graham Parish Report October 2018

A selection of news from across the Council:

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is the new benefit being gradually introduced across the UK, replacing the following means-tested benefits and tax credits for working-age people: Income Support, (income-based) Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

Universal Credit can be claimed by those in and out of work and includes incentives for people to move into work or to work more. This new social security benefit which combines six previous benefit payments into one will be rolled out in the Huntingdonshire Job Centre area from 17th October 2018.

Stronger for Longer

Huntingdonshire District Council's Active Lifestyles Team, in conjunction with Cambridgeshire County Council and other partners including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT) is helping to launch the Stronger for Longer campaign. It is aimed at encouraging older people to take up strength and balance exercises twice a week to reduce the risk of falling and keep them doing the things they enjoy. The Active Lifestyles Team offer RightStart classes across Huntingdonshire, which are graded exercises for older people wanting to increase their strength and balance. The exercises have the power to reverse age-related loss of strength, bone and balance – they can keep you fit, active and independent and doing what you love for longer. The classes are safe, fun, friendly and taught by qualified instructors.

Recycling metals

The District Council has teamed up with the metal packaging manufacturing industry to launch the 'Make your metals matter' campaign here, which will reach all 76,000 households across the district.

Making drinks cans from recycled material saves up to 95% of the energy, and greenhouse gas emissions, needed to make both aluminium and steel from raw materials. What's more, every time metal passes through the recycling loop the benefits are repeated, again and again and again! If all of the metal packaging used in homes in Huntingdonshire each year was collected for recycling, it would save around 2367 tonnes of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of taking over 501 cars off local streets for a year. Metal packaging found around their home, including:

- Drink cans
- Food tins (including pet food)
- Foil trays
- Empty aerosols
- Metal screw tops

- Foil wrap

Road Closures

A1 and A14 road closures continue to impact on local villages as cars and HGVs use local roads rather than the official diversions. There has also been increased reporting of speeding and damage to street furniture such as signs. Together with many residents, I contacted Highways England to alert them to the issue of HGVs ignoring the official diversion, and asked the Police to enforce the vehicle weight limits. This has attracted local and national media coverage, including ITV Anglia News, Cambridge News, Hunts Post and questions being asked in Parliament. Signage in some areas has improved, though the diversions are still ambiguous in places, leaving drivers confused or they are simply ignoring the official diversion routes. The National Road Haulage Association have been contacted, who suggest that poor signage is partly to blame. I will continue to press for improvements.

Call Centre

I previously reported that the new call centre menu-based system was being implemented over the summer. This has generally gone well with significantly less people being passed from one operator to another as the menu system encourages targets callers to the right customer services representative. I will be in a position to report more information about these changes once it has had longer to settle in.

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