

Open Door

Summer 2020



For the Tenants & Leaseholders of Cambridge City Council

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David Greening
Head of Housing Services

Welcome to this edition of *Open Door*. It brings you important information on how to access City Council services while the Covid-19 crisis is still with us, and where to get extra support if you need it.

Information in this edition was up to date at time of writing, but it can change quickly. For the most up to date information on council services, check the Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-changes-to-our-services

And at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus, there is general advice around the Covid-19 situation. This includes information for residents and businesses, as well as pointing to NHS and government advice, and local groups who can assist you. We recommend you enter your email address at www.cambridge.gov.uk/subscribe-for-email-alerts to receive email notifications of any changes to our information.

On page 10 of this edition, you see how to access your own personal *MyCambridge* portal through the Council's website, enabling you to self-serve and obtain information on a range of services. For extra support while the virus crisis is ongoing, our map of the city on page 9 gives you contact details for help in your local area. These local groups help with things like finances, benefits, food and shopping, and loneliness support or access to mental health services.

On page 5, see what help is available if you are struggling to pay your rent. Staff will work with you through this difficult time to ensure you do not lose your home. There is also advice on claiming benefits, and on free training to help with employment or job seeking. Contact information is also provided if you would like a one to one telephone call with the Council's financial advisor to help keep your finances on track.

Pages 6 and 7 highlight some of the further help and support available to households while the virus crisis lingers on. There is help and advice for anyone experiencing domestic abuse, and lots of resources to support us all with our mental health. An article overviews the many forms of support and free activities available for families and children in these challenging times. Page 8 shows the amazing range of culture and activities you can access for free online, as well as the creative crafting that both adults and children can do with everyday materials lying around at home.

Ordinary life goes on alongside the virus crisis. In this edition we update you on the process for electing your resident representatives onto the Housing Scrutiny Committee. And you can read about the many improvements to estates that have been funded by our Estate Improvement Scheme. After reading the article, consider sending us your suggestions to improve your own estate.

Page 12 explains some changes to the communal cleaning contract on estates. On page 13 we invite leasehold landlords to take advantage of the *Townhall Lettings* agency. And in this edition, the police bring you warnings about doorstep scams, as well as an update on the neighbourhood policing that they are doing in your local area.

With best wishes,

David Greening



Why not receive *Open Door* by email instead of on paper? It's easy to read on any device with wifi, saving paper and carbon footprint. To receive it by email instead of post, visit: <https://camcit.co/opendooremail>

One copy of *Open Door* is sent to each council home. To ask to receive a second copy for a joint tenant, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

A panel of council tenants and leaseholders help select and edit the content of every *Open Door* edition. To get involved, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Cover: *Wildflower meadow at Christ's Pieces*, photographed by Emily Watts

Email your photos of City Homes estates or green spaces to opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Services and support during Covid-19



In response to Covid-19, the City Council has implemented a lot of changes allowing services to be delivered in ways aligned with national advice about social distancing.

The Council's information and guidance around Covid-19 will continue to be updated in the months ahead. To be notified every time it updates, just enter your email address at www.cambridge.gov.uk/subscribe-for-emailalerts

Council services during the crisis

The Council is prioritising services for those most in need of support, or who depend on the Council. Physical receptions at Mandela House, Arbury Road and the Guildhall are closed until further notice, except for pre-booked appointments at selected locations.

The Council is working with other services, charities and community groups across the city to identify residents most in need and ensure they receive

assistance. Their collective actions have included:

- the Council's housing service providing accommodation to 158 homeless people by late May
- sending residents aged over 70 contact information for getting extra assistance
- giving isolated residents digital equipment, internet connectivity and support for using them
- adapting community centre support into digital and printed format so it is still accessible whilst socially isolating
- coordinating support for volunteers and mutual aid groups who are helping the vulnerable in their local communities

A network of community groups, residents' associations, faith-based groups and volunteers all over Cambridge is ensuring vulnerable people have access to food, medicine and other necessities. To contact your local group, see the list of them on page 9 inside.

Many council services that used to be delivered face-to-face had to be suspended for a time. They included non-urgent housing repairs and communal window cleaning. And the Council has been running a reduced, phone-only noise complaints service.

Frequency of cleaning internal communal areas of residential blocks is reduced. Council community centres and swimming pools are closed. Council-

maintained parks and green spaces are open, with play areas and outdoor gyms closed. Tennis courts, table tennis tables and skateboard ramps are open whilst adhering to social distancing.

Ward boundaries

The May 2020 elections were postponed. Changes to ward boundaries have been delayed for a year, and City Councillors' term of office extended by a year.

Information on City Council services

This can be accessed online, including through your *MyCambridge* portal. See page 10 inside for information on how to log in. Those not online can still phone the Council's Customer Service Centre at 01223-457000.



Staying in the UK after Brexit

For the latest information about the EU Settlement Scheme or if you are an EU national wanting to apply, see the government's advice at www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families

Protecting sheltered tenants



If tenants feel they require an urgent visit, they can phone their ILF to request it. In an emergency, tenants are requested to activate their Pendant/Alarm as they would ordinarily do.

Information leaflets have been sent to all sheltered tenants advising them how to prevent and control the spread of the infection.

Tenants are advised to significantly limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family, unless urgent. Instead, they are urged to keep in touch using phone, internet and social media. In addition:

- all social activities in schemes are cancelled until further notice
- neighbours are asked not to enter each others' properties
- non-essential visitors are asked not to come to sheltered schemes at this time

A list of contacts has been circulated to all sheltered tenants to ensure deliveries of food, medication and other support. Tenants also received a useful *Guide to Keeping Yourself Busy*.

For the duration of the Covid-19 crisis, a range of measures has been put in place to protect the City Council's sheltered tenants and the staff at their sheltered accommodation schemes, the Independent Living Facilitators (ILFs).

Staff are currently located away from the schemes, with their routine visits to tenants replaced by phone calls.

Staff are visiting tenants in person only when necessary, as decided by a triage system.

Tenants' art groups online

Before Covid-19, the Fitzwilliam Museum used to welcome sheltered residents on art appreciation sessions, to look at and talk about art at the Museum. They have now kindly adapted the sessions to continue them over the phone!

The Fitzwilliam team are running regular telephone group meet-ups for 9 small groups from the Council's sheltered schemes and the wider community. These 40-minute conference calls include relaxation and looking at and sharing artwork.

They are keeping older residents connected, enjoying art and each others' company during this challenging time.

But the Covid-19 era is a big change for everyone, and especially worrying for older people. So for any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Independent Living Service at email independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457199 or Facebook page *Cambridge Older People's Housing*.

Help for your finances during the Covid-19 crisis

Extra help with utilities

People who are struggling to pay their energy bills due to the crisis can get help at www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/who-contact-if-its-difficult-paying-energy-bills

Those worried about their pre-payment metre can get help at www.energyhelpline.com/coronavirus-help/covid-19-measures-in-place-for-prepayment-energy-customers

The government has ruled that energy customers using prepayment cards or keys will not be disconnected during the Covid-19 crisis. Four million customers around the country pay for their energy in this way.

So if, due to restrictions, you can't top up by prepayment card or key as usual, you can phone your energy supplier. By law, they must offer you other options that avoid you being disconnected during the Covid-19 crisis.

If you need one to one help with budgeting or claiming benefits, email the Council's financial inclusion officers at incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-457000 and ask to speak to a

financial inclusion officer.

They are very experienced at helping tenants with their finances, maximising income and claiming any benefits they may be entitled to. Hundreds of tenants have benefitted from this friendly help.

There is also a helpful tool on the Council's website to help you manage your personal finances and budgeting. It's at www.cambridge.gov.uk/advice-about-debt-and-managing-your-money

Meanwhile, if you are without work income - whether due to the Covid-19 pandemic or not - ensure you apply for any welfare benefits you are entitled to.

Use the Benefits Calculator on the Council's website to see how much you may be entitled to, at <https://cambridge.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, changes have been made to give further support to those who were already claiming benefits, who need to claim benefits now, or who are at risk of losing their job due to Covid-19. See these supports at www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support

Struggling to pay your rent?

If you are having problems paying your rent due to the Covid-19 crisis, please contact the Council as soon as possible to agree a plan with them.

They may be able to agree a payment plan that spreads your rent payments over time.

Or if you have paid your rent regularly in the past, the Council may be able to give you a few months' 'break' from making rent payments.

At the same time, make sure to claim any welfare benefits that you are entitled to, as these will help to ease your difficulties with rent. The Council can also advise you on that.

For instance, if you are no longer working, or are self-employed but unable to work due to Covid-19, or your employer has temporarily ceased trading, you should make a claim for Universal Credit benefit at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit

If you are self-employed and affected by the Covid-19 crisis, you may be entitled to a government grant. See www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-



[coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme)

Or if you were employed at the start of the Covid-19 crisis, check your eligibility for 'furlough' or job-retention payments from your employer. You can do this by visiting www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme

Meanwhile, for those who have paid their rent regularly in the past, the Council will discuss arranging a few months' break from rent payments. In this situation, you would pay back the missing rent later in manageable 'catch-up' amounts

that would be spread out over an agreed period. You would pay them in addition to your normal rent at that future time.

Or you might arrange to just pay a bit less rent for two or three months, and then make slightly higher payments over the following nine or twelve months, until you have made up the difference.

For example, if your normal monthly rent is £500 (£115.38 per week), the Council might offer:

- *special arrangement, example 1* in July, no payment; August, no payment; Sept to March, £500 rent + £100 extra, ie. £600 per month in all
- *special arrangement, example 2* in July, £250; August, £250; Sept, £250; Oct to March, £583.33 per month

Arrangements will depend upon your circumstances, so please get in touch immediately to make a payment plan if you need one. There is no need to slide into leaving your rent overdue, which would cause you bigger problems in the long run. Instead, phone 01223-457070 or email incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk

Boost your skills

Cambridge Online provide free digital help and advice to residents. For digital assistance, phone them on 01223-300407. You may need to leave a message, but they will call you back. Or email help@cambridgeonline.org.uk

The **Learn My Way** website also currently gives free online training on topics like using email and social media, office skills and making presentations.

They offer lots of free online trainings to help you upgrade your skills, or train in some new ones. To boost your employable skills, visit them at www.learnmyway.com/subjects/finding-job-online

To access these free trainings, phone Andrea Myers at 07712-691167 or email Andrea.Myers@clarionhg.com or visit www.learnmyway.com/subjects/finding-job-online

Contact them to let them know what your individual needs are. They will let you know when they have training that is suitable for you, whether that's online or face-to-face.

Cambridgeshire Skills is another organisation that offers a free online training resource at their **Online Learning** page.

It provides lots of trainings and useful tips at www.cambsals.co.uk/course-information/online-learning-1

Until September they are offering a free **Employability Bootcamp** online. These free online trainings cover a wide choice of topics including Food Hygiene, Retail, English, Maths, Garden Design and English as a Second or Foreign Language.

You'll also benefit from free personalised training support from their online tutors.

To access these trainings, visit <https://employabilitybootcamp-cambsskills.eventbrite.co.uk> or phone 01353-613013 (Mon-Fri, 8.45am-5pm), email cambsals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or visit www.cambsals.co.uk

Or you can message them via their social media pages **Cambridgeshire Skills** on Facebook or Twitter

Managing your finances amidst crisis

There is a wide range of financial and other support available amidst the Covid-19 crisis. Ensure you avail of all the help below if you need it.

And to access even more, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-financial-support-for-residents

Rent as part of your Universal Credit: Have you updated the amount needed for your rent in your Universal Credit claim? This ensures you receive the correct rent within your Universal Credit payments.

If you are self-employed: don't just wait to receive your Covid-19 payout from the government. Claim Universal Credit now, and then also apply for your three months' Covid-19 payment.

Your bills: Check all your utilities and media suppliers. Can they or others offer a better deal, or reduce your package? For mobile phone contracts, can you move over to SIM only?

Your water-bills: If you are on a low income, you should apply for Cambridge Water's **Assure Tariff**. You may get up to



60% off this year's water bill, and 40% off next year's. See www.cambridge-water.co.uk/household/my-bills-and-payments/my-bill-explained/other-charges-and-tariffs/assure-tariff

Set up online accounts: Set up online accounts for all your bills - water, gas, electric, etc. It makes it easier to monitor your payments, update meter readings and avoid falling into debt.

Your meter readings: Give updated meter readings to your energy supplier every month or two, to prevent them overcharging you.

Free School Meals: Register children at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or phone 01223-703200.

Free food if you need it **Cambridge Sustainable Food** is coordinating free emergency food supplies during the Covid-19 crisis. They are providing:

- **a signposting service** for people in need of food; if you or someone you know is struggling to afford or access food, phone 01223-967426 or fill in the contact form online at <https://cambridgesustainablefood.org/contact>, or phone Cambridge Food Alliance at 01223-967426

- **community food hubs** around the city giving free food to those in need of it; to find the outlet nearest to you, get contact details from the city map on page 9 of this edition of *Open Door*

Living well on a budget during the Covid-19 crisis

Keep moving, feel better



The City Council's *Active Lifestyle* team support residents to get and stay active.

They show how you can still maintain or improve your fitness, while respecting social distancing rules. For instance, a brisk walk or a gentle jog in one of the city's numerous greens or parks can greatly benefit your mood and mental wellbeing, as well as your physical health.

The team point out that any amount of

movement is better than none, and doing a bit more is even better for you.

You'll enjoy health benefits and weight control but also improved sleep, reduced stress and a better quality of life.

The key is to choose an activity that you enjoy. In order to get the benefits of being active, you should do that activity at an intensity that increases your heart rate and makes you sweat.

It might be a formal sport like tennis or football, or it might just be everyday activities like housework or gardening.

Even if you are staying at home for protection from Covid-19, there's a huge range of free support on the internet to guide you through some enjoyable daily exercise in your own living room.

For instance, the *Active Lifestyle* team are providing free online videos to get you exercising safely at home. They are ideal for people with health conditions, long-term illness and older people. Just type into the search-box on the YouTube webpage: Cambridge City Council Let's Get Moving

Living Sport will also keep you inspired to get moving every day at www.livingsport.co.uk/stayinworkout

Cambridge United Community Trust provide lots of physical activities through their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/CUCTrust

Later Life Training provide three daily workout videos for older people and those with mobility issues or long-term health conditions. In the YouTube search-box, type: Later Life Training

And celebrity fitness trainer Joe Wicks offers tailored home workouts each day. Try 'National PE with Joe', '7 days of Sweat', 'Home Workouts for Seniors', 'Fat Burners' or 'Kids' 5-Minute Moves'. In the YouTube search-box, type: The Body Coach

The City Council also provides lots of tips and activities at:
Facebook: Follow @GetMovingCam
Twitter: Follow @GetMovingCam
Instagram: Follow @GetMovingCambridge
YouTube: Cambridge City Council
Website: www.cambridge.gov.uk/sport

Stopping domestic abuse

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has seen an increase in domestic abuse and violence. There is no need to tolerate it. Confidential, expert help and support are always available on these phone helplines and websites:

- Cambridge City Council housing service, 01223-457070
- www.cambridge.gov.uk/advice-for-people-affected-by-domestic-abuse
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline, 0808-2000-247
- Men's Advice Line, 0808-8010-327
- Gay & LGBT Domestic Abuse Helpline, 0800-9995428
- Respect (helping abusive people to change), 0808-8024040
- the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance, visit www.dahalliance.org.uk

Remember, domestic abuse may be mental or social, physical or sexual. Or it may be an excessive controlling of the victim's daily life. It may get worse at times, for instance if the victim is disabled, vulnerable or pregnant.

Your housing staff are trained to support and help abuse victims safely and confidentially. They understand that you may be worried about the risks of telling

anyone, or worried for others in your home, such as children. But you can always approach your housing staff about it in safety. They know how to deal with the matter confidentially in ways that protect you and others from any further risk.

There are procedures that your housing staff can put in place to protect you. The Council can also provide a *Personal Housing Plan* to meet the needs of residents reporting domestic abuse. For more information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/advice-for-people-affected-by-domestic-violence

A Safe Space at your local Boots

All Boots stores now lend their consultation rooms as *Safe Spaces* where domestic abuse victims can get help in total confidentiality.

Just ask at your Boots counter for a 'consultation', the same as if you wanted advice on a health issue. Once inside their consulting room, you can then tell the staff member about your domestic abuse problem. They are trained to get you expert, confidential help and solutions.

Support for families

Children may become particularly anxious during the Covid-19 crisis, even if they can't express that clearly in words. Experts recommend these steps.

Listen and acknowledge: kids may signal anxiety through naughty behaviour or physical symptoms.

Give them clear, simple information about the virus situation. Explain what is being done to keep them and their loved ones safe, and their own role in helping, for instance by staying home and by washing their hands.

Manage your own emotions, as kids will copy a calm reaction from you.

Create routines as this gives them comfort and safety amidst uncertainty, especially when they are not at school. Make a plan for their day and week, including time for learning, play and relaxation.

Sleeping well boosts mental and physical health, so do keep them to regular bedtime routines.



Limit screen time and talk more: you should filter the news and social media that your child sees about Covid-19.

Cambridge Virtual Community Centre at www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc is a wonderful online resource that helps keep all the family occupied, amused and connected. It shows you lots of

simple crafts to keep children entertained using everyday materials lying around at home. It includes '75 Simple Activities for Preschoolers'. Older kids can learn how to make a rocket that will 'fly' across your living room, plus much more.

Cambridge United Football Club offer free *Education Activity Packs* for primary school children on there.

And for the senior generation, there are step by step videos where they can learn how to make free calls to loved ones using their computer or smartphone.

This *Cambridge Virtual Community Centre* also includes lots of guides to help you find exactly what you want on Youtube, from the best videos to get you moving at home to the best sites to sing along with!

Remember to have a look too at *Bitesize*, the BBC's huge free online study support for school-age pupils. It is designed to help all pupils with schoolwork and to help older pupils with exams. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize

Support for mental health

Anybody can experience a mental health crisis, for different reasons and in different ways.

Whatever your experience, it is nothing to be ashamed of. Talking to someone about it can be the first step to feeling better.

Especially during the Covid-19 crisis, there is a lot you can do to protect yourself, and a lot of support available.

These websites offer a wealth of free self-help tools and tips to support our mental wellbeing during the virus crisis:

- NHS advice on staying at home and managing anxiety in relation to Covid-19 is at www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters
- support and advice from the national charity *Mind* is at www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing
- a list of local services and phone helplines at the local branch of the charity *Mind* are at www.cpslmind.org.uk/need-help-now

- www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus is a website by the Mental Health Foundation
- at www.keep-your-head.com there is a wealth of local services for mental health and well-being of children, young people and adults
- the *Samaritans* are at www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help, if you're worried about looking after yourself mentally while Covid-19 persists
- *Learn 4 Mental Health* give skills and tips to create your very own *Wellbeing Plan* at <http://learn.4mentalhealth.com>

Freephone Helplines

- *Lifeline* is at tel. 0808-808-21-21 every day of the year from 2pm-11pm
- The *Samaritans* are at tel. 116123 24 hours a day, every day of the year

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, contact the Cambridgeshire Emergency Mental Health team – phone 111, then select option 2. Or in an emergency, dial 999.

Free, creative activities at home

Enjoy culture from home

Having to stay at home or practice social distancing can bring feelings of boredom and loneliness, where a positive distraction would be welcome.

So the Council's *Culture and Community* team is providing an e-newsletter listing local creative activities that you can experience online or do at home. Called *Creative at Home*, it's for all ages and includes online museum tours, theatre and dance performances, as well as things to make at home.

Venues offering interesting and entertaining material for free online include Cambridge Junction, Fitzwilliam Museum and Kettle's Yard as well as national organisations and independent artists.

The Council's *Creative at Home* e-newsletter is published every two weeks. To subscribe and receive it, just email artsandculture@cambridge.gov.uk, putting 'Send CAH' in the subject line.

To include households with limited or no access to the internet, some items from the *Creative at Home* newsletter will be broadcast via Cambridge 105 Radio.

Anna Smith, Executive Councillor for Communities, says: 'By rounding up the best content from museums, dance and theatre companies and other cultural organisations, we hope *Creative at Home* will inspire Cambridge residents of all ages with fresh ideas for bringing art into their daily lives.'

Craft activities for kids & families

The Junction venue in Cambridge is closed for the moment due to Covid-19. But the fun continues online - their website provides great arts and craft activities for your family to enjoy at home.

Download their activity sheets and help your kids to follow them. Then show off your kids' creative skills by taking a photo of their finished work and posting it online!

Visit... www.junction.co.uk/hands-on-happenings
@CambJunction (Twitter)
@cambjunction (Facebook)

Get creative for free

The *Creative at Home* newsletter described above aims to keep residents aware of and inspired by the local creative and cultural offering which, due to health and safety measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19, is currently unavailable to experience in person. Examples that it celebrates include:

Art to Go, Kettle's Yard

Short films online featuring creative activities you can do at home with everyday materials. These are creative workshops for all ages and abilities, to do in your own home.

They are led by professional artists who offer new and exciting ways to explore Kettle's Yard. See them at www.kettlesyard.co.uk/about/news/art-to-go

The Listening Festival

This is the social distancing version of the Cambridge Literary Festival, which could not be held this year due to Covid-19. It provides free live streams, Q&As, video interviews and podcasts in place of the city's 2020 Literary Festival. Visit www.thelisteningfestival.com

Storytelling, Nunkie Productions
Nunkie is a storytelling unit that travels the earth, presenting an online collection of classic stories and poems for self-isolators of all ages, including amusing limericks. It's at www.youtube.com/channel/UC7D4vcvv1J84I6V2K6aDtYA

Wild Writing Worksheet

This activity for children aged 7-11 and their families involves observing and collecting things from walks in parks, nature or the garden.

It is based on a project about local authors interacting with and getting inspired by a river here in Cambridge.

Once they are back home, kids are guided through responding to their finds with easy, fun poems and drawings that make words come alive.

For guidance and worksheets, visit <https://waterlightproject.org.uk/wild-writing-with-clare-crossman>

Local Focus - Support near you

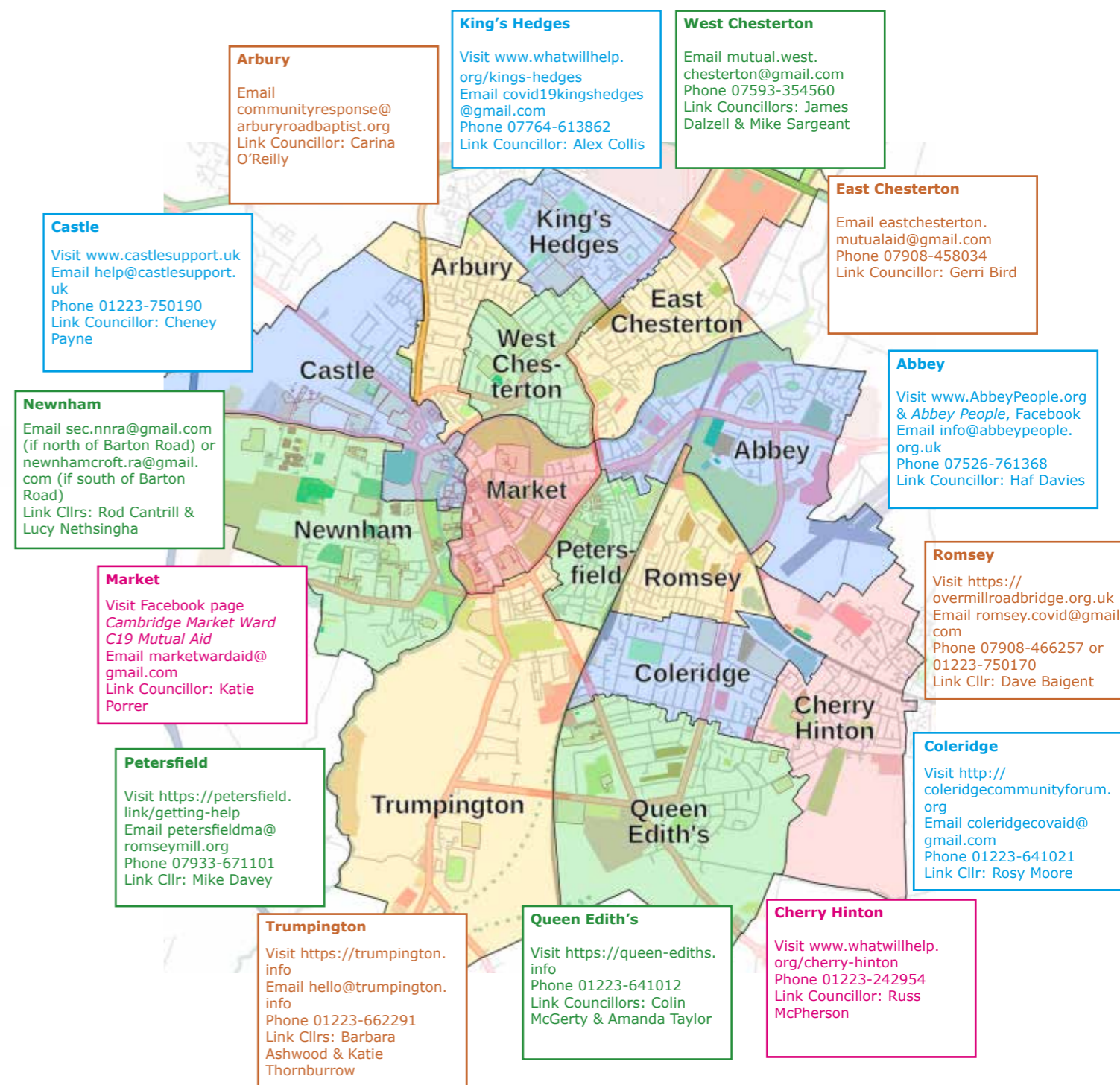
If you are struggling due to the Covid-19 crisis, there are many supports available to you around the city, depending on your situation and what type of help you need.

If you are self-isolating or not able to leave home, use the contact details for your local ward on the map below to get support from a team of local volunteers.

The local groups are able to help with basic tasks if you cannot leave the house yourself.

These include things like walking your dog, helping to collect medical prescriptions, posting a letter or completing small shopping trips.

If you have been advised to be 'shielded' on medical grounds and not to leave your home, the NHS and County Council should have contacted you to ensure you have the support you need. If they haven't or you need more support, contact the **Cambridgeshire Hub** at email communitycv@cambridgeshire.gov.uk, phone **0345-045-5219**.



Your housing services online

The online customer portal for the Housing Service went live at the beginning of March, enabling council tenants and leaseholders to start accessing a lot of their housing services directly online.

By May, over 300 council residents had registered. The benefits offered by the portal that registered tenants and leaseholders enjoy include the ability to:

- check their rent and service charge account balance
- print out their own rent and service charge statement
- pay their rent and service charges online
- request a new rent card
- set up a direct debit
- amend some of their personal details and contact information
- access Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

This facility for the City Council's tenants and leaseholders to self-serve online will be further developed in the future. In the next few months the portal will introduce a new feature that will also give residents the ability to:

- request repair jobs
- select a preferred appointment time for a repair
- monitor the progress of any repair

The registration process to use the portal is simple. First you need to register your details on the Council's *My Cambridge* portal. Access to this is at the top right-hand corner of Cambridge City Council's homepage.

Once you have access to your *My Cambridge* account, click the Council Tenants and Leaseholder Information tile, then click Log in or Register to access the Tenant and Leaseholder portal.

It will ask you to register with information based on your tenancy, such as your name, email address and tenancy ID.

Once your registration is verified and complete, you will be able to self-serve and see your live tenancy information.

You can also still use the phone and other contact methods listed on the back of *Open Door*.

Report fly-tipping instantly

Unfortunately, fly-tipping offences have been on the increase during the Covid-19 crisis. But now it's even easier for you to help keep your locality and city clean, by just reporting the problem online.

The Council is further expanding the online self-service portal described above. You can now use the *My Cambridge* portal to quickly and easily report any cleansing services that are needed in streets or parks. You can use it to report:

- litter, fly-tipping or graffiti
- issues with bin cleaning or emptying
- weed control needed, or fallen branches
- deep cleaning needed in residential streets
- dangerous waste (eg. needles, bodily fluids or bodily waste), broken glass, dead animals or asbestos

To report any of these, just log on to the *My Cambridge* portal as explained in the article above, or type any of the terms

just listed into the search bar on the Council's website.

In either case, an online form will prompt you to request the cleansing service needed. You can even drop a 'pin' onto a virtual map showing the exact location. Your request will go directly to the mobile phones of council staff who are out in the community, ready to deal with it.

In 2019, the Council spent £85,000 removing illegally dumped waste and flytipping around the city. That money could instead be providing frontline services that benefit residents and the local community.

So help tackle flytipping by reporting it immediately. The Council's team of investigators can then pursue the offenders, issue heavy fines and help keep the city clean for everyone.

Those without internet access can still report dumping or littering by phoning 01223-458282.

Your repairs service during Covid-19

A message for you from the head of your repairs service, Lynn Thomas:



'Firstly, we would like to thank you for your patience during the recent months whilst we have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

The crisis has meant that we have only been able to deal with emergency repairs, and working in empty properties to get them ready to be re-let to those in priority who need to be re-housed.

We have been consulting, and continue to consult, the government's most recent guidelines on working safely in other people's homes during Covid-19.

We are now making arrangements to be able to carry out more repairs where it is safe to do so.

In addition to this, we are also working with our contractors, TSG and Fosters, who deliver our planned works programme.



We are agreeing with them what it is safe for them to start working on, and we are making plans to allow them to start working again.

To reduce any risk of infection to you, your family and our members of staff, we will begin with repairs that can be completed in a shorter length of time inside your home, or repairs that are needed to the outside your property.

Before we come to your home to do a repair, we will be talking to you to advise you of some things you will need to do to help our staff to carry out your repair safely. If these requirements are not met by you when the repairs staff attend, then your repair will not be completed. The requirements will include:

- keeping a 2-metre distance from them whilst they work
- leaving your internal doors open to avoid contact with door handles
- keeping the parts of your home that they are working in well ventilated

We will keep our website up to date with information about the different types of repairs that we are able to complete at this time, and how we will be working safely.

For ongoing information and updates, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/request-or-report-a-housing-repair

Or if you are unable to access the Council's website you can phone the Customer Service Centre for advice at 01223-757060.'

Help with benefits and Council Tax



Universal Credit Advance Payments

Advance payment can be requested from your Universal Credit Work Coach when you make your claim, once the verification process is complete. Existing Universal Credit claimants can use their online journal to request information on what extra support is available to them.

Help with rent

If you need assistance with your rent and you currently receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit including a housing element, you can apply to the Discretionary Housing Payments scheme for extra help. Email them at benefits@cambridge.gov.uk

Help with Council Tax

If you are liable to pay Council Tax, you may claim Council Tax Reduction to help you pay the bill. Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/council-tax-reduction
The government has allocated funds that allow Cambridge City Council to grant up to £150 to residents of working age who receive Council Tax Support.

You can only get this payment if you still have Council Tax left to pay after any other discounts, exemptions or Council Tax Support. The award will have been made automatically to your Council Tax account so there is no need to contact the Council to request it.

For the self-employed

If unable to trade due to the Covid-19 crisis, you may be eligible for a grant from the government. HMRC will contact you if eligible. If receiving Universal Credit and Council Tax Support, your Council Tax Support will be adjusted once your Universal Credit has been adjusted.

If you are claiming Universal Credit, update your circumstances through your online journal so your award can be reassessed. If the minimum income floor was applied to your Universal Credit, this should now be stopped and the amount you are entitled to should increase.

If you receive Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support but not Universal Credit, confirm the date that you ceased trading as a result of Covid-19, and your claim will be updated accordingly. You can report this change at www.cambridge.gov.uk/update-your-benefits-account-when-your-address-or-circumstances-change

Changes to communal cleaning



This tendering of the communal cleaning and window cleaning contracts in certain blocks of flats across the city is following a national process which is open to both large and small companies, local and nationwide.

Contracts for cleaning of communal areas and for window cleaning in those blocks of flats across the city could be awarded to two separate companies.

What is important is that the chance to bid for both of these contracts is open to all, so that the City Council along with your resident representatives on the Housing Scrutiny Committee can secure the best companies for both of these services for you.

Your elected resident representatives and volunteer resident inspectors have been involved in this tendering process.

Drawing on residents' viewpoints, they have provided useful input into the specification for the new contracts.

Open Door will keep you informed about the new contract once it has been agreed.

The cleaning service currently delivered by Churchill is in the process of being re-tendered. The new contract for communal building cleaning and window cleaning is expected to be awarded and in place by November 2020.

Please note that if you have a caretaker the above will not affect you - the cleaning service provided by your caretaker will remain unchanged. However for those who pay a window cleaning service charge, the tendering for this part of the contract will affect you.

Changes to the cleaning service during Covid-19

To protect both residents and cleaners, cleaning staff will travel to sites in separate vehicles, and will work independently. This will enable them to still deliver a service whilst maintaining social distancing.

There will still be two cleaners on site for each visit. But the cleaning team will only be visiting each block fortnightly (rather than weekly) whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain in place.

Given that affected residents will only be receiving 50% of their usual cleaning service during this time, 50% of their service charge is being credited back onto the weekly rent account of affected tenants during this period.

Leaseholders' service charges will also be credited at the end of March 2021 in their 'Actuals' statement, to reflect the changes above.

All impacted residents have been contacted about this.

Helping leaseholders to sublet

Townhall Lettings is Cambridge City Council's social lettings agency. Their aim is to find quality, local, affordable, self-contained accommodation for people who need it, whilst providing a deal that makes good business sense for landlords.

Letting out property can be a risky business for landlords. It may sit empty at times, or the rent may be paid late, or not at all. But a unique advantage of *Townhall Lettings* is that they provide landlords with a guaranteed monthly income, in advance, even between tenancies when the property is empty.

Some landlords may be wary of letting to people who receive benefits to help them pay rent. But the amount of benefit tenants can get has increased significantly. For instance, the maximum benefit for a one-bedroom property is now £771 a month (up from £589 a month). For a two-bedroom property, it's £845 a month (up from £676).

Another unique feature of *Townhall Lettings* is that they give tenants additional support to ensure that tenants fully understand their responsibilities and settle in smoothly.

The agency's mission is to improve the private rental market in the city, so that tenants can find safe, quality accommodation provided by landlords who are also getting a good deal.

The service is making a real difference to accommodation shortages, and is helping to make Cambridge a fairer city.

In the words of one landlord who is benefitting from the *Townhall Lettings* service:

'What works best for me in their service is the guaranteed income at a very competitive market rate, with a top-quality management service thrown in...

It's a 'no fuss' way of maximising my rental income. What's not to like?! It is indeed the best deal in Cambridge!'

'Refer a Landlord' voucher scheme
If you know of someone with a property to rent out, you can refer them and receive a £50 voucher if they get signed up with *Townhall Lettings*.

To find out more about the service, visit www.townhalllettings.com or phone 01223-457920.

Police warn about scams at your door



Rogue traders are people who come to your door offering work on your home or garden that will be unnecessary or vastly over-priced. Or distraction burglars may come posing as an official employee or a person asking for help, with an excuse that seems genuine or urgent. They often come on weekdays in the late morning or evening. Ask the visitor to just leave information for you to examine later.

Your rights

If you agree to pay over £42 for any services or goods sold to you during a visit to your home or work-place:

- you have 14 days to cancel the agreement - any payment must then be returned to you
- the visitor must give you a written cancellation form stating these rights - if they don't, it is a criminal offence and the agreement is not valid

Also beware scams related to Covid-19! Many are fraudulently pretending to sell facemasks and other protective items online. See www.actionfraud.police.uk/alert/coronavirus-related-fraud-report

Rogue traders and distraction burglars may operate in your area. Simple steps can prevent you becoming a victim.

Criminals may come to your door pretending they can help with a fault in your roof or garden. Or they may claim to be from a known organisation like the water board, saying 'I need to check your water supply'. Don't believe all visitors are genuine, and don't believe their scare stories.

DO...

- ask for an ID card
- look up the visitor's company phone number yourself; phone it to check their identity
- sign up to your utility companies' password schemes; a genuine staff member will confirm the password
- have relevant passwords and company phone numbers handy so you can quickly check identities
- sign up to your local Nominated Neighbour or Neighbourhood Watch Scheme
- call the police straight away on 101 if you suspect a bogus caller, even if you didn't speak to them or let them in; phone 999 if they refuse to leave

DON'T EVER...

- go to a bank or cash point with them
- feel pressured to sign on the spot, or have work done; instead, discuss any proposals first with a relative or friend who can help you find a reputable trader

Involving leaseholders

You are invited to attend the annual Consultation Meeting that the Council holds for all its leaseholders in October (assuming the Covid-19 situation will allow such a meeting at that stage).

The meeting enables leaseholders to raise any concerns or questions they may have about leasehold issues, from maintenance works to communal repairs, service charges to anti-social behaviour problems.

It is also an opportunity for you to meet and discuss issues in person with your leaseholder representative on the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee.

The date, time and venue of the meeting will be included with your service charges statement, and sent to any email address that the Council holds for you.

The Council also has an extensive range of online information for leaseholders at www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders

For any other queries you can always email leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-457835.

2020 leaseholder election

Every four years, a resident representative is elected by council leaseholders citywide to represent them on the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee.

This committee debates and votes on all the major decisions about the Council's housing service. And the elected resident representatives on there have equal voting rights alongside City Councillors.

In June, all leaseholders received in the post a ballot pack with manifestos from the two leaseholders standing for election to represent you for the next four years. The winning candidate will be announced at www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement on the 14th July 2020.

The Autumn edition of *Open Door* will introduce you to this successful candidate who will be your leaseholder representative going forward. It will also update you on what they will be doing on leaseholders' behalf over the next four years.

Resident involvement

Estate Improvement Scheme successes



The Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee has approved £1 million per annum for five years of funding for improvements to City Council-owned housing estates.

The funding has been available since 1st April 2019. A year into the programme, there have been 35 applications for proposals of varying cost. Twelve have already been implemented or are nearing completion, and 23 more are currently

in development stage or being consulted upon with the local residents affected. Suggestions for proposals have largely come from residents themselves, through resident engagement and walkabouts.

Once the Council receives a suggestion that is deliverable, then all the impacted residents are contacted to gather their thoughts on the proposal, so that any changes work for those who are impacted by them.

The list below highlights examples from the broad range of estate improvements either completed or currently underway, such as:

- a large-scale crime prevention project involving increasing security by redesigning the entrance area of Kingsway flats
- measures to mitigate anti-social behaviour in areas across the city by installing new lighting, reconfiguring dark or secluded areas which commonly attract anti-social behaviour, and creating definitive boundaries to private areas using fencing or enclosures to deter unauthorised access

- reconfiguring communal areas for residents by providing new bike or mobility-scooter storage, redesigning communal drying areas to create more space, and repairing hard standings

- improving the safety on estates by enclosing and securing bin stores, and upgrading communal door locks and existing communal lighting

If you have suggestions for ways to improve your estate, even if the idea is different to the examples listed above, the Estate Improvement Scheme would like to hear from you.

Please send your ideas to your Resident Engagement Officer by phoning 01223-458323 or emailing resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk

And why not get more involved with influencing your housing service? Involved tenants and leaseholders help to make big decisions, improve services and improve their own estate or block.

To have a look at the wide range of roles and activities available, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement

Climate Emergency

Climate Charter

In the course of this summer, Cambridge City Council are launching the *Cambridge Climate Change Charter*. It's an online tool supporting individuals, businesses and organisations to better understand their carbon footprint, and find ways to reduce it. You'll be able to demonstrate your commitment by pledging to take action to reduce your carbon emissions.

The Council declared a climate emergency in early 2019, and set an aspiration for Cambridge to reach 'net zero' carbon emissions by 2050. But this goal will only be achieved if organisations and individuals all commit to reducing their own carbon footprint.

You'll soon be able to log on to the webpage of the *Climate Charter* to find out what your own carbon footprint is, see ways to reduce it and pledge your support.

For more information or to promote the *Climate Charter* in your own community, visit <http://cambridgecarbonfootprint.org> or email anni@cambridgecarbonfootprint.org or phone 01223-301842. *Open Door* will also keep you informed on the progress of the *Charter*.

Recycle small electrical appliances

Residents can be fined £1,000 for illegal dumping, which has increased during the Covid-19 crisis.

Smaller items can be recycled at dozens of centres around the city. Bigger items must be taken to the Household Recycling Centre in Milton, or the Council will collect them for a modest fee. See www.cambridge.gov.uk/find-a-recycling-point, email wasteandstreets@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458282.

Small electrical items like phones, toys and kettles can now be dropped into recycling banks on the housing developments at Glebe Farm Drive, Hawkey Road, Osprey Drive and Fawcett Road. (Items like TVs or laptops must still be taken to the Household Recycling Centre at Milton.)

The components of these small electrical items get re-used or recycled. As global stocks of these materials are diminishing, your recycling will make a major contribution to protecting the environment.

Resident elections and survey



Pictured above are the six elected tenant and leaseholder representatives who have served you on the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee over the past four years.

They have dedicated their time and effort to ensuring residents' views are at the heart of decision making.

The City Council would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their time and contributions.

2020 Resident elections

By mid-July 2020, five tenants and one leaseholder will be elected to represent you on the Housing Scrutiny Committee for the next four years.

The application stage closed on 2nd April 2020. Only five tenants applied for the five available tenant positions, so no tenant ballot needed to take place. Two applications were received for the one available leaseholder position, so a leaseholder ballot had to take place. Voting packs were sent to all leaseholders in mid-June to allow them to cast their vote.

In light of the Covid-19 situation, measures were taken to ensure residents who may be self-isolating could still cast their vote safely. Response options were extended to allow residents to vote either by post, online or by telephone.

The names of all six successful tenant and leaseholder candidates will be announced at www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement on the 14th July 2020. They will also be introduced to you in the Autumn edition of *Open Door*.

2020 Resident's Survey

In September 2020, all City Council tenants and leaseholders will be sent a Satisfaction Survey by post.

When you receive your copy, please do have your say. It will help the Council to better understand residents' views about the service they receive, and to make informed improvements. Residents who respond to the survey will also be entered for a prize draw.

Residents' Garden Competition

Due to Covid-19, the deadline for entering the 2020 Garden Competition is now **31st August 2020** (extended from 26th June). The new timetable is:

31st August 2020: Deadline for entries
10th September 2020: Judging day
1st October 2020: Prize-giving

Resident safety is of paramount importance, so the competition will only be held when it can be done safely. If government guidance changes the timetable above again, entrants will be notified as soon as possible.

Wenvoe nature reserve

Wenvoe Meadow is a new nature reserve beside Cherry Hinton Allotments. The allotment-holders, community volunteers and City Council worked together to create it from an old, overgrown field.

They saw that the small site had the potential to become a valuable wildlife area. With the help of the Council's Conservation Volunteer Group, the recovery work began.

The field was cut back to encourage and re-establish wildflower species. Saplings were removed and the brambles controlled. Birdboxes were put up, log piles created to give a home for diverse insects, and the hedge-line was thickened by adding some native species.

The allotment holders arranged for bee hives to be located next to the area, to help the pollination of the wildflowers. Two years later, there is already a visible increase in the diversity of the site's plants and wildlife.

Encouraged by these successes, the allotment holders successfully applied for funding to boost nature further on

the site, so that the transformative work can continue. The nature reserve will go on to become an educational resource where schools and families can pause for a while and appreciate nature.

The City Council maintains a dozen *Local Nature Reserves* around the city. They are there both for wildlife and for people. Visit <https://lnr.cambridge.gov.uk> to see an interactive map of where they are.

The site also includes updates on the latest wildlife activities. And you can download an attractive illustrated map of each nature reserve before you visit it.

Get in touch

To volunteer to help with improving biodiversity in Cambridge's parks and nature reserves, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/volunteering

Or if you have ideas for enhancing biodiversity locally, contact the City Council's Biodiversity Officer, Guy Belcher, at email Guy.Belcher@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-458532.

Message from your Neighbourhood Police

'We, your Neighbourhood Police Teams, work closely with the City Council to help solve problems that are having a negative impact on your area.

We have been continuing with our normal work, whilst also adapting to the challenges Covid-19 has brought.

Examples of recent work by your *Neighbourhood Policing* teams have included:

- disruption of drugs supply in the Abbey, King's Hedges and Arbury areas, with over £8,000 worth of drugs seized by the police in one weekend

- serving *Community Protection Warnings* and *Notices* to those causing nuisance or anti-social behaviour

- liaising with partner agencies via videocalls, in order to ensure joined-up working continues despite the Covid-19 crisis

- visits to the most vulnerable residents in the community, whom we know are at greater risk of exploitation during Covid-19, with offenders looking for new avenues of criminality



- patrols of supermarkets, streets and green spaces to ensure social distancing is maintained

We have more warrants in the pipeline across the city, and a number of closure orders are being drafted to close down problematic addresses.

Meanwhile, across the city, local policing teams are also doing ongoing work to tackle high priorities such as burglaries, exploitation of vulnerable people and dangerous driving.

All this work relies on you, the local community, telling us precisely where the problems are. If we don't know, we can't do anything about it. So to contact your local policing team at any time:

- phone 101
- report online at www.cambs.police.uk
- report online anonymously at crimestoppers-uk.org

You can find and contact your local Neighbourhood Policing Team at www.cambs.police.uk/information-and-services/Community-safety/Community-policing

And for updates on the policing work that they are currently doing in your local area, follow them on their Facebook page at 'Policing Cambridge City' or on Twitter @cambscops'

No private bonfires

Residents are warned never to light private bonfires during summer's dry conditions. A City Homes tenant recently did so. The fire quickly got out of his control and burnt down the fence between his and his neighbour's homes. The incident could easily have become fatal.

How to contact the Council?



Your MyCambridge account and your Housing Services account online

Visit my.cambridge.gov.uk to register and log in, in the top right-hand corner of the Council's webpage at www.cambridge.gov.uk

Cambridge Virtual Community Centre

For support during the Covid-19 crisis visit www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc

Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline

Tel: 0808-2000-247 (Freephone, no cost)
Visit: www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Council Payments by phone

Tel: 01223-457779, with bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage

Tel: 01223-457070

Email: cityhomesgarages@cambridge.gov.uk

Council emergencies out of hours

Tel: 0300-3038389

Repairs

Tel: 01223-457060; or 0300-303-8389
for out of hours emergency repairs

Council Tax

E: revenues@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457790

Housing for Older People, Visiting Support Service, Community Alarms

E: independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457199

Home-Link lettings

Visit www.home-link.org.uk
Tel: 01223-457918

Report tenancy fraud

E: fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 0800-328-0572 (confidential Freephone)

Report anti-social behaviour

E: asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457950

Housing & Council Tax Benefits

E: benefits@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457775

Bins, recycling, street-cleaning

Visit <http://bins.cambridge.gov.uk>
Request services online at any time
Tel: 01223-458282

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours

Tel: 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

Noise complaints (reduced service)

E: env.health@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457900
Out of hours: 0300-303-8389

General enquiries & complaints

E: enquiries@cambridge.gov.uk
Tel: 01223-457000 (9am-5.15pm, Monday to Friday)
Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions

Council's partners for housing

Mears gas servicing

Freephone 03332-070-766, including out of hours; (for leaseholders' gas emergencies, tel. 0800-111-999)

TSG Services

E: enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk
Tel: 01223-828777

Churchill communal cleaning

E: helppoint@churchillservices.com
Tel: 0845-345-1576 or 01582-760055, Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm

Fosters

E: info@fpm-ltd.co.uk
Tel: 01945-586999