Cambridgeshire County Council

MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2026

Sawston and Shelfords Division (Cllrs Damary-Homan & Fane)

Local Government Reorganisation

Secretary of State Angela Rayner announced a ‘pause and review’ of local government reorganisation in some areas, including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. She said, “In light of legal advice, I want to satisfy myself that the right process is in place that is robust and of course complies with the law.”

What we are hearing from Government is an intention to just delay plans for one year, with Shadow Authority elections in 2028 and vesting day in 2029. This means that County Cllrs will serve a full term of office. Whether these ambitions are realistic is an entirely separate question and it is not unreasonable to think that this is optimism from the Government. It may well be the case that a County Council election will be held in 2029 if Government does not meet its ambitions. Personally, I have doubts if they will get their act together to meet their timeline ambitions, and we never know what will happen from a General Election perspective. There is general expectation that LGR will happen in some form at some time, but for us even that is uncertain given we already have a strategic mayoral authority which has been a main thrust behind the LGR project.

Significant time and resource has gone in to the LGR process without suitable funding for the work, creating a notable resource drain on local authorities. Whilst much of the work will hold its value if LGR does come forth, it will need more updating the longer the process is dragged out. LGR preparation demands have been frustrating as it has limited some of our ability as Councillors and an administration to make notable change at the County Council, but I can assure you that colleagues and I are pushing for work and changes that were fettered by the LGR process. We await further news but this is not likely to come for some time.

STRATEGY, RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Quality of life and happiness remains high across Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire residents continue to experience high levels of happiness, with fewer people suffering from loneliness or mental health challenges, according to the results of Cambridgeshire County Council's fourth Quality of Life survey. This year, 6,912 residents shared their views on living in the county. 5,501 residents took part in the sample survey, approximately 1,100 in each of the five districts providing a representative view across the county. An additional 1,411 completed the online survey, enabling any resident to take part. These additional results will be analysed and published separately.

The responses received provide valuable insights into residents’ wellbeing, how they

feel about the communities they live in, and the public services around them, including those provided by the County Council. Although concerns around the cost of living, climate change, and access to jobs remain high, many residents were more satisfied with services and reported feeling better informed by the County Council.

Key findings

- 84% of residents say they feel happy, a figure that has remained consistent over four years.
- 24% say they often feel lonely and 26% reported struggling with their mental health, a lower figure than last year but still being felt most amongst younger residents.
- 87% of residents reporting that they personally feel concerned about the cost of living, the same as last year, with over half (56%) reporting having taken action in the last year as a result of cost-of living increases.
- 60% of residents say that the council keeps them well informed about the services it provides, representing a significant increase from 50% in 2025.
- Residents continue to be very satisfied with registration and library services (both 87%), followed by waste management (81%) [note this is an interesting data point as waste management also involves District Councils], park and ride and guided busway services (80%), and street lighting (78%).
- 55% per cent of residents trust the council to make decisions about local services, higher than the national benchmark of 49%.
- 49% believe the council provides value for money, up from 47% last year and 41% in 2024.
- Satisfaction with roads and pavements has risen for a second consecutive year to 32%, up from 21% in 2024.

The County Council's upcoming #BeWinterWise campaign for 2026 will help raise awareness around issues of isolation, mental health and wellbeing, loneliness and the cost of living- all of which can worsen during the darker months. The campaign will also signpost people to support available across Cambridgeshire.

The County Council carried out the survey in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridge Ahead. The results provide valuable insight and evidence to support the council's business planning processes. https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey

Council Budget

Every year, the council must set a legal budget which balances spending needs against income from council tax and other sources. With a growing population and rising demand for services, particularly in children's social care and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the council continues to face difficult decisions about how to balance priorities at a time when costs continue to rise.

The majority of day-to-day spending is required to support children's and adult social care, education and SEND, and with the remainder the council has to maintain the highways network and deliver valued community-based services including libraries and registration services. The council also faces ongoing uncertainty about the Government's plans for local government reorganisation.

The council's budget proposals for 2027/28 will be debated at the full council meeting

in February. As an administration thus far, we have listened to residents concerns about our highways and invested record amounts of money each year, more than doubling the funding granted to us by the Government; it is worth noting that the future of highways budgeting is slightly uncertain as the Government plans to award the relevant funding to the strategic mayors (CPCA for us) to allocate to constituent Local Highways Authorities. However, the prioritisation of highways funding does have knock on impacts of other areas. We will continue to prioritise highways as we know how important they are to residents and the local economy, but it does lead to tough choices in other areas.

Ahead of the budget, Cambridgeshire County Council has launched a public engagement survey to ask for residents' opinions on where it should prioritise spending and savings in the years ahead. The recent Quality of Life Survey will also provide helpful insights into residents' views. The survey closes on Sunday 15 November, and can be found at https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business-planning/27-28-phase-1 engagement/

ADULTS & HEALTH

Tacking obesity

The County Council's Adults and Health Committee heard last month that although obesity rates in Cambridgeshire are below the national average for both children and adults, they are still too high, particularly in children and young people, and in groups with lower income.

Obesity rates remain higher in some communities across Cambridgeshire, particularly in Fenland, where higher rates of obesity are found amongst both children and adults. There continues to be a strong link between obesity and deprivation. Figures show that 28 per cent of Year 6 children in the most deprived areas of Cambridgeshire are living with obesity, compared to just 13.2 per cent in the least deprived areas.

Councils, the NHS, schools, community groups and other partners are working together to tackling obesity. This work recognises that maintaining a healthy weight is influenced by a wide range of factors, including access to healthy food, opportunities for physical activity, education, employment, the built environment and wider social and economic circumstances.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION

Councils share partnership award

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council have won the award for Excellence in Partnership Working (The Fight Against Poverty) from the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation. This award is for our joint free school meal take up campaign within the district, using the Local Income Family Tracker (LIFT) system. The project resulted in 81 children now receiving free school meals, worth over £300,000 to their families over the lifetime of their education, and over £1 million to local

schools in additional Pupil Premium funding.

Unclaimed pension credit cashback campaign

Cambridgeshire County Council is working with district and city councils to contact families identified as eligible to receive currently unclaimed Pension Credit, aiming to put up to £2M per year back into residents' pockets.

Over 700 households across Cambridgeshire will be contacted by letter, email and phone. Each household will be advised of their eligibility and provided with support to help them apply for their unclaimed benefit. This is the county council's first targeted campaign to increase residents' income since approval of the procurement of the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software platform was approved at a meeting of the County Council's Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee in February.

LIFT has been purchased for district and city councils in Cambridgeshire by the County Council, albeit with South Cambridgeshire already utilising the software (and using their experience to support the wider roll out across the county) using funding from the UK Government's Crisis and Resilience Fund via the DWP, as part of a campaign of income maximisation, intended to help build financial security for low-income families.

Identified residents will be contacted directly by their District Council. The campaign targets households eligible for the two elements of Pension Credit, Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit. Households may be eligible for both. Based on an average Pension Credit claim of £4,300 a year, the five hundred households identified as eligible for Pension Credit Guarantee would have a total income gain of over £2M per year, ongoing, and should all apply.

Underage sales

Trading Standards officers have found two Cambridgeshire businesses selling age-restricted products to children during a series of test purchasing operations carried out across the county. The exercises were conducted over the summer by the County Council's Trading Standards team, working alongside Volunteer Police Cadets in Cambridgeshire aged between 14 and 16, and licensing teams from district councils.

Trading Standards encourages retailers to review their age verification policies and ensure staff consistently challenge anyone who appears under 25.

Concerns about young people accessing alcohol can be reported to Cambridgeshire Police online. Information about shops selling vapes or tobacco products to children under the age of 18 can be reported to Trading Standards' advice partner, Citizens Advice Consumer Service, on 0808 223 1133 Monday to Friday or via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service online form over the weekend. Reports may be made anonymously if wished.

The Library Presents

Chosen by residents, the autumn season of The Library Presents (16 October to 12 December) has a line-up of different events including music, comedy, theatre and workshops in art, craft and dance. Hosted in twenty-three Cambridgeshire Libraries, there will be something for everyone.

New offer: The Library Presents Level Up courses
New Level Up courses now offer the chance to dive deeper into specific artforms such as ceramics. The ticket price of the new course covers the costs of the artist and materials, and is not for profit. The service's regular two-hour workshops continue as normal with their subsidised pricing.

Cambridgeshire is one of a small number of library authorities able to bring high-quality arts programmes to local communities, thanks to continued funding from Arts Council England. https://www.library.live/the-library-presents

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ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Milton Houshold Recycling centre to close for upgrades

Subject to planning and environmental permits, the household recycling centre at Milton is likely to be closed after the first weekend in January so that a long planned significant upgrade to the facilities can begin. This will mean extra demand will fall on the nearest alternative sites at Bluntisham, Thriplow and Witchford, which will all introduce a booking system while the Milton HRC is closed. The booking system is commonplace in other areas, such as Essex, and will mean that residents from outside of the county cannot use Cambridgeshire HRCs. This will likely have most impact in Thriplow which can currently be used by residents from Royston etc.

Fly-tipping is the responsibility of the District Council and they will continue to be proactive on tackling it. It is also worth noting that the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste does offer a collection service for bulky waste, for a fee.

Minerals and Waste local plan

Consultation on this stage of the plan is still open and closes on 10 October.
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/mwlp-review

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Local Highways Improvements

The County Council's Highways & Transport Committee is due to make decisions on Local Highway Improvements bids this month. I will be more than happy to receive details of scoring for unsuccessful bids and feed them back to Parish Councils. PFHIs remain open all year round and the Council is reviewing its LHI process in advance of next years programme.

Capital Maintenance Programme

Calls for consideration of areas for Capital Maintenance will be made in November. It would be really helpful to identify areas that parishes would like to be considered for

resurfacing or other capital works. Please do send any suggestions to *both* Peter and I, and we will liaise to ensure they are considered in the process. Whilst the process is evidence led and analysis of highways is undertaken by the highways department, it is certainly not unhelpful to have your local councillors calling for works even if it doesn't guarantee success.

For general highways maintenance works, please do continue to make reports. It is essential to let the team know where there attention is needed. Whilst the software still shows lots of outstanding reports, this is notable part due to a lack of resourcing that means that reports (particularly repeat reports) are not closed down- I am noticing instances where works are completed but reports not closed. We have seen a notable improvement in highways maintenance since George has taken responsibility for the area and this sentiment is shared by other councillors who are covered by him. Peter and I can discuss particular cases with the highways maintenance team with a report number.

Reduction in roadworks exceeding permitted time

The number of days roadworks overran in Cambridgeshire fell by almost half during 2025/26, as Cambridgeshire County Council stepped up enforcement, issuing more than £424,000 in fines and charges to utility companies and other organisations.

The council issued 1,443 Fixed Penalty Notices, generating £196,286, for offences including working without the necessary permit or failing to comply with permit conditions. A further £228,350 was recovered through charges for works that overran their agreed duration.

The number of days that works overran fell from 1,191 days in 2024/25 to 692 days in 2025/26, a reduction of almost 42 per cent. This suggests that enforcement activity and overrun charges are encouraging companies to complete works within agreed timescales and helping to keep roads open.

In total, the council issued 36,685 permits during 2025/26, regulating when and how works could take place across the county. In Cambridgeshire 51 utility companies are permitted to work on our roads, and when that work is deemed an emergency, such as for a burst water main, they can legally start work before notifying the council.

Please do remember that we can order companies to repair failed reinstatement works for a two-year period following completion. It's a really effective way to get matters addressed and it does not come at any cost (beyond officer time) to the County Council. Do let Peter and I know if any reinstatements fail within this timeframe and we will do our best to get issues rectified.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

"Bus Services Reimagined"

Bus routes across the county are being axed by the Combined Authority. This feels like an inevitable outcome of the Mayor's policy that he will not increase his 'precept' or share of the council tax, not even in line with inflation, and means more and more bus

services across Cambridgeshire will likely be scrapped in the years to come. The Mayor seems to expect the Tiger On Demand buses to do a lot of heavy lifting to fill the gaps. The Mayor's Combined Authority predicts a cut of 38 per cent in bus services by 2035 unless he changes his mind on the precept. More info on this year's changes can be found below.

https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/updated-bus-network-plans-approved/

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