

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT NOVEMBER 2024

BE WINTER WISE

Be Winter Wise returns for the winter season, helping Cambridgeshire residents keep warm, safe and healthy throughout the colder months.

The focus of the campaign is on preventing winter illnesses, coping with the cost of living, and staying safe during the winter weather. It will provide practical help and guidance with the issues that face so many people at this time of year.

The Cambridgeshire County Council led campaign will have advice on:

- Help with the cost of living such as warm hubs and Pension Credit
- Ways to protect your health, including vaccinations
- Tips on how to heat your home efficiently
- Where to find free physical activities for all the family
- Advice on preparing for extreme weather, such as freezing and flooding
- Winter gritting schedules and staying safe on our roads

Supermarket vouchers will once again be available for children eligible for free school meals during the school holidays, and the council will be signposting to partner organisations who provide essential winter support.

Social media posts will feature campaign motif Olly the Owl.

FULL COUNCIL

The council debated four motions proposed by councillors, and agreed them all unanimously.

1. A call for fairer police funding and awareness of domestic abuse. Cambridgeshire is the fourth lowest funded police force in the country, and local taxpayers fund around half of Cambridgeshire's policing budget.
2. A proposal seeking changes to planning processes in cases where schemes are delivered over many years yet planning designs and decisions are not able to be changed to accommodate new situations.
3. A proposal from me about safety risks from lithium-ion batteries in items such as e-bikes and e-scooters, for householders and for waste collection and disposal crews. It endorses the work being done by Lord Foster and the charity Electrical Safety First to seek to ensure third party independent approval testing for these items entering the UK market, regulations for safe disposal of used lithium-ion batteries, and controls to address specific fire concerns such as charging points.

4. A proposal for a review of the aftermath of National Highways' project on the A14 so that issues are clear and documented, and calling for National Highways to be more responsive and to resolve outstanding matters.

The council also agreed:

- To apply to Government for a Transport & Works Act Order to progress the Cambridge South East Transport project for a busway between a new travel hub near the A1307 / A11 and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, connecting with Granta Park, and the villages in between. The law requires the support of a majority of the whole council to proceed, regardless of how many are present, so a minimum of 31 votes; the proposal passed with 33 votes in favour and fifteen against.
- To establish a new Shareholder Sub-Committee of the council's Assets & Procurement Committee, to improve governance and accountability where the council is a shareholder with a significant holding.

STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES

Quality of Life Survey

Most Cambridgeshire residents continue to feel happy and safe in the county, well connected to their local communities, and believe it's a great place to raise children, according to the County Council's second annual Quality of Life survey.

However, cost of living remains the issue of most concern, with almost half of residents using less heating, and a quarter cutting back on nutritious food in the past twelve months.

The survey was commissioned from national independent market research agency Think Insights. This year the council carried out this work in partnership with Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and Cambridge Ahead. 5,500 residents took part in the survey—1,100 in each of Cambridgeshire's five districts to give a representative view across the county.

In addition to the survey, this year the council engaged with some specific groups including those with lived experience of homelessness, the criminal justice system and drug or alcohol dependency as well as those under the age of 18. A general online public survey allowed any resident to take part.

The council will use the survey to increase its understanding of what is important to local residents and to inform council decisions.

In numbers

- 72 per cent of residents have high or very high levels of happiness. The average happiness score was 7.21, higher than the national average 7.0.

- Residents continue to feel positively about their local community; 85 per cent feel safe and 75 per cent feel they belong.
- Fewer residents report struggling with mental health this year (37 per cent down to 29 per cent) and a lower proportion report issues with physical health (40 per cent down to 31 per cent).
- Significant numbers of young people (43 per cent of 25-34-year-olds and 40 per cent of 18-24-year-olds) continue to be more likely to report mental health struggles.
- The proportion of residents reporting that they often feel lonely remains higher than national data, at 31 per cent of residents.
- Younger residents are again more likely to report loneliness (53 per cent of 18-24 year olds).
- Cost of living remains residents' highest concern, with 87 per cent of residents concerned this year.

Budget

The council's current position forecasts an overspend of £9.6M for the current financial year—that's 2 per cent of its budget. The county council's estimated budget gap for next year (2025/26) has increased from £23.5M to more than £39M, largely due to a combination of increasing demand for services, inflationary pressures, and uncertainty over future funding from Government.

Over the last ten years, the council's core government funding has reduced by 70 per cent in real terms. Combined with more steep rises in inflation and a surge in demand for services supporting some of our most vulnerable residents, this has added further cost pressures to the council.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Health scrutiny

The county council's Adults & Health Committee commissions public health services from drug and alcohol treatment and wellness checks to vaccinations—but it also scrutinises NHS health care.

The Rosie

At their recent meeting, the committee received a report on maternity services at the Rosie in Cambridge. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected two 'domains' (*Safe* and *Well Led*) at the Rosie in May 2023. Safe care was rated as 'Requires Improvement', with Well Led receiving 'Good'. The CQC issued one 'must do' and '13' should do actions.

The report covered developments in training, staffing, wait times, and the CQC's finding that 'Maternity staff felt respected, but did not always feel supported and valued'. It also considered how service user feedback was encouraged and used to influence improvement, and how the Rosie benefits from and shares learning.

Hinchingbrooke redevelopment

The committee also heard an update on plans to provide a new hospital on the existing Hinchingbrooke Hospital site by 2030. Work has begun to develop an outline business case and the programme currently remains on track to open the new hospital in late autumn 2030.

Young adult social care

For some time now I have been working with a number of parents of young adults in receipt of care, either from the council or the NHS. Their experience of the services their adult sons or daughters have received has been, to put it mildly, poor, stemming from systemic behaviours in the two organisations going back many years.

Following many meetings, telephone calls, and exchanges of emails with parents and with council and NHS staff, I'm pleased to say that there are glimmers of positive change, particularly in the NHS Integrated Care system which has held some very open and honest meetings with parents. I'm hoping that the county council will also be open to the same kind of self-challenge.

The Firs

I was pleased to receive the news that The Firs residential care home in Little Downham is now rated Good by Care Quality Commission inspectors, and has been removed from special measures. The home, run by Barrels UK Care Ltd, caters for older and younger adults and people with dementia and physical disabilities.

ASSETS & PROCUREMENT

The council's Assets and Procurement Committee has voted to close five county council offices and invest in other council office accommodation.

Among the offices to be closed is Noble House in Ely, on the business park at Angel Drove.

The plans will generate capital savings of nearly £11M over the next two years, with much of that reinvested in council buildings including community facilities. This decision will help continue to shrink the council's carbon footprint, and deliver around £2M in annual savings.

These closures are the first phase in the council's Accommodation Improvement Programme. This project has reviewed under-used council offices throughout the county where the average occupancy is less than 25 per cent across the working week—part of the Joint Administration's drive for value for money.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Rackham Ofsted

Rackham Church of England Primary School received notification late last month that it would be inspected on 22–23 October 2024. Very best wishes to Rackham for a successful inspection.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION

Poverty Strategy Commission

A new commission involving organisations from across Cambridgeshire has been launched to tackle poverty in the county.

The Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission will work independently to make recommendations to partners across the county who are supporting people currently in, or at risk of, poverty.

A group of eleven independent commissioners with extensive professional experience supporting residents will:

- look at data and evidence relating to poverty in Cambridgeshire and how the system currently responds to this
- hear from residents who have personally experienced poverty
- produce a series of recommendations for local organisations to consider as an approach to recognising and tackling poverty.

The commission will meet regularly and determine what it will focus on within the timescales. It will deliver a report in early 2025 which will include a review of the evidence submitted and a set of recommendations.

Pension Credit

A campaign has been launched to make sure everyone who is eligible for Pension Credit in Cambridgeshire is claiming it.

Pension Credit is extra money to help with living costs for those over State Pension age and on a low income. It could mean an extra £186 per month for the average household.

In Cambridgeshire as many as one in three people who are eligible for Pension Credit may not be claiming it. Cambridgeshire County Council is appealing to everyone who may be eligible to check.

Claiming Pension Credit can also unlock other benefits, such as the Winter Fuel Payment, a free TV licence for those aged over 75, help with NHS dental treatment, glasses and hospital transport costs and other benefits depending on circumstances.

Pensioners can get a Winter Fuel Payment this year if they are entitled to Pension Credit at any point between 16 and 22 September 2024.

To be eligible for Pension Credit, you must:

- live in the UK
- be over State Pension age
- have a weekly income below £218.15 if you're single, or £332.95 if you're part of a couple.

The county council has set up a dedicated webpage with advice, guidance, and links to Government websites where people can check if they are eligible and apply for Pension Credit <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/pension-credit>

Road closures for Remembrance events

The council has agreed to produce a toolkit to raise awareness of the support available from the Council for those organising Remembrance events. This consists of waiving the fee for any Temporary Traffic Regulation Order, and providing access to free training for traffic management volunteers.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

East West Rail consultation

East West Rail (EWR) have announced that their Non-Statutory Consultation will begin on 14 November 2024, closing on 24 January 2025. More information, including details of consultation events, can be found at <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Mepal viaduct

The council is preparing to carry out essential planned maintenance repairs to the drainage system on Mepal Viaduct in the spring. This will be a long job, including replacing 700 metres of kerb drainage and sub-deck associated works. Parapet maintenance will also be carried out. Officers are currently considering the best pattern of road closures to enable them to complete this task.

Mepal flooding

Flood risk officers have now reviewed the CCTV survey carried out by the council's Highways Drainage & Resilience Team in Bridge Road and New Road Mepal. They have made recommendations including works to repair pipework and further investigation of the flooding issues there.

Coveney Main Street

Closure of the main road through Coveney is expected Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 November 9:30AM-2:30PM for patching between Long Lane and

Gravel End. Dates may be subject to change—check notices on site or if you live in the affected area use the contact details on the letter you should have received for further information.

Co-op access road

I have been liaising for some time with council officers over the classification of the access road from Ely Road to the Sutton Co-op. This road is in fact adopted though it does not show as such on the council's mapping systems. I've been promised that the mapping system at maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk will be updated to show the road as adopted.

Gravel End to Downham Hythe

Authority has now been given to order the works to repair the bridge on Footpath 3 between Gravel End and Downham Hythe. Design will begin imminently, but with a number of components requiring lengthy fabrication times, construction is set to begin at the end of January and be completed by the end of March. This has all taken far too long but at last is finally under way.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will be in the school Community Room on Monday 4 November and Monday 2 December at 6:30-7:30PM.

I hope to attend

- **Sutton** Timebank coffee morning Tuesday 19 November 10:00
- **Witchford** coffee morning Wednesday 20 November 10:30
- **Coveney** coffee Wednesday 27 November 10:30
- **Little Downham** book café Friday 29 November 10:00

Please note that these dates may be subject to change.

I can also be contacted

- by email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- on Facebook
- by phone on 07930 337596

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division