

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2026

FULL COUNCIL

Business plan and budget

The full council met on Tuesday 10 February, to vote on the budget and business plan for 2026/27 to 2028/29. The proposals for a 'healthy, fair and sustainable Cambridgeshire', approved by a majority of councillors, include record spending on roads, thousands of extra school places, and support for vulnerable residents.

The nearly £1.3 billion business plan and budget includes a number of investments aligned with the council's three new ambitions.

Supporting a green and sustainable county

- an additional £20 million for highway maintenance.
- delivery of the council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy.
- £11 million to upgrade Household Recycling Centres at Milton and March.

Enabling full and healthy lives for all

- £14.7 million of additional funding for adult social care providers to help them manage rising costs and ensure care workers are paid the Real Living Wage, improving stability and quality for those who depend on care workers for their support.

Ensuring fairness and opportunity

- continuing holiday meal vouchers until the end of summer 2026 for those children most in need, despite the Government withdrawing the Household Support Fund; the council will also use the new £5 million Crisis and Resilience Fund to provide a wider range of anti-poverty measures, offering practical support to households facing financial challenges.
- 3,500 new primary school places, and £72 million over five years to increase secondary school places.
- £780,000 a year to run a children's residential home in South Cambridgeshire, along with continued funding for the Families First early intervention programme that helps keep more families together.
- more than £1.2 million will be invested in libraries and archives over the next two years.

Rising costs in social care and special educational needs are putting enormous pressure on council finances, and these statutory services for our most vulnerable residents now account for by far the largest part of our budget. Despite these national pressures we are still managing to invest in key priorities.

Thousands of people depend on our roads and paths every day and residents tell us repeatedly that highways are their top concern. We are continuing record levels of investment in maintenance, alongside additional support for overstretched social care, and continued funding for free school meal vouchers.

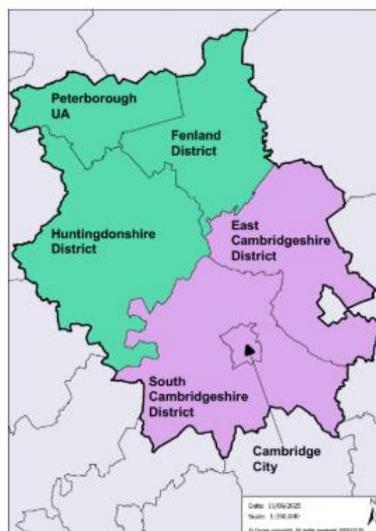
We will continue to challenge Government to recognise they are short-changing the communities of Cambridgeshire and to provide the right level of funding for services our residents deserve.

The plans include an increase of council tax by 4.99 per cent, the maximum permitted by Government for county councils, as is the case in nearly all councils across England, and the level assumed by Government in setting its grant allocations. This will generate around £21 million in additional funding and help the council continue providing the essential services people rely on.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government's consultation on the options for local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is live until Friday 26 March.



Map of LGR option A



Map of LGR option B



Proposal D (left/first) and E (right/second)



The Government has chosen to consult on all four options submitted. These would replace the current county and district arrangements with new unitary authorities—a single council responsible for delivering all local government services in an area, rather than services being split across different councils.

Cambridgeshire County Council has submitted Option A (Two Councils. One Fairer Future.), which joins East Cambridgeshire with Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and enables local residents to share in decision-making over the places where we work, study, shop, receive health care, and spend leisure time. Find out more at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/lgr/proposal/LGR-Option-A-Proposal-28-Nov-25.pdf>

Residents can view the options and submit their views online. Free use of computers, Wi-Fi and internet access is available at Cambridgeshire libraries, along with printed versions of the consultation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough>

The Government is expected to announce its final choice of option in the summer.

ASSETS AND PROCUREMENT

Cambridge Biomedical Campus

The County Council's Assets & Procurement Committee has agreed a partnership with developer Prologis to support the future expansion of Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

67 acres of land owned by the council is being put forward to allow the campus's next phase of growth. This will deliver space for life science research, development and innovation, co-working laboratories, learning spaces, a skills and training centre, key worker serviced apartments and offices for life science support companies.

Proposals include investment in transport infrastructure, green spaces and a community fund. The project will give the council a future commercial return, subject to planning permission, that will be used to help deliver our key services and support the council's ambitions.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Two new special schools for Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire County Council has asked the Department for Education to continue with the delivery of two new special schools in Gamlingay and March.

Greensands Academy Gamlingay and Lime Academy March had been approved for delivery by the DfE under the previous government, and are expected to provide 270 new special school places in Cambridgeshire.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

New system to combat poverty across Cambridgeshire

The council has agreed to procure a data-led system that will allow more targeted support for low-income families to address and prevent poverty.

In May 2025, the final report of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission recommended helping low-income individuals and households to ensure they are receiving all the money they are legally entitled to and also reduce their avoidable financial outgoings. This process, known as ‘income maximisation’, aims to help tackle financial hardship by preventing crisis, stabilising household budgets and supporting residents to become more financially resilient.

A new data-led system would lead to more systematic and earlier identification of those who would benefit from income maximisation—which evidence shows is one of the best ways of tackling poverty over the longer term.

South Cambridgeshire District Council have already adopted such a system, and in the last twelve months have secured nearly 1,000 additional claims for residents which are worth over £500,000 to residents in their first year alone, with a lifetime value of nearly £4 million based on average claim lengths.

Data-led systems used in other areas have shown a return on investment of over £400 for each £1 spent. This new platform will enable the council to focus on preventing residents from falling into poverty by building their financial resilience, reducing their future vulnerability and the need for subsequent more costly crisis interventions.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Safe disposal of batteries

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership RECAP is urging residents to recycle batteries and battery-powered electricals safely, following an increase in fires caused by incorrectly disposed lithium-ion batteries. Recent incidents include a fire at Thalia’s Alconbury waste transfer station at New Year, as well as thirteen bin lorry fires across Cambridgeshire in the last twelve months.

In 2023, more than 1.6 billion batteries were thrown away in the UK, with over 1.1 billion hidden inside everyday household items such as phones, tablets, e-cigarettes, toothbrushes and power tools. When these items end up in general

waste or mixed recycling, batteries can ignite or explode during collection, transport or sorting.

Across the UK, over 1,200 waste-related fires were recorded in the past year—a 71% rise since 2022, posing significant risks to crews, the public and waste-handling facilities. Lithium-ion batteries are especially dangerous when crushed in lorries, and even small button or toy batteries can spark fires once compacted.

To help prevent fires, residents are urged never to place batteries in the bin, to use designated recycling points, tape over damaged terminals and check for local collection schemes.

All types of batteries can be recycled free of charge at Household Recycling Centres, supermarkets and DIY stores. This includes loose household batteries, lithium-ion and rechargeable batteries, and batteries in small electrical items. Any shop that sells batteries must also accept used batteries for recycling.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/waste-and-recycling/battery-disposal>

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Potholes

The council is continuing to do everything it can to address the large numbers of road defects that have appeared in the last two months. This is a national issue so road repair crews are in demand everywhere.

Wet weather has reduced productivity and increased the chances of repair failure. Road space availability for road closures is hard to come by in some parts of the county; and internal resources are stretched and difficult to scale up. This has resulted in increased time required to respond to, and mark up, reports of fresh defects; longer times to fix marked potholes; and higher failure rates.

The highways service is responding as flexibly as it can; and the council continues to increase its own investment where Government funding falls so far short.

Road works

The 24/7 closure of Twentypence between Wilburton and Cottenham for works by Anglian Water was lifted three weeks earlier than planned.

Micro-asphalting works on High Road, Lawn Lane and Station Road in Little Downham passed without incident, and the project manager kept the parish clerk and me well informed throughout.

Work on the B1050 Earith Road in Willingham, from the Roseberry holiday park to the Willingham Coop, will begin on Monday 9 March and finish on Friday 27 March. The road will be closed from 8:00AM to 5:00PM during this time.

Straight Furlong Little Downham will be closed 24/7 from 16 March to 27 April, with working hours of 8:00AM to 6:00PM along the length of the road from Hundred Foot Bank to Main Street. And grip cutting will be taking place along Pymoor Lane and in other areas to drain surface water away from the carriageways.

Peat soil roads

St Neots & Mid Cambridgeshire MP Ian Sollom asked a question about Cambridgeshire's peat soil roads in Parliament a few weeks ago, and received an assurance that the issue would be raised with ministers.

Ian Sollom MP: The B1050 between Earith and Willingham in my constituency is one of many peat-affected roads in Cambridgeshire. Such roads cost up to four times more to repair than others, and repairs last just a fraction of the time. The Secretary of State will know that the funding formula for highways maintenance is based on road length and does not take account of geological conditions. These roads are really dangerous to drive on, and my constituents are really frightened. Will she consider creating a special budget for peat-affected roads, or at least adjusting the formula to take account of geological conditions?

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP (Secretary of State for Transport): I appreciate that certain roads and certain parts of the country face different challenges due to their geology. I will certainly raise the hon. Member's point with the Roads Minister, and we will come back to him.

Maintenance programme for 2026/27

The maintenance programme for 2026/27 has been proposed to the Highways & Transport Committee. For the Sutton division this includes:

Surface treatment

- (C129) Station Road Little Downham, Lawn Lane to Black Bank Road
- (B1411) High Road Little Downham, Tower Road to Mill Hill
- (Unclassified) Sutton Court Sutton, Church Lane to end

Preparation for surface dressing

- (C125) High Road Little Downham, Mill Hill to Grunty Fen Drain
- (C124) Bury Lane Sutton, B1381 to bridge

Slurry seal of footway

- (Unclassified) The Row Sutton, throughout

In addition, the A1123 Hillrow Causeway in Haddenham and the B1381 near Earith and patches throughout will be included in the peat soil roads programme.

A1101 Bates Drove speed limit

Following a series of injury collisions, a serious motorcycle collision in June 2025 and a motorcycle fatality eight days later, a speed limit of 50MPH is to be implemented on Bates Drove between the top of Black Bank Little Downham and the top of Hundred Foot Bank Pymoor.

NEWS FROM THE COMBINED AUTHORITY

A10 Ely to Cambridge

The Department for Transport (DfT) has not yet replied to a letter from the Mayor about funding for the A10. Without this funding, there is no clear route to DfT funding for the completion of a Full Business Case or delivery of a preferred option.

In the meantime, the project team has explored approaches that would allow Outline Business Case work to advance. Options for the A10 run from dualling of the whole road to more targeted junction improvements, with indicative costs ranging from approximately £500 million to £80 million.

The Combined Authority is also working with Homes England to explore funding options, and this work will report in the spring.

Bus franchising

An independent review of bus franchising for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has issued a draft report to Combined Authority officers. Further detailed work will now be done, with an update to the Combined Authority's Transport Committee in June.

Electric vehicles

The Combined Authority has been granted £361,780 from the Government's Electric Vehicle pavement channels grant fund and is working with the county council and Peterborough on how this funding will be used.

Transport funding

In December 2025 the Department of Transport issued a letter to the Combined Authority confirming a four-year package of local transport funding allocations.

This settlement brings together a number of different funding streams into a single sum, and allows the Combined Authority to determine how these are allocated to the county council and Peterborough.

In return, the Combined Authority needs to submit to Government a Local Transport Delivery Plan for 2026/27, and an outline plan for the remaining years. The Government will use this to understand how local transport funding is being invested and to assess alignment with national priorities and outcomes.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

Sutton surgery

Cllr Mark Inskip and I hold our monthly surgery at Joy Bistro 65 High Street Sutton. Forthcoming dates are Monday 30 March and Monday 27 April, 18:30-19:30.

I can also be contacted ...

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

County Councillor for the Sutton division