

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT AUGUST 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Work by councils on the Government's reorganisation of local government continues to take much time and money. Business cases are being developed for the three options formally on the table. There is a fourth option being promoted by the two MPs representing areas of Peterborough, but it is unlikely to attract support, and councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can put forward no more than three options to Government.

Focus groups have been taking place in all the Cambridgeshire districts, and the responses to the recent survey are being analysed.

It has now been announced by the Government that the committee system of local government, under which Cambridgeshire County Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council formally operate, will be scrapped. The new unitary authorities, in Cambridgeshire and elsewhere, will be run on the 'leader and cabinet' model.

Councils set to undergo reorganisation have been warned by the Government against taking decisions that could 'fetter the future decisions of new councils', including major organisational restructures, establishing companies, and the spending of reserves, among other things.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has also said that it will issue directions requiring written consent from successor councils for land disposals worth more than £100,000, as well as contracts worth more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non-capital expenditure.

East Cambridgeshire District Council of course has recently decided to spend £13 million on a crematorium, and has offered The Maltings, Maltings Cottage, and Oliver Cromwell's House to the City of Ely Council for £1 each.

FULL COUNCIL

The Full County Council met on 15 July. It agreed to

- Ask the Government to consider better ways of planning and delivering GP infrastructure and services for growing communities.
- Raise the profile of the importance of flood prevention for the future of the Fens.

- Urge the Government to make it easier to clear flytipping and other waste from trunk roads which requires closure by National Highways.
- Oppose cuts to Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments for disabled people.
- Reaffirm its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

The council also accepted the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Shareholder Sub-Committee

The county council's Shareholder Sub-Committee met last month and approved the updated Business Plan from the council's wholly-owned company This Land.

This Land was set up in 2016 by the previous council administration, and not in a way we would have supported. Since the change of control at the county council in 2021, we have commissioned a report from advisors Avison Young, taken advice from other experts, set up a Shareholder Sub-Committee of councillors to oversee the company, and ensured the board has the right leadership in place.

To date, This Land has repaid the council £15.5M of loans and £42M of interest. The outstanding loan is £119M, which the council expects to be repaid by 2029. In March this year, following detailed consideration of This Land's financial position, the council agreed to restructure the loan payments. The loan has been converted into two parts:

- £59.9M is a repayable loan, and commercial interest will be charged.
- £59.85M is a grant, which will be repaid dependent on This Land's future performance and is not subject to interest.

Even if This Land were not able to make performance related repayments on the £59.85M grant, the council would still achieve a balanced position from This Land by 2029, due to interest payments received in addition to loan repayments.

The updated business plan enables the company to repay interest, reduce the amounts owed to the council, and limit the risk from the company.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Pharmacy consultation

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents are being asked to share their views on whether their pharmacy needs are being met, in order to help assess and develop pharmacy services in the area.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board would like to hear from pharmacy users about the services they receive in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The answers will help to define areas where communities are well served and where there may be gaps.

Feedback from the public will help revise the area's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. The consultation is open until Saturday 20 September.

<https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pna>

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Trust 'requires improvement'

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Trust has been downgraded from 'good' to 'requires improvement' by the Care Quality Commission following an assessment in February. The Trust is responsible for delivering a number of NHS services in the community, including physical and mental health, and specialist services.

The report published by the CQC recognised that the inspection took place 'at a time of ongoing instability for executive leadership' and set out a number of areas the Trust needed to improve.

However, it also highlighted several positive findings, including that the new chief executive had been 'well received' and that staff found him open and felt able to raise concerns with him. The report also described some of the research and innovation programmes being carried out at the Trust as 'inspirational' and said inspectors heard about 'many high performing and innovative services'.

New scrutiny committee

The full council agreed to set up a separate Health Scrutiny committee. The intention is to increase the focus of the council's scrutiny of our health partners, while the Adults & Health Committee continues to make decisions on public health and social care commissioning.

Measles vaccine reminder

The UK Health Security Agency is reminding parents that measles can be a serious illness. An estimated 5,000 children in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will start primary school without their MMR vaccination, and more than 8,000 without their pre-school booster. Doses are usually given at one year, and at three years four months, but missed doses can be caught up later.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Children in Care celebration and awards

On 25 July I joined Cllrs Jonny Edge and Anna Bradnam at Cambridgeshire County Council's Children in Care Celebration & Awards at Inflatebounce in

Wyton. What a venue! Large numbers of happy children enjoying all the inflatables and vast quantities of pizza and chips, while having their achievements recognised and celebrated. Great to meet them and their foster families, as well as the council staff who keep it all together.

Community outreach service

A new Community Outreach Service aims to support and develop the skills of parents of children from birth to five years, and those leading community groups for families with children from birth to five years.

The County Council's Talking Together in Cambridgeshire service will be visiting parent and toddler groups across Cambridgeshire to chat with parents and carers about simple, effective ways to support their child's early communication, language, and literacy development. This includes fun, practical activities that promote communication and language skills—and engaging training sessions tailored just for parents and carers.

There will also be free training opportunities for community groups working with families with children from birth to five. This training will build on existing knowledge and boost confidence in sharing key messages with families.

The Community Outreach Service is available to:

- Cambridgeshire early years community groups (supporting families with children from birth to five) that are constituted charities, community, or voluntary organisations.
- Cambridgeshire Libraries
- Cambridgeshire Child and family Centres.

A half-hour online launch event will take place on Monday 18 August 2025 at 1:00PM. To book a place at this event, please complete the registration form at <https://forms.office.com/e/wtugiXyv3D>

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Grunty Fen landfill site

FCC Environment, which owns and operates the Grunty Fen landfill site near Witchford, has asked for public support after a rise in trespassing, vandalism and arson attacks at the site. FCC operates the Grunty Fen Landfill under contract from the County Council and permits from the Environment Agency.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A reminder that the consultation on the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open until Thursday 11 September.

<https://naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk/>

Anglian Water £62.8M payout over sewage breaches

Water regulator Ofwat has agreed a £62.8M redress package with Anglian Water after finding a 'serious breach' in how Anglian Water manages its sewage works. It recognises the water company's repeated failings to maintain and upgrade sewage infrastructure.

Ofwat has proposed improvements Anglian Water must make to its wastewater treatment works and network after discovering excessive spills from storm overflows.

Ofwat to be scrapped

Meanwhile, Ofwat itself is being replaced by a tougher water regulator. It is excellent news that the Government has finally seen the need for tougher action against sewage pollution, soaring bills, and bloated bonuses for water bosses.

Help to get online

Connecting Cambridgeshire is seeking applications from community groups and organisations to enable Digital Hubs across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Small grants of up to £4,200 will be available to procure connectivity solutions and digital devices to be used by the public, and provide the local community with access to digital skills and confidence.

Community groups interested in becoming a Digital Hub should read the eligibility criteria and fill in the application form at

<https://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/about/help-to-get-online/digital-hubs/>

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Highways transparency report

Cambridgeshire County Council has produced detailed reports on its highways maintenance activities as required by the Department for Transport.

A quarter of the £500 million additional maintenance funding from Government for 2025-26 depends on councils publishing reports by the end of June 2025 demonstrating compliance with best practice criteria. The reports must detail five-year maintenance spending comparisons, network condition statistics, pothole repair estimates, and planned maintenance activities. Further information is required by October 2025.

Key highlights from the report

- Since 2023-24, the amount of capital funding the County Council spends each year on highway maintenance has increased by £35M, from £24M to £59M.

- The County Council has allocated more than £73M for highways maintenance in 2025/26, inclusive of revenue funding.
- Over the last five years, we have repaired an average of 55,400 individual potholes each year.

In 2024/25 the County Council has:

- Spent more than £30M improving over 145km of roads countywide.
- Reconstructed or resurfaced 166 roads.
- Spent more than £4.5M repairing 52,229 potholes across the county.
- Received 16,371 potholes reports from residents.
- Spent more than £5M improving over 120km of key walking and cycling routes countywide.
- Reconstructed or repaired 241 footpaths.
- Emptied and cleaned more than 35,000 drains.
- Upgraded 31 traffic signals.
- Recycled 41,000 tonnes of material and saved over 735 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, through various sustainability and carbon reduction processes.

In 2025/26, the County Council has planned:

- 259 schemes to repair 135km of road (with over 60 per cent being preventative treatment work).
- 253 schemes to repair key walking and cycling routes countywide.
- Five bridges will be upgraded.
- 20 traffic signals will be replaced/upgraded.

More information is available online at

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/highways-transparency>

A142 Mepal bridge closure

The maintenance work on the A142 Mepal bridge has now completed.

Gritter fleet out

It may be the height of summer, but the gritter fleet has been out—dusting recently resurfaced roads to protect them during heatwaves.

Weed spraying and gully clearing

Weed spraying for all villages in the Sutton division is due to take place in early August. Cyclical gully clearing for Coveney, Witcham, Mepal, and Sutton is due to take place before the end of March next year.

Ely Area Capacity Enhancement remains unfunded

Once again the Government has failed to fund the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement project, which would open up space for more rail movements

north of Ely. This is a critical piece of national infrastructure, and it is desperately disappointing that successive Governments have failed to resource this.

Lynn Road Ely

The County Council has refused an application for double yellow lines on a stretch of Lynn Road Ely. The plans were put forward by Hopkins Homes, one of the developers at the Orchards Green development, as part of their planning permission for the site. The two Ely county councillors (Alison and Christine Whelan) have asked that the developer be encouraged to submit an alternative way to provide the required cycle route into Ely.

Grunty Fen Road / Main Street Witchford

Cambridgeshire County Council proposes to make an Order under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, as amended, to introduce No Waiting at any time (double yellow lines) on lengths of road around the Main Street / Grunty Fen Road junction in Witchford. Details can be found online at

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/traffic-regulation-orders/permanent-traffic-regulation-orders>

or **<https://consultation.appyway.com/east-cambridgeshire>** and select CCC (Main Street and Grunty Fen Road, Witchford) (Prohibition of Waiting) Order 202.

Comments on these proposals (to the email address above) are open until Thursday 7 August 2025 quoting reference PR1091.

Autonomous bus trials

At the end of last month I took a trip on the pilot autonomous bus service from Madingley Park & Ride to West Cambridge. Current legislation means there still has to be a driver in the seat, but their role is to monitor the bus and oversee what's happening on the route, overriding the automatic system as necessary—which was surprisingly seldom. Great to see this huge technological step forward on the streets of Cambridge, and to experience the future in the here and now.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has secured an additional £1 million from the Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles to expand this project.

GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

Executive Board

On 10 July I attended my first meeting as a member of the Executive Board of the GCP. We agreed the full business case for the new Waterbeach railway station, and noted that Network Rail would be managing the closure of the existing station.

At my request, we also agreed to review the element of the plans for the Barton Greenway which is proposed to run along the Baulk Path in Grantchester. The business case indicated that this piece of Greenway would cost £2.5 million, and attract only one more pedestrian and one more cyclist a day as a result.

COMBINED AUTHORITY

Members of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) board agreed to revise the local bus fare cap scheme and extend it to the end of October 2025; and to extend the temporary Tiger Pass scheme for young people to the end of March 2026. The Mayor's proposal to prevent the Tiger Pass being used for cross-boundary journeys was defeated, as this would have seriously affected young people in places such as the villages around Newmarket. A wider set of options for a permanent Tiger Pass will be developed over the summer.

Routes 9 (Littleport to Cambridge) and 31 (Ramsey to Whittlesey) have been saved, but the Mayor's proposals to cease three bus services including the 8A (March to Cottenham) in order to pay for this were defeated. A number of high-cost routes will be subject to ongoing review, but public transport should not be a zero sum game where one route can only survive at the expense of another.

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 1 September and Monday 6 October, 18:30-19:30.

Or catch me on ...

- Wednesday 20 August, 10:00, St Andrew's Hall (Witchford coffee morning)
- Tuesday 26 August, 10:00, The Glebe Sutton (Timebank coffee morning)
- Wednesday 27 August, 10:30, Coveney coffee morning
- Wednesday 27 August, 14:00, Little Downham Village Hall (book café)
- Friday 29 August, 11:00-12:00, Scott Court Sutton (Nellie's community café)

The above dates may change at short notice subject to late changes to my diary.

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