

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT JULY 2026

FULL COUNCIL

Reform UK narrowly held the Roman Bank and Peckover county council seat on Thursday 25 June. A by-election for the Ramsey and Bury seat will take place on Thursday 16 July. The council's current composition is

Liberal Democrat and Independent	33
Conservative	10
Reform UK	8
Labour	5
Green	3
Non-aligned Independent	1
Vacancy	1

The next meeting of the full county council is on Tuesday 14 July.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been expecting the Government to announce its proposed new council boundaries before parliamentary business ends for the summer on Friday 17 July.

However with Essex, Hampshire and Norfolk all initiating legal challenges to the Government's proposals in their area, and with a change of Prime Minister imminent, it's less clear that an announcement for Cambridgeshire will be made in that timescale.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Holiday activities and food

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme returns this summer, with holiday scheme places and nutritious meals for eligible school-aged children across Cambridgeshire from 21 July to 28 August.

Coordinated by Cambridgeshire County Council on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE), Holiday Activities and Food provides primary and secondary aged children with access to healthy food, fun activities and enriching experiences throughout the school holidays. Government funding for the programme is confirmed until December 2028.

More than 130 schemes are expected to run across the county, offering over 2,500 places for children. Activities will range from sports, outdoor adventure and play-based schemes to drama, technology, creative arts and youth-focused programmes.

As part of the summer programme, eligible children will benefit from:

- A wide choice of schemes tailored to different interests and age groups
- Fun, enriching experiences designed to support skill-building and boost confidence
- At least one nutritious meal each day, along with healthy snacks
- Daily physical activity through active play and sports
- A safe, supportive environment delivered by approved local providers.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION

Armed Forces Covenant

The county council's Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee has agreed to formally sign the Armed Forces Covenant, bolstering the support provided through the 2011 Armed Forces Community Covenant, and making a public declaration of support for and commitment to the Armed Forces community.

While signing the Armed Forces Covenant is voluntary, national legislation has significantly strengthened the Covenant in recent years. The Armed Forces Act 2021 requires local authorities to give due regard to Covenant principles in housing, healthcare, and education. The Armed Forces Bill 2026 will extend these duties further, ensuring more consistent support across public services.

Cambridgeshire County Council has developed a comprehensive Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan listing practical commitments and ensuring that serving personnel, veterans and their families receive consistent help whenever they interact with the council, and that their needs are considered in future policies and projects.

The council will provide dedicated space in libraries for sharing information and making resources such as the Forces Connect app more widely available. Libraries will also play a practical role in supporting veterans and their families, including helping with applications for veterans' badges, offering space for Armed Forces community groups and events, and ensuring staff are trained to better understand the needs of the Armed Forces community.

New ways of tackling poverty

Members of the council's Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee have unanimously agreed a number of new anti-poverty initiatives using the Government's multi-year Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Cambridgeshire County Council is receiving a share of this fund, which replaces the Household Support Fund. The funding received by the County Council is required to be allocated to:

- support to those experiencing financial shock
- support that improves residents' financial resilience
- activities that connect and enhance local support, such as community food projects.

Councillors have agreed to use the fund to:

- procure a new crisis payment scheme, worth £400,000 this year and "1M in each of the two following years
- award £800,000 to Citizens Advice to continue to deliver an Income Maximisation service across Cambridgeshire until 2029
- award £1.5M over three years to fund an advice outreach service for residents who are isolated rurally or digitally, or otherwise unable to access mainstream support.

The income maximisation service delivered by Citizens Advice has so far supported 3,182 residents gaining a combined £3.7M in additional income.

Further income maximisation work will be provided through LIFT, the Low-Income Family Tracker which will also be funded through the CRF. LIFT has already been used very successfully in South Cambridgeshire and will help identify residents who may be missing out on support they are eligible for, such as Pension Credit, Healthy Start vouchers, Free School Meals or heating-oil support, and encourage them to apply.

Much of Cambridgeshire's share of the former Household Support Fund was used to fund holiday food vouchers for families entitled to free school meals. The Government's new Crisis and Resilience Fund cannot be used in this way. However, families previously in receipt of holiday food vouchers will be prioritised for identification by LIFT and receive a targeted offer of personalised support. Families will also be encouraged to access the Holiday Activities and Food programme described earlier in this report.

Families eligible but not currently registered for Free School Meals will also be prioritised, as will low-income families with younger children not registered for Healthy Start vouchers.

Digital support for unpaid carers

According to the 2021 Census 52,236 people in Cambridgeshire are caring for a family member, friend or neighbour who is ill, older, or disabled. Caring responsibilities can impact on people's health, finances, and employment opportunities.

Bridgit is an AI-enabled digital support platform developed in partnership with Caring Together Charity, which supports carers on behalf of the County Council. It provides a one-stop, 24/7, digital hub offering personalised advice on wellbeing, employment, finance, care options, and local support services. Since its launch in 2024, Bridgit has been accessed by more than 9,000 carers, generating over 13,000 personalised self-help plans.

Bridgit tailors its guidance to individual users, and uses targeted social media outreach to help identify 'hidden carers'—people who do not recognise themselves as carers and may not realise that support is available.

Work is now under way to develop Bridgit Gen 2, which offers a more interactive, real-time coaching experience accessible via the web, mobile, and WhatsApp. This will allow carers to receive personalised guidance at any time of day, helping them navigate the challenges of caring alongside work, family life, and their own wellbeing. The updated platform will be available later this year.

The council is also refreshing its All-Age Carers Strategy (2026–2028) to reflect rising demand and the changing needs of carers. This work has been informed by extensive consultation, ensuring that carers' voices, feedback, and what matters most to them are at the heart of the strategy.

The updated strategy will focus on earlier identification of carers, improved access to support, better support for young carers and parent carers, strengthened mental health and wellbeing support, and closer partnership working.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Minerals and Waste local plan

The County Council has agreed to start the process of updating its Minerals and Waste Local Plan, which it does every five years. The content of the plan is intended to address the following.

- The planning policy context in which the new Plan will be prepared and introduces the national decision-making policies.
- How sustainable development and climate change adaptation and mitigation will be embedded into the new Plan.
- The vision and outcomes of the Plan, including objectives and aims.
- How much development is required and where it should be located.

- How minerals will be protected from sterilisation and minerals and waste sites will be protected from encroaching development.
- Additional policies that build on the national decision-making policies and address local issues.
- Where site profiles for future allocations will be included in the new Plan
- Master Plans for large scale minerals and waste development and its restoration, presently this is only the Block Fen / Langwood Fen Master Plan.
- Design guides that shape how waste and minerals developments are designed, and how other development should accommodate waste management within their design (for example, space for bins).
- The indicators that will be used to monitor the Plan.

Consultation on this stage of the plan will open on 3 August and close on 10 October.

Kingsway solar farm application withdrawn

Promoters of the Kingsway solar scheme have withdrawn their application for this large solar farm near Balsham, West Wrating, Weston Colville, Willingham Green, Carlton, Brinkley and Six Mile Bottom connected to Burwell substation. This is assumed to be a temporary withdrawal.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Highways contract renegotiated

The council has agreed an extension of its road maintenance contract with M Group, which will provide better value for taxpayers and stability during Local Government Reorganisation.

The council's contract with M Group, which was due to end in June 2027, will be extended until June 2030. As part of the extension a number of enhancements to the contract have been jointly agreed between the council and M Group, prioritising improved value for money and quality control.

The new contract extension will come into effect in July this year, with agreed improvements in the delivery of road maintenance services to be rolled out over the course of the summer.

In July 2025, the Government advised that authorities going through Local Government Reorganisation should ensure that their decisions do not negatively impact the sustainability of successor authorities or limit the ability of those future councils to deliver on their priorities, within their budgets.

This short-term extension will enable the future councils to procure their own road maintenance contract, rather than tying them into a long-term contract.

The collaboratively agreed enhancements secure an improved deal for Cambridgeshire's taxpayers a year ahead of when the current contract was due to expire, and include:

- introduction of fixed costs for regular maintenance activities to secure better value for money and improved accuracy for budgeting
- a revised quality control regime that incentivises delivery of work on time and meeting standards
- direct penalties for failure to deliver to the required quality and time standards (in addition to remediation of work)
- tracking of all road maintenance vehicles to enable monitoring of their whereabouts and outputs to ensure we are getting an efficient service.

Busway safety

Significant progress has been made to deliver essential safety improvements along the length of the Guided Busway over the last year, with installation of safety fencing to the southern part of the Busway almost complete.

To the north of Cambridge, works are taking place between Cambridge Regional College and Milton Road. After this section has been completed, contractors will continue the installation of separation fencing between Milton Road and Cambridge North station. Procurement for works along the route from Histon to St Ives is expected in summer 2026, with construction due from late summer.

The Guided Busway, which runs between St Ives and Cambridge, is an important part of Cambridgeshire's transport network linking people with major employment hubs, healthcare facilities and education providers. The adjacent path is a well-used active travel route popular with walkers, wheelers, cyclists and horse riders.

The Highways and Transport Committee is being asked to endorse the continued delivery of the safety works on the northern section of the busway, to ensure the continuing use of the innovative transport route and ongoing compliance with health and safety legislation. To ensure these essential safety works are completed as quickly as possible, the £6M cost is being met from Major Infrastructure Reserves.

The programme of safety improvements being delivered includes:

- Installation of separation fencing along the route to create a physical barrier between the path and the Busway
- One new and three upgraded formal crossing points, with £2M allocated to improve accessibility for all users following the installation of perimeter fencing to stop the use of informal cut-throughs
- Flood mitigation measures to ensure walkers and wheelers can safely use the path during and after periods of heavy rain

- Enhanced signage, lighting and speed controls, including reduced bus speeds and a 15MPH limit on the path

Temporary speed limits of 30MPH will be reviewed as new safety infrastructure is completed. On the northern section, variable speeds of up to 40–50MPH may be introduced where appropriate, improving journey times while maintaining safety.

The council has also strengthened busway governance and oversight with regular risk assessments and reports to senior officers. Engagement continues with the Health and Safety Executive.

Wheatsheaf crossroads B1040

Works to the Wheatsheaf crossroads on the B1040 between Somersham and St Ives, the scene of several fatalities, have been held up by land assembly and probate issues. The council has been asked to delegate authority to the relevant council officer to proceed with a compulsory purchase order if necessary to enable the project to proceed, though it is still hoped to reach a conclusion by negotiation.

Humphries Way, Milton

Measures to improve this difficult junction on the A10 need to have been completed by around spring 2028. However, there is currently a £1.4M funding gap between the money committed by developers and the cost of the scheme.

The council is developing an Outline Business Case for the A10 corridor between Ely and Cambridge, but it is still unclear whether the Government is committed to the project in principle, and where the Combined Authority will find its required fifteen per cent contribution to whatever solution is chosen.

Dualling of the A10, promised for decades but not delivered, would cost many millions of pounds and take many years. A programme to improve the junctions however—including Humphries Way but also Stretham and other problem areas—would be more affordable and could be carried out much sooner.

Local Highways Improvement bids

The East Cambridgeshire Local Highways Improvement panel meets on Friday 3 July to consider and score the eleven 'complex' bids submitted by councils and communities in East Cambridgeshire. Two of these—Witcham and Witchford—are from the Sutton division.

Bus services at risk

An independent review for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority warns that bus networks across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area could see severe cuts.

Driven by a funding shortfall and Mayor Paul Bristow's announcement that he will not increase his mayoral precept, the report projects a ten per cent network cut by 2029 and a nineteen per cent reduction by 2035, with nearly thirty-eight per cent of services at risk.

Junior Travel Ambassadors

Over eighty Junior Travel Ambassadors from across Cambridgeshire gathered at an event recently to celebrate their achievements, promoting road safety and active travel in their school communities.

Junior Travel Ambassadors are encouraged to make decisions about what they think is needed to improve road safety for their school. The role also involves encouraging the school community to get more active and lead healthier lifestyles. The project has been running since 2015 and there are now 187 Junior Travel Ambassadors from thirty-one primary schools across the county.

Signage repairs

I'm pleased to have been told that the damaged, leaning directional sign on Westmoor Common pointing towards Adventurers Drove has been repaired. The broken sign at Engine Bank Mepal has also been mended.

The Row closure postponed

The Row Sutton was due to be closed for nine days for pavement works. This was postponed, partly because it came to my notice that letters were not delivered to affected households as they should have been. I am continuing to pursue this because distributing these letters has been left to the contractors, with no mechanism in place to check that they have actually met their obligation.

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 6 July and Monday 3 August, 18:30-19:30.

On Wednesday 29 July, subject to diary changes, I hope to be at the Coveney coffee morning at 10:30AM and Little Downham Book Café at 2:00PM.

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