

CLlr Christopher Morris, Hardwick

MONTHLY REPORT – JULY 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Proposals for new 'unitary' councils to replace our county and district councils continue to be developed, and have been narrowed down to three options. All three divide Cambridgeshire & Peterborough into just two unitary authorities, as follows:

Option A

- East Cambridgeshire, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire
- Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough

Option B

- Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire
- East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Peterborough

Option C

- Huntingdonshire, Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire
- East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Peterborough

The County Council will be supporting further work on Option A, while the leadership of South Cambridgeshire District Council is supporting Option B.

The existing Cambridgeshire & Peterborough councils must write to the Government by the end of November, with proposals for no more than three different options. Each council leader can support only one option.

Final power rests with the Government, who may choose or amend any of the above proposals or even substitute them with a proposal of their own. The Government must consult on whatever it proposes.

If you would like to discuss the LGR process and your specific local context please let me know.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

End of year sees smaller overspend than predicted

The council ended 2024/25 with a revenue overspend of £4.45M. While no overspend would be preferred, it is less than predicted, and Cambridgeshire

County Council remains in a healthier financial position than many other authorities. Cuts from national government are biting everywhere. Capital expenditure for the year was closer to plan than anticipated, a much improved position on previous years.

Performance report

A new style report brings together a review of the council's performance across all of its services. The report can be found as the Appendix to Item 8 at <https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/c/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2314/Committee/71/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

ADULTS & HEALTH

New public health strategy

A variety of contracts have been retendered for home adaptations, adult social care transport, drug and alcohol services, and adult weight management services. The committee also reviewed and endorsed a new Public Health Plan to 2030. Priorities identified in the strategy are obesity, particularly in children in deprived areas; mental health and wellbeing; smoking and preventable mortality; and health and work support initiatives.

Health scrutiny

The council's Constitution & Ethics Committee has agreed to recommend that the Council set up a separate Health Scrutiny committee. The intention is to increase the focus of the council's scrutiny of our health partners.

ASSETS & PROCUREMENT

Breaches of procurement rules

The council's Assets & Procurement Committee considered its first report on breaches of procurement policy or legislation, several of which date back more than five years. There were more breaches than originally expected, however none involved fraud, corruption or financial irregularities.

Under the Liberal Democrats, action is being taken to change organisational culture and ensure transparency in procurement. Corporate performance in this field is generally improving.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

New ways of building schools

The council has agreed to enable academy schools to lead on construction of some expansion projects on their premises, and developers to lead on some new build schools. The council has also agreed a new service in Harston with residential placements for two children with complex needs.

COSMIC

Adult learning services earn high praise from Ofsted

Learners and apprentices studying through the council's adult learning services thrive due to the warm, nurturing and inclusive learning environment and substantial new knowledge and skills they learn, says a recent Ofsted report.

Cambridgeshire Skills offers education and training for adult learners in the county, the largest programmes of which are tailored learning, adult skills and family learning. Courses are run by sub-contractors and are offered online and in around 87 community venues across Cambridgeshire, including community centres, libraries and schools. The service works closely with the county council's Learning and Development team to provide apprenticeship opportunities.

The Ofsted inspection of the two teams, which took place in late April and early May, found the overall effectiveness of the service to be Good. It judged the behaviour and attitude of learners to be Outstanding, with a rating of Good awarded in every other category.

Household Support Fund reopens

Applications to the Household Support Fund (HSF) reopened in April. The Fund is provided by Government to support households experiencing immediate financial hardship and the rising cost of living.

The Fund will run from Tuesday 1 April 2025 to Tuesday 31 March 2026. Eligible households can apply for one £110 voucher in this period. More information, including eligibility criteria and application form, can be found on our website. Please email CommunityCV@cambridgeshire.gov.uk with any further queries. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-costof-living/household-support-fund

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Government steps in to take control of Fens reservoir plans

The Government has announced it is stepping in to take over delivery of nine reservoirs, including the Fens reservoir planned near Chatteris. The announcement indicates that this will 'accelerate' completion of the reservoir, though it gives no date, and it is not clear how much faster the Government could start water flowing than the currently advertised date of 2036.

Planning for a low carbon, resilient energy future

An informal engagement survey is seeking the views of Cambridgeshire residents on the future of renewable energy, net zero, and energy in our county.

The county council is keen to hear from parish councils, local businesses or community groups. To get involved, visit the Local Area Energy Plan webpage.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-andenvironment/climate-change-action/low-carbon-energy/local-area-energyplanning

Council recognised for climate leadership

Cambridgeshire County Council has been ranked as one of the top-performing councils in the country for the action it has taken towards Net Zero.

The Council achieved a score of 55 per cent in the Climate Action Scorecards published by Climate Emergency UK, placing it second among all comparable local authorities in England. The score marks an improvement of 11 per cent from 2023, making Cambridgeshire County Council 'one of the most improved county councils', according to Climate Emergency UK.

The Scorecard assesses more than 400 councils and combined authorities against a broad range of climate criteria, including transport, buildings and heating, biodiversity, planning, governance, waste, and community engagement.

Food waste volunteers

By mid-2026, all districts in Cambridgeshire will have changed the way they collect food waste from homes. Instead of being picked up every two weeks, food waste will be collected weekly, separate from garden waste.

To help make the scheme a success, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) is looking for volunteers to talk to residents on their doorsteps about the changes and how they will be affected, to help people to think about how they can reduce food waste. Full training will be provided.

www.recap.co.uk/campaigns/food-waste-volunteers-needed-introducingsimpler-recycling

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Consultation on the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy is expected to open on 18 July. The document is detailed but very well put together and informative.

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

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Public rights of way

Parish councils have been invited to help develop a public rights of way (PROW) hierarchy. The hierarchy will rank local rights of way by their importance to our communities. This includes gaining an understanding of routes that are important for utility journeys (such as accessing workplaces, schools or services) and for leisure and recreation.

A questionnaire has been sent to all parish councils for feedback on the rights of way used in our local areas. Parish councils are invited to contact local walking or cycling groups, or other local rights of way users, for their input. The questionnaire will close on Thursday 31 July.

Guided Busway safety

By historical accident, the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway is regulated by the Health & Safety Executive, rather than as a typical highway or a typical railway. Following the recent prosecution relating to three tragic deaths between 2015 and 2021, the council has agreed to fence its entire length, and remediate flooding at three key points.

A14 retrospective

There is unanimous agreement across the council about the unsatisfactory performance of National Highways in its improvement programme on the A14. The project left a very large number of unresolved issues in its wake, and the council is continuing to engage with National Highways to seek resolutions to these.

Highways satisfaction survey

At least 3,300 Cambridgeshire residents are being asked for their views on the County Council's highways and transport services in the National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction survey. In this annual survey they will have the opportunity to comment on everything from the condition of roads and footpaths to public transport and the quality of cycling facilities.

A questionnaire is being sent to a random sample of residents, followed by a reminder. Those who receive a copy are being encouraged to take part. They can do so either by post or online. Local and national results will be published in

late-October 2025, and the council will use the feedback to manage and improve local services.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair - Cambridgeshire County Council Staffing & Appeals Committee

On the morning of June 25th I was elected Chair of the County Council Staffing & Appeals Committee. The committee has delegated authority to exercise the Council's functions in respect of all matters, save those otherwise reserved to other bodies, relating to the employment of the Council's officers and contractors including determining the terms and conditions of employment.

Chair - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority

On the afternoon of June 25th I was elected Chair of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority. The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The main responsibilities are set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and include: Promoting fire safety, protecting life and property from fires, and rescuing people from road traffic collisions. The Fire Authority makes decisions about how the local fire and rescue service operates and reviews performance and policies. It also sets the budget each year and decides the corporate priorities.

Board Member - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority Board

As Chair of the Fire Authority I have also joined the CPCA Board as a co-opted member. The purpose of the Board is to ensure that the decisions and actions of the Combined Authority deliver key positive outcomes for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is chaired by the elected Mayor (Paul Bristow) and in addition to myself, consists of the leaders of the seven constituent councils, the Chair of the Business Board, the Police & Crime Commissioner and a representative from the Clinical Commissioning Group.

Please don't hesitate to contact me in my capacity as any of the above.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLOR

Parish council meetings

I continue to attend 3-4 parish council meetings each month and will announce planned attendance in advance where possible.

1-2-1 Meetings

Outside of parish council meetings I'd be delighted to arrange a time to discuss any local matters with you directly. Don't hesitate to let me know if you'd like to put something in the diary.

I can also be contacted ...

- by email at christopher.morris@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- By post c/o Member Services, Cambridgeshire County Council, Box ALC2650, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, PE28 4YE
- by phone on 01223 699 831



CLLr Chris Morris

County Councillor for Hardwick Division