

Cllr Luis Navarro

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 councils, 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 East Cambridgeshire District Council is supporting Option B.

Option A is the only option which retains East Cambridgeshire's links with Cambridge, where a huge proportion of East Cambs residents work, study, obtain health care, and travel for leisure and entertainment. Options B and C would remove any democratic input by East Cambridgeshire residents into decisions which have major impacts on their lives.

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.

Meanwhile, there is a survey, not a consultation, which closes on 20 July. An East Cambs parish forum will also take place on Wednesday 9 July at 2:00PM. <https://can-campaigns.co.uk/local-councils-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough-are-changing/>

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 its services. The report can be found as the Appendix to Item 8 at

https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/c/tl/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-cost-of-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-and-environment/climate-change-action/low-carbon-energy/local-area-energy-planning**

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-introducing-simpler-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

Local Highways Improvement Panel meets to score bids

The East Cambridgeshire Local Highways Improvement Panel, consisting of five councillors, met last month to score three 'complex' funding bids, from Sutton, Haddenham, and Littleport. Sutton's application was its third bid for a vehicle weight limit through the village. Recommendations for these schemes, along with a number of 'non-complex' schemes scored by council officers, will be presented to the Highways & Transport Committee in October for consideration.

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.

A142 Mepal bridge closure

The weekend bridge closures started last month after all and will continue into the first half of July.

Active travel updates

- Action is progressing on a long-overdue walking and cycling crossing at the BP A10 roundabout at Ely. The public consultation has shown a very strong preference for a bridge crossing. Cost estimates suggest this could cost between £6.8M and £11M, with

additional allowance for quantified risks taking the scheme budget to between £9.9M and £14M. The Outline Business Case will be considered by the Combined Authority's Transport Infrastructure Committee, with approval needed to take the scheme forward to Full Business Case phase. This will include development of the detailed design and costings, along with any required planning consent and land acquisition. £260,000 of funding remains from the £550,000 allocation for the Outline Business Case to begin this next phase of work, with additional funding expected to be required to support land acquisition and planning.

- Cambridgeshire County Council is currently rated Level 3 (out of 4, with 4 being the best) by Government for Active Travel Capability. Cambridgeshire is one of only six councils nationally to reach this level, and no councils have yet reached Level 4. This recognition makes it easier for the council to access grant funding to make even more improvements and is something we can be proud of.

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.

Bar Hill Bridge

Councillors in the area (Cllrs Murphy, Hathorn, Poulton, Deter and myself) have been working to make sure that the surface of the bridge is always kept levelled and safe for all users. National Highways have installed monitors on the Bar Hill Bridge and data will be analysed over 12 months to understand the settlement condition and action based on resulting data. I will follow these developments closely and keep you informed.

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.