

FULL COUNCIL

Group changes

Cllr Doug Dew (Hemingfords & Fenstanton) has left the Conservative Group on the County Council and joined the Liberal Democrat Group. The new composition of the Council is now

- Conservative 27
- Liberal Democrat 21
- Labour 9
- Independent 3
- Vacancy 1 (by-election 16 February)

Budget meeting 7 February

Tuesday 7 February was the date of the annual budget meeting. As reported last month, the Government announced its 'financial settlement' for councils just before Christmas and proposed that Cambridgeshire County Council's 'core spending power' (the overall revenue funding available for council services) should increase by 9.5 per cent, less than the current rate of inflation.

Half of that 9.5 per cent is from the council's power to raise council tax—in other words, the Government expects local council tax payers to shoulder a lot of the extra costs.

The County Council proposes to set a balanced budget for 2023-24, in the face of a national funding settlement which takes no account of Cambridgeshire's population growth. The Government's decision to move its fair funding review back for a further two years leaves Cambridgeshire with a formula which takes no account of recent population growth, and in some cases bases funding on population figures which are more than twenty years old.

The proposed budget seeks to bridge a potential funding gap for the coming year of £21.4M, even after finding more than £10M of additional savings or income, in the face of levels of inflation not seen for forty years along with rising costs for energy and essential services.

The proposed budget also outlines how the Council plans to spend more than £15m in one-off funds from reserves next year including

- £1M to continue free school meal vouchers for eligible children
- £1M into highways schemes including rural roads drainage
- £1M investment into flood mitigation
- more than £1.3M into libraries
- £380,000 investment in community services.

The council's new 'triple bottom line' approach to the social and economic impacts of budget proposals has seen increased investment in biodiversity improvements, and in ensuring all new schools are built to net zero standards.

The budget proposal would see band D properties paying an additional £73 per year in council tax, although more than half (64 per cent) of the county lives in homes rated band C or below and would see rises of between £49 and £65 per year. In total this would raise £17.8M towards setting a legally balanced budget for 2023/4 and help to mitigate the additional costs of adult social care.

The Full Council were asked to approve the Council's five-year business plan, based on its Strategic Framework, which sets out a vision for a 'greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire', and is based around its seven key ambitions. Over the next five years, the business plan looks to deliver

- £122M for new primary school places
- £164M for new secondary school places
- £13.3M investment into converting streetlights to LED, delivering both environmental and financial benefits
- £2.5M into a new highways materials recycling operation
- A £7.2M upgrade to the March and Milton household recycling centres

At the time of writing, the following council tax changes are being proposed.

Cambridgeshire County Council	+ 4.99 per cent (£1.72 per week Band D)
East Cambridgeshire District Council	No change
Fire Authority	+ £4.95 per annum at Band D
Police & Crime Commissioner	+ 5.8 per cent (£0.29 per week Band D)

The Combined Authority has agreed to introduce a Mayoral Precept of £12 per year at Band D to support local bus services.

STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Electricity Contract

Concerns over the carbon credentials of its current provider of electricity have led Cambridgeshire County Council to defer a decision to sign up for a further four years while it looks into further options.

Since 2016 the Council has had a single contract in place for the supply of electricity with Total Energies, a French multinational oil and gas company from which it purchases a 'Pure Green' electricity tariff at a small extra cost. The contract was negotiated via the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO), of which the County Council is a shareholder.

In recent discussions with ESPO, the opportunity has arisen to allow the council to offset the energy it purchases with energy it generates, such as from the North Angle solar farm which is due to become operational later this year. It is not yet known if this opportunity would be available via other purchasing organisations, and councillors agreed to defer making a final decision on the contract until March to explore this further.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Cold weather actions and tips

Each year the number of deaths expected from cold weather increases. Cold weather and freezing temperatures are threats to health, as they can lead to falls, respiratory infections, strokes, heart attacks and other health risks.

This winter a particularly high number of people are ill with a respiratory illness, and so Cambridgeshire County Council have put together some actions and tips for residents to help them prepare.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/locals-urged-to-be-aware-of-the-dangers-to-health-in-cold-weather

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE

Great Gidding School

A difficult meeting of the committee last month included a decision to start formal consultation on the potential closure of Great Gidding school in Huntingdonshire. Pupil numbers from within the catchment have declined significantly and there are concerns about the ongoing educational and financial viability of the school.

Outdoor centres

The council is also moving to close Stibbington outdoor centre, and use the money saved to improve the council's other centres at Grafham Water and Burwell House.

Holiday vouchers scheme

The Christmas holiday voucher scheme closed at the end of January with around three per cent of vouchers unclaimed—significantly less than in previous rounds. The Council intends to run a voucher scheme for February half term and will be publishing information in early February. Each eligible child will be issued with a £15 voucher for the half term; criteria are published on the council's website.

- Information <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/help-with-school-learning-costs/free-school-meals>
- Queries winter.support@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Foster Caring

Cambridgeshire County Council is continuing to seek residents who would like to make a real difference to the lives of a child or young person by becoming a Foster Carer. Applicants must be over 21 years of age, have a spare bedroom, and be willing and able to provide a stable and loving environment in which a child or young person can thrive. Foster Carers can benefit from local training and development, generous pay and benefits, 24/7 support from a Supervising Social Worker, as well as local support groups and networking opportunities.

- Information www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering-and-adoption
- Email fostering@cambridgeshire.gov.uk,
- Call 0800 052 0078
- Text FOSTERING to 60777

Strikes in School

The National Education Union has announced four strike dates affecting Cambridgeshire.

- Wednesday 1 February (national) – which did take place
- Wednesday 1 March (East of England)
- Wednesday 15 March (national)
- Thursday 16 March (national)

The County Council's education team has been providing advice and information to schools, and the Director of Education has met with the Trade Unions.

The most up to date and relevant information about strikes affecting particular schools will be on the schools' own websites. However a list will also be maintained at

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/school-term-dates-closures/school-closures>

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Food bags for vulnerable families

Nearly 1,200 vulnerable families across Cambridgeshire were given special food bags as part of the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme this Christmas.

The 'Take and Make bags'—funded by the Department for Education—contained long-life food items worth up to £35 to allow families prepare nutritious meals for the New Year. Bags were distributed to 1,178 families, and eligible children were also able to attend a holiday scheme which provided them with a nutritious meal and a variety of experiences such as sports, cooking and play opportunities. Requests for free school meals have increased by 24 per cent in the past sixteen months.

Free school meals information www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/help-with-school-learning-costs/free-school-meals

Cost of living www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities-localism/support-with-the-cost-of-living

National Lottery funding

Funding of up to £10,000 is available for events and activities through the National Lottery Awards for All programme. National Lottery Awards for All does not have a deadline, but can take up to twelve weeks from the point of submission to receiving funding, which means applications for the Coronation weekend should be made before the middle of February. www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/under10k

Think Communities Winter Newsletter, link below

<https://sway.office.com/H88oDz8xm1DhWFFY?ref=Link>

Cambridgeshire Matters Newsletter

[Welcome to the November 2022 Cambridgeshire Matters newsletter \(govdelivery.com\)](http://www.govdelivery.com)

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Waste upholstered domestic seating

There are changes by the Environment Agency to its enforcement of legislation on disposal of waste upholstered domestic seating. As a result of these last-minute changes, Cambridgeshire County Council had no option but to stop receiving unwanted sofas and other upholstered furniture from 1 January.

Fortunately, this situation lasted only a week, and legally compliant storage arrangements have now been put in place while permanent disposal solutions are negotiated.

Moving towards Net Zero

The County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee received a report last month on the council's progress towards Net Zero for its own operations, and for the whole of Cambridgeshire.

The focus of the council's activities in the next six months will be on:

- Decarbonisation measures in eight schools for heating, hot water, and energy efficiency.
- 30MW of solar electricity generating capacity coming online from the North Angle Solar Farm.
- 100 homes connected to the Swaffham Prior Community Heat Network receiving 99 per cent decarbonised heating and hot water.
- 1,500 Cambridgeshire homes installed with solar and battery solutions by the end of May 2023 to add to last year's figures.

- Starting to retrofit a further five Council buildings (to add to the 22 already complete or nearing completion) to decarbonise heating and hot water.
- 30 businesses receiving low carbon business support to start their Net Zero journey.
- Decarbonisation plans for the Council's high emitting carbon sectors.
- A roadmap for the roll-out of county-wide electric vehicle infrastructure in partnership with the Combined Authority and district partners.
- Starting an audit of trees and significant hedgerows this month on the Council's assets to inform the Corporate Tree and Woodland Strategy and wider Biodiversity Strategy.
- Launching a new People Strategy to help bring the right skills and resources to the organisation for climate change and biodiversity crises.
- Developing and sharing best practice and case studies as part of the implementation of the Council's Climate Communications Strategy.
- Agreeing Net Zero by Design principles for all projects and services.
- Net Zero procurement guidance for commissioners of Council services.
- A further thirty council officers receiving Carbon Literacy training.
- A new corporate outcome for the Council starting April 2023 focused on responding to the climate crisis and achieving carbon net zero.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Street lighting and road repair recycling

The County Council plans to fit street lighting with energy-efficient LEDs. The council spends £3.3M a year on energy for street lights, and investment in a programme of LED replacement would pay back in under six years.

The Council is also proposing to recycle materials from road works, from asphalt and tar to gully water, with an estimated saving of around £250,000 a year.

Potholes

Cllrs Alex Beckett and Neil Shailer, chair and vice-chair of Highways and Transport at the County Council, have published a statement about potholes.

"In the winter a lot more road defects and potholes form, this is being seen across the country. This is due to wet and freezing weather causing those worn areas of road and pavement surfaces to break up.

"We know how important our roads are which is why we carry out regular inspections of our roads, bridges, cycleways and footpaths. Defects identified and reported to us are repaired as quickly as possible. We have increased the number of gangs dealing with both temporary and permanent fixes and we are using our two dragon patchers.

"Our dedicated highway inspectors are working hard to keep the roads safe, but we can't be everywhere at all times, which is why we encourage the public to report any potholes or highway faults using our online tool. It's easy to use and flags any faults which have not yet been marked. We would rather have multiple reports of the same fault, than none at all.

"After the cold spell at the end of last year, it can take time for damage in the road to go on and form into potholes. We'd urge drivers to be vigilant over the next few weeks and report any faults to us."

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/highwayfaults>

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Combined Authority Board set its budget in January, including for the first time a Mayoral Precept of £12 a year at Band D (less for lower bands, and more for higher bands) to support bus services in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. This will help stabilise vulnerable services and help pave the way for a more sustainable 'franchised' bus model.

This was opposed by Conservative council leaders, including the Leader of East Cambridgeshire, who proposed instead withdrawing ten Cambridgeshire bus services without consideration of the effect on social isolation, deprivation, access to facilities, or connections to the rest of the transport network—or even any information about the number of bus pass holders using the services. They also proposed to use reserves to keep other buses running for just one year. Fortunately, both proposals were defeated.

The Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee, asked some searching questions about the Combined Authority's draft Bus Strategy. There were concerns in hearing that any possibility of franchising, which enables the Authority to specify the services to be provided and set the routes, timetables and fares, would take two years just to reach Business Case stage, and probably five years or more to implement.

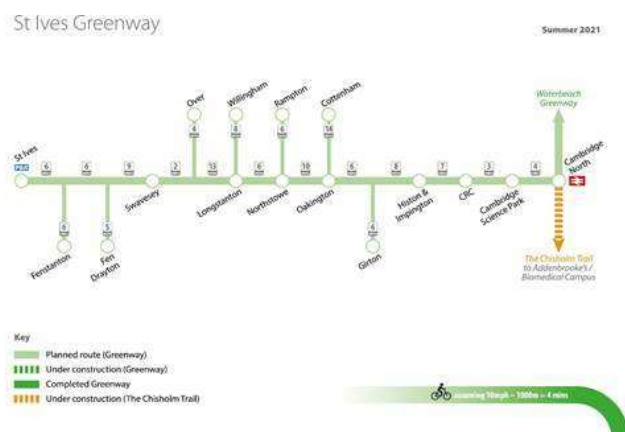
The Combined Authority has agreed new governance and committee arrangements. As the Government is not offering any more money for affordable housing, the Housing Committee has been wound down and replaced with an Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee.

BUSWAY

St Ives Greenway Project

Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership has been developing proposals for 12 new Greenways, which will provide safe, convenient, and attractive active travel routes between Cambridge and its surrounding villages.

The St Ives Greenway project is unique in that rather than create a new route, we aim to enhance the existing, well-used, active travel path parallel to the guided busway (also known as National Cycle Route 51) between St Ives and Cambridge. There are two elements to this. The first is to develop new connections to neighbouring villages so that people can more safely and easily reach the route by foot or cycle, and the second is to secure the longer-term resilience of the route to flooding between St Ives and Swavesey. See map below.



Improving access to the Greenway

To bring benefits for communities along the route sooner, we are bringing two projects out to public consultation in February, these include a spur linking Oakington to Cottenham as well as spurs to Fen Drayton and Over. These spurs would provide safer and better connections for those walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse-riding to and from the main active travel route.

On the 2nd of February, a briefing was hosted for the relevant ward and county councillors as well as the local Parish Councils for Fen Drayton, Over, Oakington, Westwick and Cottenham.

For both the Oakington to Cottenham spur and Over to Fen Drayton spur, there will be an eight-week public consultation via an **online survey** will run from **midday Monday 6th February** until **midday Friday 31st March 2023**. This will include an online public Microsoft Teams event, as well as materials being provided online for comment via a survey. If any materials is required in an alternative format, please email consultations@greatercambridge.org.uk or call 01223 699906

The public consultation will give members of the public the opportunity to learn more about the project and provide their views. More information will be provided in due course online at:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/active-travel-projects/greater-cambridge-greenways/st-ives-greenway>

Flooding

It is well known that the route is liable to flooding in the Fen Drayton lakes area and we are working to address this as part of the St Ives Greenway project. To design the best long-term solution, Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) have installed flood monitoring equipment that will collect data on flood duration and the depth of flooding over the next 18 months. The data this provides will help us to work with the Environment Agency, RSPB and landowners to determine the most appropriate intervention to secure the long-term resilience of the Greenway. Once this data has been captured, GCP will be able to make an informed decision on the best approach moving forward, rather than risk designing and implementing measures that quickly become redundant.

LONGSTANTON

Patching of the local roads below took place w/c 30 January, the next phase will be in the summer with the following treatments/dressings. Please refer to leaflets attached within the email.

- B1050 Hattons Road (between Longstanton and Barhill) -Gripfibre treatment
- B1050 Longstanton Bypass – Gripfibre treatment
- School Lane - Surface dressing
- Home Farm Road -Surface Dressing

Please note, all the below will be treated and assessed on a site-by-site basis in accordance with Cambridgeshire County Council's policy which can be found on the website:

- All junctions will be treated with the Gripfibre Dressing
- All white lining replaced within 28 days
- All studs/cats' eyes replacement

NORTHSTOWE

- Northstowe Kickstart fund was released in January. This fund is designed to encourage the development of new groups or activities that will benefit the developing community of Northstowe. The kickstart Fund aims to remove financial barriers to setting up community groups and activities and help with start-up costs for example renting a room or buying equipment. First deadline for applications is 13th February
- Longstanton Park and Ride Links – both links are now open.
Balfour Beatty have confirmed the delivery of the lanterns for the streetlights is scheduled to arrive for March 9th and installations will take place very soon after. CCC Project manager has been on site and has identified minor snags only, a completion certificate will be signed following these works.
- Noisy motorbikes – are being reported to me and I have directed the resident in question to the police. The motorbikes are gathering on occasions in the evening on the square/green are driving around the streets very late at night.

OAKINGTON

- 20mph and A14 Legacy - snagging works were completed in January.
It was raised at Transport Advisory Group on 4 January that the speed cushions in Westwick (from Cottenham end) do not have any signs leading to them and considering the speed limit it feels very dangerous during winter as the solid high bumps are hard to detect. This would not be the case in the summer months. CCC project officer has confirmed that there will be Road Safety Audit 3 undertaken which will highlight any potential issues including this one, from there CCC can undertake remedials where necessary.
- The double yellow lines on the junction are scheduled to be blacked out in January, but dates of completion are yet to be confirmed.
- Flooding hotspots due to be repaired:
 - Water lane w/c 6/2/23 -work has commenced
 - Dry Drayton Road w/c 13/2/23
 - Mill Road w/c 27/2/23

OVER

- Potholes reported on social media have been shared with Highways Team and awaiting feedback.

MEETINGS ATTENDED and COMMUNITY WORK 18 January 2023 to 7 February 2023

Local meetings:

Northstowe Town Council (24 Jan), Groundwater meeting with Longstanton Environmental & Groundwater Group (LEGG), SCDC Officers/members, Longstanton Parish Council and Northstowe Town Council representatives (26 Jan), Oakington Recreation Ground (2 Feb), Northstowe Secondary College Careers (3 Feb)

Council meetings:

Northstowe Childminding (2 Feb), St Ives Greenway: Oakington to Cottenham briefing for Councillors (2 Feb), St Ives Greenway: Over and Fen Drayton Spur briefing for Councillors (2 Feb), Cambridgeshire County Councillor (7 Feb)

Community work:

Northstowe Town Council Market Working Group, NSC Fundraising Committee, ASB local issues, Northstowe Foodies, Marketing of Warm Hubs via school newsletters, Arranging Food Pantry beside the Mobile Library (2nd Friday of the month)

Private case work:

Most Councillors will have private case work that they are dealing with, details of which cannot be shared due to GDPR.

COUNCILS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND KEY GOVERNMENT FUNDED ORGANISATIONS

If you have a problem or concern do not worry too much about who can solve it just ask the question and we will endeavour to signpost to the right person. The organisational structure of Cambridgeshire is complex, but it is important to identify where responsibility lies.

<p>County Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Education, Transport, Highways, Heritage, Social care, Libraries, Trading standards, - Waste management, Maintaining their estate.</p> <p>Some of these services are shared between Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council but any concerns should be directed to the county council.</p>
<p>District Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Council tax payments and benefits, Household bin collections, Housing and housing benefits, Council leisure facilities, Environmental health, Residential planning.</p>
<p>Parish/ Town Council</p> <p>Responsibilities: Looking after community buildings, Open spaces, Allotments, Play Areas, Bus shelters.</p>
<p>Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP)</p> <p>'The local delivery body for a City Deal with central Government worth up to £500 million over 15 years, to vital improvements in infrastructure (decarbonising transport), supporting and accelerating the creation of 44,000 new jobs, 33,500 new homes and 420 additional apprenticeships.'</p> <p>Partnership between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, University of Cambridge.</p>
<p>The Combined Authority, Cambridge and Peterborough, our elected Mayor</p> <p>'A combined authority (CA) is a legal body set up using national legislation that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and take collective decisions across council boundaries.'</p> <p>What our mayor does – Business support, skills, housing, transport, environment, international, digital connectivity, resilience, research, and strategy. New homes.</p>
<p>Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridge and Peterborough</p> <p>To support and challenge the Chief Constable to provide effective and efficient policing services for the area.</p>
<p>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority</p> <p>The Fire Authority is the governing body responsible for delivering a fire and rescue service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It is made up of Cambridgeshire County Councillors and Peterborough City Councillors.</p>

CONTACT DETAILS

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the above, or any other matters.

Firouz Thompson, County Councillor for Longstanton, Northstowe, Over and Oakington & Westwick
Email: firouz.thompson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

For those on social media we have highly active Facebook groups:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2066298150052161/> - Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe

<https://www.facebook.com/libdems3rdMay18> - Over & Willingham