

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT JANUARY 2025

FULL COUNCIL

Five motions were debated at the December Full Council meeting.

Being a 'trauma-informed' council

This motion was about those delivering council services needing to be aware of the effects of trauma on residents with whom they come into contact, and how to support trauma survivors.

I'm continuing to work with several families of young adults whose experience of adult social care has itself been traumatising, and I made the point that the council also needs to improve its own practice and stop traumatising people.

Special educational needs and disabilities

This motion asked the council to respond to the Government's review of the school curriculum making clear the importance of an appropriate curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and to gather information from secondary schools in the county on how they are ensuring they are able to meet the needs of all pupils.

It also asked the Children & Young People Committee to consider how the child and adolescent mental health system is working, and gather information about experience of special educational needs and disabilities in early years and primary school settings.

Mill Lane bridge, Huntingdonshire

This motion was about flooding at this location and the timetable for an options appraisal. It was voted down as unnecessary, as work is already under way.

A1421 Haddenham to Witcham Toll

This motion was about road safety options at this location and the timetable for a report. Again this was voted down as unnecessary, as this road will be included in a report coming to the Highways & Transport Committee shortly.

Family farms and inheritance tax

This motion asked the council to write to the Secretary of State calling on the Government to stop changes to inheritance tax on family farms, and engage with the local farming community to offer support. I supported this, as it is an important issue locally and the Government's approach is wrong.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Council budget

Cambridgeshire County Council will set its budget on Tuesday 11 February, with recommendations being considered in advance by the Strategy Resources & Performance Committee on Tuesday 28 January.

Each year councils are required to set a balanced budget for the year ahead. This has become more difficult in recent years for several reasons including

- Growing demand for services and increasing complexity of health and care needs
- Inflation
- Market failures in services such as provision for children in care, with high demand, insufficient supply, provider profiteering, and diminished council negotiating power.

The totality of the council's gross budget, including schools and services funded by specific grants, is expected to be over £1.1 billion for 2025-26. Of this, over half (£567 million) is proposed to be spent on children, education and families, and health and adult social care.

In December, councillors were told that efficiencies and savings or additional income of £34 million would be needed to set a balanced budget for 2025-26, and considered draft proposals to achieve this. However, the coming five years show an overall funding gap of £132 million, of which £73 million is not yet addressed.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Social care reform—but not until 2028

The Government has promised to 'finally grasp the nettle on social care reform', with an independent commission due to begin work in April.

Proposals on a stable system for the long-term funding of adult social care in England have been needed for years. But these are unlikely to be delivered before 2028 at the earliest, the government has confirmed. The proposed commission, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, is not due to publish its final report until then.

Meanwhile, councils and care providers across the country are saying this is far too long to wait for reform of vital social care services which are already on their knees.

Urgent and emergency care

The County Council's Adults & Health Committee received a report last month for their scrutiny on the performance of the NHS in urgent and emergency care.

During 2024/25, performance has been below the planned trajectories submitted as part of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) operational plan, and below national standards.

Two key national metrics for urgent and emergency care are that

- Emergency departments should see and treat a minimum of 78 per cent of patients within four hours of arriving in the department by the end of March 2025, and
- Patients categorised by the ambulance trust as Category 2 emergency, should have an ambulance response time within 30 minutes.

Both these targets remain behind plan, with the NHS under considerable pressure locally and nationally.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

CAB grant for income maximisation

The County Council's COSMIC committee has agreed a grant of £800,000 over two years to Citizens Advice in the county for income maximisation—working with residents to ensure they are in receipt of all financial assistance they are eligible for, and helping people out of poverty across Cambridgeshire by providing a long-term solution to financial hardship.

Since income maximisation work began in 2023, 5,455 Cambridgeshire residents have accessed the service, resulting in an income gain of £3,887,844.

The CAB is sadly no longer supported by the district council in East Cambridgeshire. Face to face appointments with Cambridgeshire Rural CAB are available in Fenland and Huntingdonshire, but only for residents there.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Non-recycled waste

A recent article in the *Guardian* newspaper reported that 87 per cent of Cambridgeshire's non-recyclable waste goes to landfill—second only to Essex. The council commented:

“Our first priority is to reduce, re-use and to recycle as much as possible, as there are limited methods available to treat the waste that is left over in the short-medium term.

“We are actively working with both our waste contractor, as well as Central Government, to try and find the best long-term solution to manage the county's waste.”

It is important to note that

- All mixed dry recycling collected from Cambridgeshire households and household recycling centres is recycled
- All food and garden waste collected from households is composted.
- Where legislation prohibits sending waste to landfill the council is in full compliance.
- Where possible, black bag waste is treated using energy recovery or mechanical biological treatment, to divert as much as possible from landfill.

The whole waste industry and legislative framework is currently going through a period of significant change. The council is awaiting detailed guidance from Government to inform its long-term waste strategy.

Meanwhile the council is actively looking at more modern ways to treat waste that can't be recycled and is currently going to landfill.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

£10 million for road maintenance

The Government has announced how much each council area will receive for highways capital maintenance for 2025/26.

For the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area it's £10 million, with a quarter of that amount to be held back until the respective councils have proved they will meet certain—still to be announced—criteria. £10 million sounds a lot, but

- The Government may hold back twenty-five per cent of it
- It includes Peterborough as well as Cambridgeshire
- In Cambridgeshire alone the backlog of highways maintenance is around £600 million.

Better than nothing, then, but a long way from what we need.

Prioritising the highways capital programme

The council's Highways & Transport Committee on 3 December approved a new scoring system to prioritise planned capital highways maintenance schemes.

Parish councils and county councillors were approached by the council to submit suggestions of roads that needed significant capital work.

When it meets in March, the committee expects to receive a proposed three year forward capital maintenance programme and an indicative programme for the following two years. The same meeting will also consider a proposed hierarchy for maintaining walking, wheeling, and cycling routes. Proposals for a hierarchy for maintaining Public Rights of Way is expected to follow in July or October.

Winter gritting reminder

With the weather taking a cold turn, a quick reminder about gritting on Cambridgeshire's roads.

Cambridgeshire County Council's 37 gritting vehicles cover 44 per cent of the county's road network. Cambridgeshire is split into three gritting areas:

- Fenland and East
- Huntingdonshire and South
- Cambridge

Which roads are gritted and when will depend on forecast temperatures in each of these three areas, so there may be occasions when some parts of the county are gritted but not others.

Roads on the gritting network are classified as primary or secondary routes. Primary routes are the priority for gritting, because they serve as major connecting routes for communities and allow people to get to work and access essential services. Secondary routes are gritted in addition to primary routes as and when resources allow when there is a forecast of a prolonged cold spell, where road surface temperatures fall below zero, or when snowfall is forecast.

You can find which roads are primary or secondary gritting routes at <https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/> In the Map categories menu to the left of the screen, choose Transport and Streets, then select Primary Gritting Routes and Secondary Gritting Routes from the drop-down menu.

The Council checks detailed weather forecasts throughout the day, and at midday every day during winter receives road and air temperatures from twelve weather stations around the

county. This information guides where and when to send out the gritters and how much salt needs to be spread.

You can find more information about winter gritting in Cambridgeshire at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths> And the County Council posts regular updates on Facebook and Twitter, including road gritting news and weather warnings.

In 2022, 14 people were killed, 379 seriously injured, and 1,227 slightly injured in reported road collisions on Great Britain's roads when there was rain, snow, sleet or foggy conditions, according to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. The AA has useful advice for driving in snow and ice, at <https://www.theaa.com/driving-advice/seasonal/how-to-drive-in-snow>

Speed cameras

I got a response I wasn't expecting when I asked at Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways & Transport Committee yesterday morning whether the council might consider the introduction of more speed cameras.

In a discussion about Cambridgeshire's 'Vision Zero'—the aim to reduce to zero the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads—I pointed out how few speed cameras there are in Cambridgeshire compared with, for example, Staffordshire.

The answer from road safety manager Simon Burgin was the one I expected, about the cost. But he went on to say that another factor was that 'there have to be the appropriate available court slots to deal with anybody committing speeding offences'. Increasing enforcement could lead to people 'falling through the cracks' as there would simply not be space to 'push them through' the court system—and this was 'a bigger problem to solve' than the cost. It's yet another example of the collapse of the justice system under the previous government.

I also used the opportunity of the 'Vision Zero' discussion to ask about hold-ups of traffic behind slow-moving agricultural vehicles, and whether spaces at the sides of appropriate roads could be cut out and marked—in the same way as passing places on narrow roads—to enable agricultural vehicles to pull in and let following traffic pass. This would avoid the temptation of risky overtaking.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority has decided not to increase the current bus fare cap of £2 per journey. This comes despite the decision of the Government nationally to increase the fare cap to £3, and will be welcomed by many bus passengers.

The new Tiger on Demand bus service, which replaces the 'Ting' demand-responsive service in the west of Huntingdonshire, will soon be coming to East Cambridgeshire, and opening up public transport opportunities for many village residents here. This is very welcome news, especially as East Cambs Conservatives opposed Ting and the funding for more bus services.

<https://transport.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/buses/tiger-on-demand/>

Happy new year!

Cllr Lorna Dupré , County Councillor for the Sutton division