

Cambridgeshire County Council – Papworth and Swavesey Division

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

County and District Councillors' Monthly Report – August 2025

## **Local Government reorganisation – General Update**

Work by councils on the Government's reorganisation of local government continues to take much time and money. Business cases are being developed for the three options formally on the table. There is a fourth option being promoted by the two MPs representing areas of Peterborough, but it is unlikely to attract support, and councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough can put forward no more than three options to Government.

Focus groups have been taking place in all the Cambridgeshire districts, and the responses to the recent survey are being analysed. It has now been announced by the Government that the committee system of local government, under which Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council formally operate, will be scrapped. The new unitary authorities, in Cambridgeshire and elsewhere, will be run on the 'leader and cabinet' model.

Councils set to undergo reorganisation have been warned by the Government against taking decisions that could 'fetter the future decisions of new councils', including major organisational restructures, establishing companies, and the spending of reserves, among other things.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has also said that it will issue directions requiring written consent from successor councils for land disposals worth more than £100,000, as well as contracts worth more than £1,000,000 for capital and entering contracts of more than £100,000 for non capital expenditure.

## **Local Government reorganisation – Ministerial Update**

The Local Government Minister has written to all councils in two-tier areas with a short update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The letter does not contain any new policy announcements, but there are several points worth noting:

- The letter reiterates that 500,000 population is a guideline rather than a hard target or minimum floor.
- It emphasises that the minister is prepared to intervene where councils in an area are not working together to assist development of final proposals. This includes data sharing.
- The Government is maintaining its ambition to create unitary councils in Surrey on 1 April 2027 and in all 20 other two-tier areas on 1 April 2028. The advice is explicit that there will be no district or county elections in Surrey in May 2026. There will only be elections for the shadow authority.
- It does not say anything new about district/county elections in other areas including Cambridgeshire in May 2026. The Government has previously indicated that 'it has no plans to postpone any elections which councils are scheduled to hold' and 'the starting point is for all elections to go ahead unless there is strong justification'. We assume this remains the Government's position.

- The advice indicates that the Government intends to issue directions to give shadow unitary authorities significant control over district and county councils making new financial commitments before vesting day. These directions will only be made after the LGR Structural Changes Order is in place in the county area. This is the same approach used in previous instances of LGR.
- The minister re-emphasises that the Government does not consider independent trusts to be appropriate models for social care delivery in the context of LGR. It will not make funding available to support the establishment of a new trust.

## News from the District Council

### **Four Day Working Made Permanent**

At its Full Council meeting on 17th July, South Cambs District Council voted to make the Four Day Working Week permanent. This decision was agreed by Cambridge City Council with which South Cambs shares planning, waste and IT services. South Cambs' Employment and Staffing committee will determine the implementation details. In practice, residents should notice little difference as the council has been trialling four day working for almost two years. Most bins will still be emptied on Fridays, except in Caxton where they are emptied on Thursdays. The council offices will remain open from Monday to Friday, with late opening on Wednesdays. (Officers rotate their non-working days so that all departments are staffed on all five days.)

### **Rural England Prosperity Funding Round Two**

Funding of £350,376 is available for business and community projects in South Cambridgeshire thanks to a grant scheme launched on July 24. The Rural England Prosperity Fund is in its second year and can provide grants for capital projects. Funds will be split between business and community schemes.

For businesses it can provide support with funding to small scale micro and small enterprises for diversification, entrepreneurs looking to start up or scale up, and growing the local social economy by supporting innovation.

For communities, it will support projects related to digital infrastructure, green spaces, heritage, active travel, rural circular economy, volunteering and capacity building.

Last year's scheme saw 26 local projects receive financial support for a diverse range of projects ranging from developing Over skate park, refurbishment of the Impington Sports Centre tennis and netball courts, a new website for the Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum, and a new kitchen for Harston village hall.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund aims to support rural areas by boosting the local economy. The funds are provided by government and administered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). Applicants can apply from between £10,000 up to £50,000 each for local businesses to diversify or create jobs. Funds can also support a range of community initiatives such as rural travel, volunteering opportunities, digital projects or schemes that create a sense of local pride. Find out more [here](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding-for-businesses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund-open): <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding-for-businesses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund-open>

Applicants must either be micro to medium sized businesses, social enterprises, sole traders, charities, farmers, rural community groups and higher or further education institutions. The application window for the fund opened on July 24 and runs until 24 August or until the funds are spent.

For full grant criteria and application form please visit the South Cambridgeshire District Council Rural England Prosperity Fund [webpage \(https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding-for-businesses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund-open\)](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding-for-businesses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/rural-england-prosperity-fund-open) or email [sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk)

## **Grants to improve South Cambridgeshire high streets**

A new round of funding of at least £90,000 is available for business and community projects to revitalise “high streets” across South Cambridgeshire. This government funding has been allocated to support rural areas by enhancing the appearance and character of towns and villages, to help boost the local economy and improve overall quality of life for residents. The grant money comes from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) acting as lead authority delivering the fund. South Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for grant scheme delivery and allocation.

As South Cambridgeshire has few actual high streets, applications for (for example) village shops and pubs will be considered. Improvements implemented thanks to last year’s similar grant include a war memorial garden in Cambourne, disabled access to a Café in Over, upgrading to doubled glazed windows at a hairdressing shop in Histon, improvements to the village entrance and communal areas in Longstanton, and improving the front of a community pub in Great Chishill.

For full grant criteria and the application form, please visit the South Cambridgeshire District Council web page here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business/grants-and-funding-for-businesses/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/improving-the-high-street-grant-open>

## **Allotment improvement grant**

Last chance to apply for up to £10,000 towards improving your allotments! This grant will support projects that enhance the productivity, sustainability, and social value of allotment spaces, such as:

- Improving water access through reliable connections and rainwater harvesting
- Implementing pest control measures, such as fencing
- Upgrading facilities such as waterless toilets
- Delivering measurable social benefits, such as promoting mental well-being, outdoor activity, and community engagement.

Other allotment improvements will also be considered, ensuring allotments remain thriving, inclusive spaces for all.

Applications for this grant will close on Sunday 31 August. Do you have a project in mind? Get in touch with the team to see if it would be eligible. More information, contact details and the application form is all available on the [website: https://www.scambs.gov.uk/allotment-improvement-grant](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/allotment-improvement-grant)

\*At the time of writing, this grant scheme is undersubscribed and allotment associations are encouraged to submit applications before the end of the month.

## Wildlife Trust is South Cambs DC charity of the year

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has been chosen as charity of the year by the new Chair of South Cambridgeshire District Council. From protecting precious pollinators to restoring wildflower meadows and safeguarding endangered species, the partnership will shine a spotlight on the vital work being done to protect local wildlife and wild spaces.

As the newly appointed Chair, Cllr Peter Sandford, selected the [Wildlife Trust BCN](#) in recognition of its vital work protecting local wildlife and restoring natural habitats across the region.

**Cllr Sandford** said: “Nature is at the heart of our communities, and the work of Wildlife Trust BCN is more important than ever. From preserving ancient woodlands to inspiring young people through education, their efforts make a real difference to both people and the planet. I’m honoured to support them.”

Wildlife Trust BCN manages over 100 nature reserves and leads numerous conservation and community engagement projects. The Chair’s support aims to help raise awareness and funds for the Trust’s ongoing mission to create a wilder future for everyone.

**Brian Eversham, CEO of the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants**, said: “It’s wonderful news to have been chosen as South Cambridgeshire District Council’s charity of the year and I would like to thank Cllr Sandford for choosing us. I hope our staff and volunteers take it as a validation for their hard work in the area. With popular nature reserves like Cambourne, Fulbourn Fen and Beechwoods which are enjoyed by many thousands of visitors each week alongside quieter local gems like Hayley Wood, Shepreth L Moor and Overhall Grange which are vital for several threatened species, South Cambridgeshire has some fantastic Wildlife Trust sites.

“Nature provides space to learn and relax, improves our health and wellbeing, tackles climate change and brings flood relief, pollinators, clean air and water – so our work boosts many of the services councils like SCDC provides for local communities and businesses.

“We look forward to celebrating the area’s wildlife with the council and its staff and raising funds to support conservation in the local area.”

Find out about the work of Wildlife Trust BCN [here](https://www.wildlifebcn.org/): <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/>

# A Message from the new Town and Parish Councils Liaison Officer

He should have already been in touch with you but in case not, here's a message from the new Liaison Officer.

"I wanted to introduce myself as the new Town and Parish Councils Liaison Officer for SCDC.

I previously spent 4 years with the County Council library service, working with local people, as well as town and parish councils, to improve their area, through schemes like reading festivals and cultural events. I was delighted to work alongside Wisbech Town Council to promote the library and showcase the heritage of the town. I hope my experience can be used to foster more of this type of work in South Cambs.

My goals in this role are to:

- Streamline communications between the District Council officers and Parish Councils.
- Improve information flow between the District and Parish Councils.
- Collaborate on projects spearheaded by either the District and/or Parish Councils.
- Ensure knowledge and good practice is shared appropriately and to best effect between stakeholders in the district.
- Problem solve and/or manage expectations where necessary to improve relationships with Parish Councils generally.

I am not a gatekeeper - I don't want to intrude on any working relationships Parish Councils have built with officers, or add another layer of complexity. But if you are contacting someone new, or would like help to find the right person, or if you think your Parish Council needs support with local projects, I'd be delighted to help. Ultimately, improving information flow and engagement is in all our interests, and success in this will be a key factor I will judge myself on.

My email is [jack.bullimore@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:jack.bullimore@scambs.gov.uk) and my work phone is 07594 780992. If you have any thoughts about how I should prioritise working with Parish Councils, or indeed want to pass on any challenges they're facing, I'd be very keen to hear from you and to get started on making improvements wherever possible."

## News from the County Council

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

A reminder there is still time to give your thoughts on the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The consultation is live now until 11 September 2025. You can complete the online survey [here](https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/lnrs/consultation/):  
<https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/lnrs/consultation/>

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are a new system of spatial strategies intended to reverse biodiversity loss in England and deliver wider environmental benefits. Across the country, 48 local strategies are in development or delivery. Your local knowledge is essential to inform and improve the LNRS for our region. This is your chance to shape how we protect and restore nature across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Whether you're a resident, landowner, farmer, or nature lover - your voice matters.

### **Wellbeing support - Care Network Cambridgeshire**

Would someone you know benefit from wellbeing support? Care Network Cambridgeshire's Wellbeing Service offers free, short-term support for adults (18+) in South Cambs who may be struggling with confidence, isolation, illness, or low mood. Our friendly team can provide one-to-one support and match individuals with trained volunteers who can offer companionship through phone calls or accompanying them to access the community. Support is tailored over 6-8 sessions, helping people regain independence and feel more connected.

If someone you know could benefit, making a referral is easy - just visit [care-network.org.uk/wellbeing](https://care-network.org.uk/wellbeing) or phone 0330 094 5750

### **Full Council**

The Full County Council met on 15 July. It agreed to

- Ask the Government to consider better ways of planning and delivering GP infrastructure and services for growing communities.
- Raise the profile of the importance of flood prevention for the future of the Fens.
- Urge the Government to make it easier to clear fly tipping and other waste from trunk roads which requires closure by National Highways.
- Oppose cuts to Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments for disabled people.
- Reaffirm its commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. The council also accepted the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

## Strategy Resources & Performance

The county council's Shareholder Sub-Committee met last month and approved the updated Business Plan from the council's wholly-owned company This Land.

This Land was set up in 2016 by the previous council administration, and not in a way the current administration would have supported. Since the change of control at the county council in 2021, it has commissioned a report from advisors Avison Young, taken advice from other experts, set up a Shareholder Sub-Committee of councillors to oversee the company, and ensured the board has the right leadership in place.

To date, This Land has repaid the council £15.5M of loans and £42M of interest. The outstanding loan is £119M, which the council expects to be repaid by 2029. In March this year, following detailed consideration of This Land's financial position, the council agreed to restructure the loan payments. The loan has been converted into two parts:

- £59.9M is a repayable loan, and commercial interest will be charged.
- £59.85M is a grant, which will be repaid dependent on This Land's future performance and is not subject to interest.

Even if This Land were not able to make performance related repayments on the £59.85M grant, the council would still achieve a balanced position from This Land by 2029, due to interest payments received in addition to loan repayments.

The updated business plan enables the company to repay interest, reduce the amounts owed to the council, and limit the risk from the company.

## **Adults and Health**

### **Pharmacy consultation**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents are being asked to share their views on whether their pharmacy needs are being met, in order to help assess and develop pharmacy services in the area.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board would like to hear from pharmacy users about the services they receive in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The answers will help to define areas where communities are well served and where there may be gaps.

Feedback from the public will help revise the area's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. The consultation is open until Saturday 20 September. <https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pna>

### **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough NHS Trust 'requires improvement'**

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Trust has been downgraded from 'good' to 'requires improvement' by the Care Quality Commission following an assessment in February. The Trust is responsible for delivering a number of NHS services in the community, including physical and mental health, and specialist services.

The report published by the CQC recognised that the inspection took place 'at a time of ongoing instability for executive leadership' and set out a number of areas the Trust needed to improve.

However, it also highlighted several positive findings, including that the new chief executive had been 'well received' and that staff found him open and felt able to raise concerns with him. The report also described some of the research and innovation programmes being carried out at the Trust as 'inspirational' and said inspectors heard about 'many high performing and innovative services'.

### **New scrutiny committee**

The Full Council agreed to set up a separate Health Scrutiny committee. The intention is to increase the focus of the council's scrutiny of our health partners, while the Adults & Health Committee continues to make decisions on public health and social care commissioning.

### **Measles vaccine reminder**

The UK Health Security Agency is reminding parents that measles can be a serious illness. An estimated 5,000 children in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will start primary school without their MMR vaccination, and more than 8,000 without their pre-school booster. Doses are usually given at one year, and at three years four months, but missed doses can be caught up later.

## Children & Young People

### Community outreach service

A new Community Outreach Service aims to support and develop the skills of parents of children from birth to five years, and those leading community groups for families with children from birth to five years.

The County Council's Talking Together in Cambridgeshire service will be visiting parent and toddler groups across Cambridgeshire to chat with parents and carers about simple, effective ways to support their child's early communication, language, and literacy development. This includes fun, practical activities that promote communication and language skills and engaging training sessions tailored just for parents and carers.

There will also be free training opportunities for community groups working with families with children from birth to five. This training will build on existing knowledge and boost confidence in sharing key messages with families.

The Community Outreach Service is available to:

- Cambridgeshire early years community groups (supporting families with children from birth to five) that are constituted charities, community, or voluntary organisations.
- Cambridgeshire Libraries
- Cambridgeshire Child and Family Centres.

A half-hour online launch event will take place on Monday 18 August 2025 at 1:00PM. To book a place at this event, please complete the registration form at <https://forms.office.com/e/wtugiXyv3D>

## Environment & Green Investment

### Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A reminder that the consultation on the new Local Nature Recovery Strategy is open until Thursday 11 September. <https://naturalcambridgeshire.org.uk/>

### Anglian Water £62.8M payout over sewage breaches

Water regulator Ofwat has agreed a £62.8M redress package with Anglian Water after finding a 'serious breach' in how Anglian Water manages its sewage works. It recognises the water company's repeated failings to maintain and upgrade sewage infrastructure.

Ofwat has proposed improvements Anglian Water must make to its wastewater treatment works and network after discovering excessive spills from storm overflows.

### Ofwat to be scrapped

Meanwhile, Ofwat itself is being replaced by a tougher water regulator. It is excellent news that the Government has finally seen the need for tougher action against sewage pollution, soaring bills, and bloated bonuses for water bosses.

## Help to get online

Connecting Cambridgeshire is seeking applications from community groups and organisations to enable Digital Hubs across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Small grants of up to £4,200 will be available to procure connectivity solutions and digital devices to be used by the public, and provide the local community with access to digital skills and confidence.

Community groups interested in becoming a Digital Hub should read the eligibility criteria and fill in the application form at <https://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/about/help-to-get-online/digital-hubs/>

## Highways & Transport

### Highways transparency report

Cambridgeshire County Council has produced detailed reports on its highways maintenance activities as required by the Department for Transport.

A quarter of the £500 million additional maintenance funding from Government for 2025-26 depends on councils publishing reports by the end of June 2025 demonstrating compliance with best practice criteria. The reports must detail five-year maintenance spending comparisons, network condition statistics, pothole repair estimates, and planned maintenance activities. Further information is required by October 2025.

### Key highlights from the report

Since 2023-24, the amount of capital funding the County Council spends each year on highway maintenance has increased by £35M, from £24M to £59M.

The County Council has allocated more than £73M for highways maintenance in 2025/26, inclusive of revenue funding.

Over the last five years, we have repaired an average of 55,400 individual potholes each year. In 2024/25 the County Council has:

- Spent more than £30M improving over 145km of roads countywide.
- Reconstructed or resurfaced 166 roads.
- Spent more than £4.5M repairing 52,229 potholes across the county.
- Received 16,371 potholes reports from residents.
- Spent more than £5M improving over 120km of key walking and cycling routes countywide.
- Reconstructed or repaired 241 footpaths.
- Emptied and cleaned more than 35,000 drains.
- Upgraded 31 traffic signals.
- Recycled 41,000 tonnes of material and saved over 735 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, through various sustainability and carbon reduction processes.

In 2025/26, the County Council has planned:

- 259 schemes to repair 135km of road (with over 60 per cent being preventative treatment work). 253 schemes to repair key walking and cycling routes countywide.
- Five bridges will be upgraded.
- 20 traffic signals will be replaced/upgraded.

More information is available online at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/highways-transparency>

## Combined Authority

Members of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) board agreed to revise the local bus fare cap scheme and extend it to the end of October 2025, also to extend the temporary Tiger Pass scheme for young people to the end of March 2026. The Mayor's proposal to prevent the Tiger Pass being used for cross-boundary journeys was defeated, as this would have seriously affected young people in places such as the villages around Newmarket. A wider set of options for a permanent Tiger Pass will be developed over the summer.

The Combined Authority is holding a series of local drop-in events across the region to help residents learn more about the new Tiger Bus routes launched earlier this year. The sessions are an opportunity for people to:

- Speak with the team about the new routes
- Ask questions and share feedback
- Pick up a leaflet or find help planning a journey

More information at [www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/tiger-bus-routes](http://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/tiger-bus-routes)

Peter Sandford and Chris Poulton

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