

Cambridgeshire County Council – Papworth and Swavesey Division

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

County and District Councillors' Monthly Report – September 2026

Local Government Reorganisation

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has asking local authorities to pause work on the implementation of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). MHCLG will also pause work, pending a review. It is clear that some of the decisions wouldn't have survived a legal challenge which was scheduled for this week and, after considering its own legal advice, MHCLG decided to reflect on the decisions taken and the processes used. The terms of reference for the review have not yet been written.

The 'bigger prize' for the government is devolution – and as part of 'Rewiring the State', the government is determined to 'break up the centralised model of government'; they don't want unitarisation to derail things. The minister's view is that unitary councils should be the building blocks of devolution, and that unitaries provide a more joined up service for the public.

Elections for unitary councils will not take place in 2027 but more likely will happen in 2028. Any elections that had been due in 2027 will take place on exiting council boundaries, for example in East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Cambridge City. No elections were planned for South Cambridgeshire or Cambridgeshire County Council, so we should have no elections next year.

Details of the way forward are currently lacking but we will keep you informed as things become clearer.

News from the District Council

Cambourne to Cambridge busway route approved

The Government has approved the Cambourne to Cambridge busway and active travel route, paving the way for a new public transport link connecting Cambourne, Bourn Airfield, Hardwick, Coton and Cambridge. The scheme will also include a 2,000-space travel hub at Scotland Farm and is intended to support the local growing communities by providing a faster, more reliable and sustainable alternative to cars. Following the Secretary of State's decision, Cambridgeshire County Council will begin the procurement process, with contractors expected to be appointed next year to complete the detailed design before construction begins. The project follows several years of consultation, stakeholder engagement and a public inquiry. It is a key part of supporting sustainable growth and improving connectivity to jobs, services, and opportunities across Greater Cambridge. You can read the Secretary of State's decision letter, the busway order and the inspectors' report [on the Government website](#).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cambourne-to-cambridge-guided-busway-transport-and-works-act-order>

Grant to help people with long-term health conditions stay active

Community groups, voluntary organisations, specialist providers and small fitness businesses across South Cambridgeshire are encouraged to apply for a grant aimed at helping adults with long-term health conditions remain physically active.

The [Long-Term Health Condition Grant](#) from the District Council offers funding of up to £2,000 per applicant to support the development and delivery of activities and programmes designed specifically for people living with long-term health conditions.

It is the fourth year that the grant has been running. Applications are now open and will close at 5pm on Friday 25 September 2026. Successful applicants will be notified on 9 November 2026.

The funding can be used for a range of purposes, including venue hire, equipment purchase, training courses, and accessibility requirements. Projects can be delivered within a single village or across multiple communities within the district.

The grant has two key objectives:

- Supporting people with a wide range of long-term health conditions to access activities that help them stay active.
- Promoting a broader range of inclusive physical activity opportunities across South Cambridgeshire.

Grant recipients will be asked to collect participant feedback and support new participants to complete health questionnaires, helping to measure the impact of funded activities. Applicants are asked to demonstrate how their project will continue beyond the initial funding period, ensuring a lasting benefit for local communities.

Anyone interested in applying can find further information and application details on the South Cambridgeshire District Council grant [webpage](https://www.scams.gov.uk/ltc-grant/): <https://www.scams.gov.uk/ltc-grant/>

Parish councils invited to claim Six Free Trees

Parish councils across South Cambridgeshire are being encouraged to help increase local tree cover by taking part in the latest [Six Free Trees scheme](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/six-free-trees-open):

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/six-free-trees-open>

Since the scheme began in 2019, South Cambridgeshire District Council has given out over 950 trees that have been planted across the district, helping to support biodiversity, enhance green spaces and contribute to local climate action efforts.

The popular initiative is returning for its sixth year, offering parish and town councils the opportunity to claim either six small trees (whips) or one larger pot-grown tree from a selection of native species.

The trees are supplied with stakes, ties and biodegradable tree spirals to help them establish successfully. Additionally, this year a mulch mat will be added to every order, and an optional watering system for bigger trees to help them stay hydrated in dry and hot conditions.

Participating councils will be responsible for planting and caring for the trees once they have been delivered. This year, trees will be delivered earlier than in previous years to give the planted trees more time to establish over the winter months, improving their chances of thriving and coping with dry conditions during the summer.

Schools interested in planting trees are encouraged to contact their local parish council, which can submit an application on their behalf. Other publicly accessible planting locations will also be considered. Residents with ideas for suitable tree planting sites in their community are encouraged to contact their parish or town council.

Parish councils interested in applying can find further information and application details on the Council's [Six Free Trees webpage](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/six-free-trees-open) (<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/six-free-trees-open>). The deadline for applications is 31 October 2026.

Looking to do larger scale planting? Apply for the [Woodland Trust's free tree packs for schools and communities](#), which offers tree packs of 15, 30, 105 or 420 saplings.

Community Pantry Grant

A reminder you can help make food more accessible in your community. Grants are available of up to £400 to help local groups set up Community Pantries and offer an accessible space for sharing food and essentials. The grant is:

- Open to Parish/Town councils, community groups & supported informal groups.
- For non-profit, community use only.

The funding covers items like cupboards, shelving, fridges and signage (not food purchases). Applications are open until March 2027 (or until funding lasts).

Visit the website for more information and how to apply for the [Community Pantry Grant](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/community-pantry-grant-open) here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/community-pantry-grant-open>.

Email duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk

East West Rail update: Commencement of door-to-door visits for outstanding Land Interest Questionnaires

As part of their ongoing work to update records of land ownership and occupation along and adjacent to the proposed railway route, East West Rail have written to landowners requesting completion of a Land Interest Questionnaire (LIQ). It is important that East West Rail hold correct information to ensure that they contact everyone with an interest in land directly impacted by their proposals who then have an opportunity to have their say on the proposals and participate in the planning process.

Where a completed LIQ has not been returned, members of the East West Rail Land Team may visit properties in person. The purpose of these visits is to confirm that the LIQ has been received, answer any questions landowners may have and provide support with completing and returning the questionnaire. If no one is available when they call, a calling card will be left with details of how to contact the team.

For more information to the relevant LIQ webpage: <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/planning/land-and-property/land-interest-questionnaires>

Community energy funding opportunity via Great British Energy

Great British Energy (GBE) are currently seeking expressions of interest from local and community energy groups across the UK. This first step is to help identify projects across the UK, helping build a clearer picture of projects and proposals to help inform the future design of GBE products and approaches to support local and community energy. By responding to the expression of interest this will also allow organisations to opt-in to receive updates on GBE local funding opportunities and initiatives. For more information see:

<https://www.gbe.gov.uk/express-your-interest>

New Home Energy Guide for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents

A new Your Home Energy Upgrade Guide for residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is available. The guide has been developed through the Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP), working as Action on Energy, a partnership of local authorities across the region. The project has been funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

Designed specifically for homes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the guide provides trusted, practical information to help residents improve the comfort, energy efficiency of their homes. It includes advice tailored to different house types, information on insulation, heating systems and renewable technologies, guidance on when to seek professional support, and details of available grants and services.

Whether residents are homeowners, landlords or tenants, the guide is intended to help them understand their options and take steps towards warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient homes.

Read the guide here: www.actiononenergycambs.org/guidance-and-installation

Planning: significant national changes

There have been major changes to the national planning system which will affect planning decisions in South Cambridgeshire.

The Government has strengthened the presumption in favour of sustainable development, meaning that development within existing settlements should generally be approved unless its benefits are substantially outweighed by adverse effects. There is also greater support for certain development outside settlements, including agricultural and farm diversification and sport and recreation.

The new rules also place greater emphasis on development close to well-connected railway stations and transport hubs, including locations within the Greater Cambridge area. There is increased support for higher-density development, including development in existing urban areas, extensions and some development within residential gardens.

Other changes include stronger national protection for community facilities such as public houses, continued support for brownfield redevelopment, and stronger support for telecommunications and infrastructure.

There are also changes affecting local standards. Local authorities retain some ability to set higher requirements where these can be properly justified, including in relation to water consumption and biodiversity net gain on specific sites.

The new framework places particular emphasis on tackling climate change, including energy efficiency, renewable and decentralised energy, electric vehicle charging, walking, cycling, public transport, green infrastructure and nature-based solutions.

These changes will inevitably affect how planning applications are considered. Local planning officers are applying the new national framework alongside the other policies and requirements that remain in force.

New powers for Mayors

The Government has given Mayors new powers to overturn local planning decisions, or approve large applications of more than 150 homes which councils have decided to refuse. Councils approve well over 90% of applications, and where they do refuse, there are usually good reasons such as flooding, environmental damage, inadequate infrastructure or poor-quality housing.

Planning is highly complex and requires detailed local knowledge and professional expertise. Mayors are not planners, and there are concerns that allowing them to override local planning decisions risks undermining local democratic accountability and could lead to inappropriate development.

Indeed, there is a real risk that this approach could ultimately slow housing delivery rather than

increase it, if developments are approved which subsequently face significant problems around infrastructure, flooding, environmental impacts or viability.

New national forest

The Government has approved the creation of a new national forest as part of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor. Given the scale of planned growth across our wider area, increasing woodland, improving biodiversity and creating green infrastructure will be increasingly important.

News from the County Council

Adults & Health

Unpaid carers invited to share their experience

Unpaid carers across Cambridgeshire are being invited to share their experiences to help shape the future of support services in the county. Cambridgeshire County Council is bringing together unpaid carers, people with lived experience, local organisations and others with an interest in supporting carers to design future Adult Carers Support Services.

The council is keen to hear from people who provide care for family members, friends or neighbours, as well as young adult carers and others with experience of caring. Their insights will help ensure future services reflect the needs of carers and the people they support.

A series of workshops will take place between September 2026 and March 2027, giving participants the opportunity to help develop future service priorities, shape how services are delivered and contribute to wider commissioning plans. There is no expectation that people attend every session, with all involvement welcomed based on individual availability and interests.

The workshops will build on feedback already shared by carers and provide another opportunity for people to influence how support is delivered in future.

Anyone interested in taking part, or who would like more information, can contact Commissioning.FPTeam@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Shaping the future of adult social care

People across Cambridgeshire are being encouraged to have their say on the future of adult social care as part of a national public engagement programme launched by Baroness Louise Casey.

The Big Conversation on Care, launched on 29 July, aims to give people across England a direct opportunity to influence the future development of a National Care Service and how care and support will be provided for years to come.

The commission is seeking views from the public on a range of issues, including who should be eligible for support, what role families should play in caring for loved ones, and how care should be funded in a fair and sustainable way.

The programme will run until April 2027 in two phases. The first phase, running from July to November, focuses on the values and principles people expect from the care system and who

should receive support. The second phase will look at funding, delivery and long-term reform of adult social care.

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion

Homelessness and temporary accommodation in rural areas

The County Councils Network (CCN) has published new analysis on homelessness and temporary accommodation in county and rural areas, showing that it is not just a big city problem.

- In March this year 23,186 children in county and rural areas were in temporary accommodation—74 per cent more than six years ago, almost double the national increase, and five times the increase in London.
- In March 2026 there were 22,230 households in temporary accommodation in county and rural areas, an increase of almost 80 per cent over the last six years. Almost one in five of these households are based in expensive ‘nightly paid’ private accommodation.
- Councils in county areas spent £124M on temporary accommodation in 2019/20, rising to £373M in 2024/25. This trebling of spend is a faster rate than anywhere else in England.
- Homelessness is also continuing to rise across county and rural areas, with local authority costs soaring in response: in 2019/20 councils in county areas budgeted £161M for homelessness, but this increased to £447M this year.

Highways & Transport

Rights of Way improvement plan

The County Council has now begun its review of its Rights of Way Improvement Plan and is seeking comments from parish councils and other stakeholders.

Comments are now invited on key questions about our local rights of way network, and the priorities residents would like to see in a revised plan. Comments can be made at <https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/place-and-sustainability/95349146/>

The deadline for responses is Sunday 11th October. If you have any questions about completing the questionnaire, please write to Rowip2026@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

20MPH programme review

The first-year evaluation of eight 20MPH schemes introduced across Cambridgeshire since early 2024 indicates that the programme has been effective in reducing vehicle speeds. All eight locations recorded statistically significant reductions in average speeds, generally exceeding the background reductions seen elsewhere in Cambridgeshire. Speed reductions ranged from 6 per cent to 16 per cent, with the strongest performance seen in locations where pre-scheme speeds were highest.

Early evidence on collision outcomes is encouraging but remains inconclusive due to the relatively short monitoring period and low collision numbers in many settlements.

Following the speed limit reduction in Ely, average speeds (main routes only) reduced from by three miles per hour. The majority of vehicles were travelling below 33.3MPH before the speed limit reduction and this reduced to 29.6MPH afterwards.

In conclusion, there is evidence of a statistically significant reduction in speeds and collisions following the speed limit reduction in Ely, but additional years of data will be required to substantiate this. It is therefore too early to say what the long-term impact of the speed limit reduction has been, but initial signs are encouraging.

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