

Cambridgeshire County Council

MONTHLY REPORT April 2026

Sawston and Shelfords Division (Cllrs Damary-Homan & Fane)

FULL COUNCIL

The Full Council resolved to oppose any proposals to merge our local police force into a regional or national entity, and called on the Government to prioritise increased funding for community policing teams, national standards for vetting and technology upgrades to improve efficiency, and enhanced rural crime support and local police desks in community hubs.

The Full Council also resolved to explore ways to provide targeted holiday support including funding an ongoing holiday voucher scheme subject to the Government's funding rules, and using a proportion of the council's Crisis & Resilience Fund to do this where it meets Government eligibility criteria. The council also agreed to ask the Government to provide sufficient funding for councils to continue supporting families during school holidays.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government has now announced its decision on Local Government Reorganisation for Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Hampshire.

In all cases it has chosen new unitary councils which are smaller than their proposed 500,000 minimum population, and in the case of Norfolk and Suffolk it has chosen to split districts, something it originally indicated would be unusual.

These decisions are seemingly a long way from what was expected based on the Government's criteria. It creates further uncertainty around the future of local government for our area (albeit we know that we will be in a unitary authority with Cambridge City) and the timing of this decision is frustrating as it would have been useful to assess the announcements prior to responding to the Cambridgeshire LGR consultation.

The divergence from the criteria set out is also frustrating as, if it had been clear that population requirements and the desire to not change district boundaries was flexible, different proposals for the future of the area would have likely been made.

The Local Government Reorganisation process continues to remain unclear and it does not seem that the MHCLG is talking to itself about how aligning LGR and the Development Corporation could be sensible. We await further information from the Government with bated breath.

Development Corporation

The consultation for the proposal to set up a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge closed at the start of this month. We await more information and will provide

update when we hear news from the MHCLG.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

East West Rail consultation

On Tuesday 14 April, the 'final' route wide consultation for the East West Rail proposals will launch, closing on 9 June. For our area, a consultation is being held by EWR on Friday 1 May 2pm-7pm at Great Shelford Rugby Club. More information is available on EWR's website here: eastwestrail.co.uk/news/latest-stories/east-west-rail-announces-details-of-final-consultation

Pothole management

Cllr Alex Beckett, Chair of Highways and Transport Committee, has written a very useful article regarding the condition of our highways:

<https://notesfromalex.substack.com/p/why-are-the-roads-so-bad-rightnow>

In general, Alex's substack is a good resource for details on our local pothole issues.

Meanwhile, I have set up a new tracking system for defects within the County Division via Excel. Peter and I have accumulated quite the list of issues over the winter and have found some of our reports are responded to quickly (especially when raised as emergencies), but response times have been mixed with some issues remaining for disappointingly long times. To ensure that no defects slip through the cracks, I have created a central document for Peter, myself and officers to use. I propose to include the tracker information for each parish as an attachment accompanying the monthly report, starting in May. Whilst Peter and I have a good understanding of issues in the local area, I'd welcome correspondence regarding local issues to ensure that my document is comprehensive.

EV charger pavement channels

The County Council is piloting an EV cross pavement charging channel scheme, aimed at residents who rely on on-street parking for their vehicles. Residents will be able to apply for a charger channel to be installed outside of their homes, allowing them to run a charging cable from a private charger to an on-street car without creating a trip hazard on the footway. The Council will heavily subsidise the installation of the channel and maintain it thereafter (as part of the highway), although there is some cost to residents and the responsibility of installing the charge point itself lies solely with the resident (although other grants exist to support this).

If any residents are interested in the proposal or would like more information, please encourage them to get in contact with me. I will provide further general updates when I have access to the relevant information.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Holiday food vouchers

The Council has agreed the funding levels for the continued provision of holiday food vouchers for free school meal eligible children, following the end of the Government's Household Support Fund which had previously funded the majority of the scheme:

Holiday Period	Weekly Voucher Value	Total Voucher Value
Easter (30 March – 10 April)	£10	£20
May Half Term (25 – 29 May)	£10	£10
Summer (21 July – 1 September)	£10	£60

Through the new Crisis and Resilience Fund and other available options, we are exploring how to ensure that support remains in place for families who face financial hardship during the school holidays.

Two new special schools for Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire County Council previously asked the Department for Education to continue with the delivery of two new special schools in Gamlingay and March. Greensands Academy Gamlingay and Lime Academy March had been approved for delivery by the DfE under the previous government, and the current Government has now confirmed that it will proceed with the plans.

Between them the two schools are expected to provide 270 new special school places in Cambridgeshire. Demand for in-county special school spaces has grown significantly year on year, in line with national trends, since these schools were first planned. In Cambridgeshire the number of children with an Education Health & Care Plan grew by 71 per cent from 2020 to 2025.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION

Help with oil heating costs

The council has received £708,000 from the Government which is ring-fenced to support households struggling with the cost of domestic oil heating. The money has been added to the council's Crisis & Resilience Fund, and applications are being administered by the Cambridgeshire Community Foundation.

Applications to the fund opened on Monday 30 March. The link to apply is at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-withthe-cost-of-living/crisis-payment>

This fund is intended for Cambridgeshire households on low incomes who are reliant on heating oil and who need to top up their tanks as a matter of urgency. To receive this

support, applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- Live in Cambridgeshire.
- Be reliant on heating oil to heat their home and/or water.
- Have 150 litres or less of oil remaining at the time of application.
- Be in receipt of or eligible for one of the following means-tested benefits:
 - Universal Credit
 - Pension Credit
 - Income based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

If funding allows, the council hopes to expand the scheme at a later date to households on incomes just above the threshold for means-tested benefits, or with exceptionally high energy needs.

Eligible households can apply for up to £400 of support. The level of support awarded may fluctuate with the price of oil. The target for payment to be issued is 48 hours from the time that all required evidence is received. Once the fund is exhausted, second payments will be issued where necessary. Residents will first be expected to access income maximisation support from Citizens' Advice and only those referred back following a financial assessment will be eligible for further payments.

Residents can apply direct to Cambridgeshire Community Foundation, or may be referred by a referral organisation that has assessed their circumstances and can verify that they need immediate assistance (SCDC is a good point of access for residents). All applicants will need to provide proof of address, income, and the need to top-up with heating oil.

All information and updates to residents can be found on the council's website. Any communications received by the Contact Centre are being directed to this webpage. The details of residents who have called or emailed the council so far are being collated and they will be contacted directly when the fund opens.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/help-with-utility-bills>

There will likely be a large number of residents applying into the fund and the outlined 48-hour turnaround for payments will be challenging in the early weeks of the fund, given foreseen high demand. In line with the Crisis and Resilience Fund and Poverty Commission objectives, applicants will receive signposting to other forms of support available to improve resilience against future financial shock.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

From the Ground Up – Parish level nature recovery projects

Cambridgeshire County Council is calling on residents across the county to play an active role in restoring local nature as part of the 'Nature Recovery - From the Ground Up' project—a new initiative supporting parishes and community groups to design their own Community Nature Recovery Plans.

A Community Nature Recovery Plan is a locally created blueprint that sets out priorities for improving nature and wildlife at a parish level. These plans help communities to shape a vision for nature locally and identify steps to bring about the changes. The plans will support the wider goals of Cambridgeshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Key actions include:

- Restoring habitats
- Creating nature corridors and stepping-stones for wildlife
- Increasing areas managed for wildlife

As part of the project, all Cambridgeshire parishes will have free access to the online mapping software Parish Online until March 2027. This will allow parish councils and community groups acting on their behalf to map out proposed projects relative to LNRS priorities, explore cross parish projects, and contribute to collaborative maps (for example showing swift boxes across the county). Parish Online can be used more broadly to track all of the nature areas within a parish, which could be very useful in the face of development proposals. Guidance for using Parish Online can be found here [Nature Recovery resources | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Cambridgeshire is one of the counties with the least nature-rich land in England, and the LNRS sets out an ambitious plan to “double nature” locally, expanding nature-rich land from eight per cent to the national average of sixteen per cent.

The first phase of the project runs from July 2025 to March 2027, focusing on Cambridge and twenty parishes across East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, Huntingdonshire, and South Cambridgeshire. Other parishes are invited to use the project resources and mapping software and register interest for future phases of the project.

The project is funded by Cambridgeshire County Council's Just Transition Fund and delivered in partnership with Natural Cambridgeshire. Please see the final page of this report for a list of upcoming events relating to the project.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/climate-change-energy-andenvironment/improving-the-natural-environment/nature-recovery-fromthe-ground-up

HEALTH SCRUTINY

Children's autism health services

The council's health scrutiny committee considered the provision of health services for children with autism. CCS NHS Trust is the body responsible for provision of autism services for children aged 0-11.

Referral activity prior to the COVID-19 pandemic averaged fewer than 100 referrals per month. During the pandemic and periods of lockdown, referral numbers reduced slightly, falling to below 90 referrals per month. Since early 2022, average monthly referrals have risen to over 135 per month, with considerably greater month-to-month variation. This increased volatility makes demand more difficult to predict and plan for.

CPFT is responsible for services to 12-18 year olds. It reports that increasing awareness of autism and recognition presentations combined with high demand for complex multidisciplinary assessments have led to extended waiting times in some cases. An increasing number of families are seeking assessments from independent providers via their GPs, or via private referrals.

The Integrated Care Board, CCS and CPFT are aware of the issues within the services and the impact of waiting times on children and families, and are trialling several initiatives to address them. The challenges of increased awareness, demand for diagnosis support and strained resources to support this need remain a challenge.

Primary care in Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire is facing sustained and structurally significant population growth, especially in Cambridge and surrounding areas. It has an ageing population with long-term conditions, increased clinical complexity, health inequalities, delay in new or expanded healthcare premises, and pressure on appointment availability and telephone access.

Recruiting and retaining GPs and practice nurses is a challenge. There is disproportionate workload for practices serving communities in pockets of deprivation. The national 'Carr-Hill' formula for core GP funding is insufficiently responsive to deprivation and current patterns of need. The Government's Ten Year Plan is aiming to shift care from hospitals to neighbourhoods.

The Integrated Care Board explained how it is managing these challenges while itself going through a process of radical reorganisation. It is working with local GP practices, many of which are in a very vulnerable situation.

COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATES

Water resources plan

Water Resources East is responsible for producing a regional water resources plan for eastern England including Cambridgeshire. This is a combination of infrastructure investment and demand management. Cambridgeshire will increasingly rely on water resources transferred from other parts of the region, and increased water storage, improved transfer and sharing of water between regions, and reduced demand will all be important.

Youth employment strategy

The Combined Authority has approved the development of a Youth Employment / NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Strategy for 14-25 year olds and

recommend it to the Combined Authority Board.

Local visitor economy partnership

The Combined Authority has agreed to submit an application to Visit England for accreditation as a Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Rural tourism will be a key focus of this.

County Councillors for the Sawston and Shelfords Division

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From the Ground Up related events:

April 2026

Tues 14th Apr, 9.45am-3pm

[Riverfly surveyor training](#)

Run by: Cam Catchment Partnership

Location: Duxford, CB22

- Find out more about Riverfly monitoring which is a valuable tool to regularly check and track river health.
- Join a practical, hands-on session to learn Riverfly monitoring skills including identifying target species
- Volunteer a couple of hours per month to monitor your local river

Weds 15th Apr, 1pm-2.30pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Technical tips for using Parish Online to prepare a Community Nature Recovery Plan](#)

Speaker: Chris Mewse, Managing Director, Geosphere – providers of Parish Online & XMAP

Location: Online

- Information on how to access the free trial of Parish Online in Cambridgeshire
- Technical tips for using the Parish Online mapping software
- An introduction to the key reference layers in Parish Online to inform Community Nature Recovery Plans
- The opportunity to suggest collaborative mapping layers to track progress across the county on key topics e.g. Swifts, Himalayan Balsam

Wed 15th Apr, 5pm-6pm

[Staying Connected: An introduction to Nature Recovery – From the Ground Up for Parish Clerks and Councillors](#)

Run by: Cambridgeshire ACRE

Speaker: Sandy Skelton, Community Nature Project Officer, Cambridgeshire County Council

Location: Online

- Overview of the support available to Parish Council's and community groups through the Nature Recovery-From the Ground Up project
- Information on how to access the Parish Online trial and pass access on to local community groups/key individuals
- Information on how you can share your nature recovery successes to inspire and inform action for nature across the county

Fri 17 Apr, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: How to specify a rain garden](#)

Speakers: Clara Todd & Yair Perry, Water Sensitive Cambridge

Location: Online

- An introduction to rain gardens
- What makes a good rain garden location?
- Information on how to join a collaborative bid for rain gardens

Fri 24 Apr, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: A Parish View of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)

Speaker: Deborah Ahmad, Principal Ecologist, Cambridgeshire County Council

Location: Online

- An introduction to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- An introduction to the LNRS mapping approach and explanation of common anomalies at the Parish level
- How local groups can continue to ground-truth the LNRS and feed into future LNRS reviews

Thurs 30th Apr, 9.30am-1.30pm

[Behaviour change for a greener tomorrow](#)

Location: 11 Melbourne Avenue, March PE15 0EN

Run by: Fenland District Council

- An introduction to the COM-B Behaviour Change Model
- The chance to apply COM-B to real-world environmental habits
- The opportunity to learn from others and share experience

May 2026

Fri 1 May, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Parish Online Troubleshooting Session](#)

Speaker: Chris Mewse, Managing Director, Geosphere – providers of Parish Online & XMAP

Location: Online

- An interactive trouble-shooting session to tackle problems with using Parish Online for Community Nature Recovery Plans

Tue 5 May, 2pm-3.30pm

[NR-FGU Cluster meeting: Huntingdonshire](#)

Speaker: Peer learning circle

Location: St Ives Library, Meeting Room 1

- Share progress on [preparing a Community Nature Recovery Plan](#)
- Shared lessons learnt
- The opportunity to explore challenges and opportunities

Fri 8 May, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Community Land Purchase – lessons from Abbey Fields](#)

Speaker: Jon Pavey, Treasurer, Histon & Impington Green Spaces

Location: Online

- How was the community land purchase of Abbey Field achieved?
- Top tips for other groups wanting to undertake a community land purchase
- Lessons learnt

Mon 11 May, 2pm-3.30pm

[NR-FGU Cluster meeting: East Cambs](#)

Speaker: Peer learning circle

Location: Reach Village Hall

- Share progress on [preparing a Community Nature Recovery Plan](#)
- Shared lessons learnt
- The opportunity to explore challenges and opportunities

Wed 13 May, 7pm-8.30pm

[NR-FGU Cluster meeting: South Cambs](#)

Speaker: Peer learning circle

Location: Duxford Community Centre

- Share progress on [preparing a Community Nature Recovery Plan](#)
- Shared lessons learnt
- The opportunity to explore challenges and opportunities

Thurs 14 May, 6pm-7.30pm

[NR-FGU Cluster meeting: South/East Cambs border](#)

Speaker: Peer learning circle

Location: Histon Library

- Share progress on [preparing a Community Nature Recovery Plan](#)
- Shared lessons learnt
- The opportunity to explore challenges and opportunities

Fri 15 May, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Winning Section 106 Funding – lessons from Friends of Somersham Nature Reserve](#)

Speaker: Phil Clark, Chair of Friends of Somersham Nature Reserve

Location: Online

- An overview of the process of applying for Section 106 funding
- Top tips for applying for Section 106 funding
- Lessons learned from securing Section 106 funding in Somersham

Wed 20 May, 5pm-6.30pm

[NR-FGU Cluster meeting: Cambridge City Meeting](#)

Speaker: Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council, Abbey People

Location: Cambridge Central Library

- Update on the application for Nature Towns & Cities Accreditation for Cambridge City
- Update on a ward-level Community Nature Recovery Plan for Abbey Ward
- Update on the nature school's network

- Plan for the Cambridge Nature Festival

Fri 22 May, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Understanding verge management for biodiversity](#)

Speaker: Sam Chadwick, Highways Team, Cambridgeshire County Council and Claire Wallace, Biodiversity & Green Spaces Team, Cambridgeshire County Council

Location: Online

- An overview of the process of the verge management – who's involved, what are the requirements?
- Best practice verge management for biodiversity
- Protected Road Verge (PRV) designation and 'adopting' a verge (S142)

June 2026

Fri 12th Jun, 1pm-2pm

[NR-FGU Showcase: Parish Online Troubleshooting Session](#)

Speaker: Chris Mewse, Managing Director, Geosphere – providers of Parish Online & XMAP

Location: Online

- An interactive trouble-shooting session to tackle problems arising with using Parish Online for Community Nature Recovery Plans