

CLLR FIROUZ THOMPSON

GROWTH ANNOUNCEMENT

The end of January saw a high-profile announcement from the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, about the Government's ambitions for growth.

Much of the announcement focused on Cambridgeshire, and in particular the decision to revive the Oxford-Cambridge corridor or 'OxCam arc' dumped by Boris Johnson three years ago. This plan, touted as 'Europe's Silicon Valley', will now be overseen by science minister Sir Patrick Vallance, whom many will remember appearing on our screens as one of the health professionals advising us daily during the early phase of the Covid pandemic.

Details included confirmation of

- East West Rail, with a new station at Tempsford
- The new Cambridge Cancer Research Hospital
- A University of Cambridge Innovation Hub in central Cambridge
- Development at the Beehive Centre site in Cambridge, and at Waterbeach
- The new Fens and Lincolnshire reservoirs
- Upgrading of the A428 Milton Keynes to Cambridge.

There will be a new delivery body for development around Oxford, to mirror the growth company for Cambridge already established by the Government, headed by Peter Freeman, the former chair of Homes England.

This announcement is a recognition of Cambridgeshire's significance to the UK economy. But it's also an urgent attempt to revive flagging economic growth, and much of what has been announced by way of infrastructure to support intensified development around Cambridge consists of schemes already planned or under way.

It's not clear whether the money is there for the whole route of East West Rail to Cambridge, and residents and businesses need certainty about this so that they can plan for the future.

House-building plans in and around Cambridge are already ambitious, developed through the local planning process. The infrastructure in the Chancellor's announcement is needed to meet these existing plans, not additional ones. For example the proposed Fens Reservoir—still in the early stages of consultation—will not be supplying water until the late 2030s, and is intended to enable the existing housing targets. Additional development will require further investment to ensure communities have access to sufficient water, health services, and transport. Anglian Water is continuing to object to a number of development proposals on the basis of the insufficient sewage systems.

Commitment to the Cambridge Cancer Hospital is welcome, but our health services, from GP surgeries and access to dentists, to accident and emergency facilities in our hospitals, are already struggling.

And the establishment of further unaccountable delivery bodies to progress the Government's plans does not bode well for genuine public engagement and democratic input. This is particularly concerning as the Chancellor's announcement comes just at the point at which the Government is tearing up the fifty-year-old map of local government [see below] and reorganising local councils which will take several years to set up and start work.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

An announcement by the Government in December on the future shape of local government is being followed through at breakneck speed. The Government wants elected Mayors, everywhere. And no two-tier (county and district) councils anywhere. Areas without Mayors are being prioritised to get them, and two-tier council areas are being invited to submit proposals for moving to single-tier 'unitary' councils in the coming months. Those council areas that want to move really quickly on this have been given the opportunity to request cancellation of their upcoming county council elections this May.

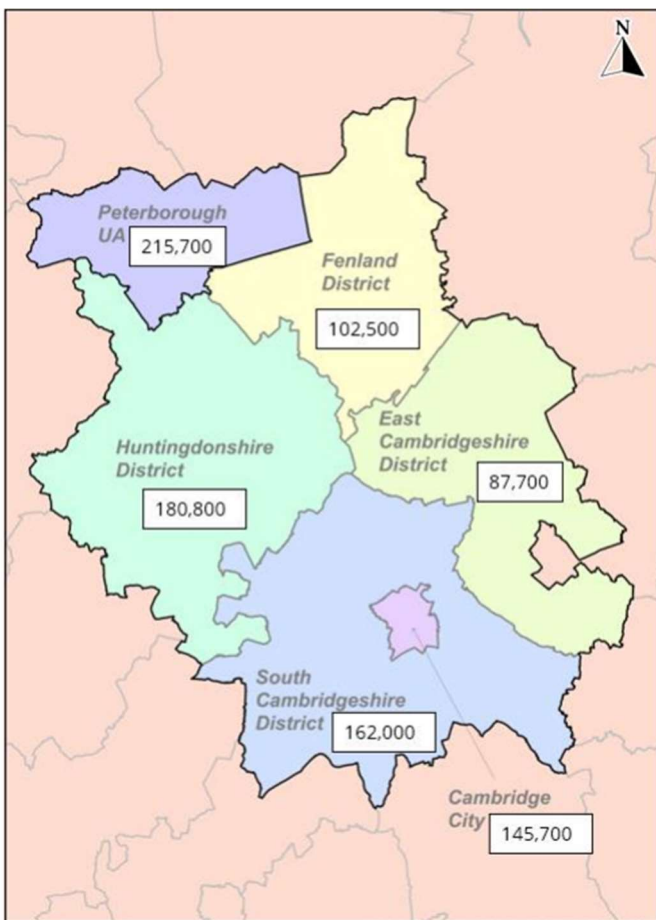
In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the elections for the County Council and the Mayor on Thursday 1 May will go ahead.

Unitary Councils

The Government's specification for new unitary councils continues to emerge. Broadly, new Mayoral authorities should have a population of around 1.5 million (ours has about 900,000 so is a little on the small side). Each Mayoral authority should have at least two unitary councils under it. Each of these councils should have a population of at least 500,000.

This means that unless there's a lot of special pleading, we should expect two unitary councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It may be possible to cut up existing district councils and reallocate the pieces, but this would slow up the process and make it more complex, and the Government doesn't seem to be in that sort of mood.

The populations of the local authorities in the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority area from the most recent (2021) census are as follows.



The county council's Insight team is producing data to help council officers advise councillors and to help councillors come to conclusions about sensible, workable proposals. Ultimately, drawing lines on maps will be exactly what the Government's exercise is all about. If councils don't agree collectively what we think is the

best solution, the Government will just pick one of its own choosing. Its policies and priorities will be up to local residents in the elections that follow.

More powers for Mayors

At the same time as all this, the Government also wants elected Mayors to have more powers.

- All areas will have to produce a Spatial Development Strategy, to be adopted with support from a majority of constituents.
- Mayors will be given new development management powers 'similar to those those exercised by the Mayor of London'—including the ability to call in planning applications.
- Mayors will be able to charge developers a 'Mayoral Levy' to 'ensure that new developments come with the necessary associated infrastructure'. Such a levy was used to help fund London's Elizabeth Line in 2012.
- Homes England will have a stronger partnership with established Mayoral Strategic Authorities and increased accountability to mayors to help them deliver on their plans. As part of this, the government says it will move Homes England to a more 'regionalised model' over time, 'so that the agency is even more responsive to the economic plan of an area'.
- Mayors will be given 'the funding they need to deliver on their housing ambitions, with control of grant funding for regeneration and housing delivery'.
- Established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will be given the power to set out the strategic direction of any future affordable housing programme.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Sutton C of E Primary school is opening a specialist autism resource centre this month. There are several such facilities at secondary schools in Cambridgeshire, but just one other such facility in a primary school in the county. The new ten place Enhanced Resource Base was approved last May (2024).

Budget proposals for Children and Young People

At the January committee, draft business plan and budget proposals that would see continued investment in the services that Children, Education and Families deliver and commission, were scrutinised and supported by a majority of the Children and Young People Committee members.

The Children and Young People Committee has a significant role in ensuring 'children and young people have opportunities to thrive' as part of our Strategic Framework and the council's approach for achieving the vision of a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire. This is why, they propose to invest the following:

- An additional £9million for children who become looked after
- £4.7million to support home to school transport services
- £340k to increase direct payment packages for children and young people with disabilities.

Other proposals include:

- Re-designing the way services are delivered to ensure they are as effective as possible and prioritising the reinvestment of resources into early intervention. This will help to reduce demand and alleviate children and young people's complex needs. Improving outcomes for children and families by supporting more of them to make changes early on in their lives will help avoid statutory intervention. For example, a £490k investment is proposed to increase capacity and extend our work with our partners in East Cambridgeshire to help keep children and their families safe.
- A proposed new Residential Strategy – where children do need to come into the care of the council, we want to better serve their needs through increased local residential capacity.
- A new approach to SEND – more effective partnership working with local schools and academy trusts, reviewing home to school transport routes to ensure transport is appropriate to need and routes are optimised.

STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES

Council Budget

Cambridgeshire County Council Strategy Resources & Performance Committee met on Tuesday 28 January and considered its budget proposals to the Full Council, which will meet on Tuesday 11 February.

Plans for the coming year include an investment of more than £56M in highways maintenance to tackle the significant backlog of repairs. This includes £14.5M for day-to-day management of the highway and an additional £20M in planned maintenance including roads, pavements, drainage, bridges, safety barriers, traffic signals, public rights of way, and cycleways.

The proposals include £3M to cover inflation for local care providers and an extra £8M for the five per cent increase in the Real Living Wage. The draft budget also invests an additional £9M for children who become 'looked after' by the care system, and £4.7M to support home to school transport services.

In addition, an estimated £6M of Household Support Fund will support those most in need, alongside further improvements in libraries through £1.3M already committed to the Libraries Plus programme.

Nationally, the financial picture for councils is not good. Four in five county councils are saying that they will be worse off than before the Government's autumn budget and financial settlement. 93 per cent of county and unitary councils will have to raise council tax by the maximum permitted, which is 4.99 per cent in all but exceptional circumstances.

County councils face huge challenges meeting the need for adult social care, provision for special educational needs, and school transport. 93 per cent of Cambridgeshire County Council's spending is on things it must do by law, and 86 per cent of the council's income comes from council tax and business rates. It really doesn't leave much room for manoeuvre.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Frequent users of A&E

A new specialist team is helping to reduce avoidable visits to Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Known as the High Impact Use team (HIU), the service is a partnership between NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and the County Council (who host the service) on behalf of the Integrated Care System (ICS). This service helps those who often attend A&E for reasons that extend beyond medical interventions and for needs which would be better met by other professionals.

Since its launch in October 2024, the team found that many of the frequent visitors to A&E at local hospitals were experiencing issues such as loneliness, financial problems, and poor physical and mental health, rather than medical emergencies requiring urgent hospital care.

The HIU team works alongside partners to build a trusted relationship with each person identified as requiring non-clinical support through their frequent attendances at A&E, and help meet their needs. This can include arranging and attending appointments with the patient, enrolling them in community groups or charity services, and assisting them to access other support such as counselling services, housing advice and employment guidance.

The service is provided to people aged eighteen or over who are registered with a GP in Cambridgeshire, Peterborough or Royston.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Falls prevention

Cold homes can affect mobility and put older people at greater risk of falling. It's important to be extra careful to avoid falls during winter months. There's an online interactive risk checking tool to help identify your risks, or those of older family, friends, or neighbours. www.steadyonyourfeet.org/cambridgeshire

Library Presents

The Library Presents team is delighted to announce the launch of the spring season of exciting arts events which will run from March to June 2025. The season will bring workshops and performances to locations across Cambridgeshire.

Please find attached a digital copy of the season brochure. Full details of the programme, along with booking information can also be found at www.library.live/the-library-presents. Details for our ward are below:

- Tuesday 20 May - Leather Flower Workshop, Northstowe Cabin
- Sun 22 JUNE - The Zoo That Comes To You (Puppetry), Northstowe Cabin

If you would like to receive a hard copy of the brochure, please email thelibrarypresents@cambridgeshire.gov.uk.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Contract for collection of recyclable waste

There has been much discussion recently of a new contract for disposal of recyclable waste which involves transport for processing in Northern Ireland.

This contract is for the contents of our blue bins. Recyclable materials dropped off at Household Recycling Centres are dealt with under different contracts.

The contract for blue bin waste is let by RECAP, the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Partnership (www.recap.co.uk). The County Council's procurement team assisted RECAP with the procurement process because the council hosts the RECAP Manager role, but the contract award decision was made by the waste collection authorities (the district councils). The waste collection authorities have managed this contract for the last ten years.

The current contractor, Thalia at Waterbeach, did not submit a compliant bid. so was disqualified. The contract was awarded to two successful contractors:

- Biffa (London) for material from East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Fenland
- RE-GEN (Northern Ireland) for material from Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Bids were awarded on quality as well as on price, and transport considerations were part of the criteria.

It has been suggested that the new contract with RE-GEN will mean thousands of miles of additional HGV journeys, compared to the current contract. However, RE-GEN already has contracts with sixteen other authorities and distributes sorted recycling back to the UK before making the return journey to Northern Ireland. The company intends to build a new processing facility in the Midlands during the lifetime of this contract.

RE-GEN can recover up to 99 per cent of material through their plant, compared to 80 per cent under the current contract. This will mean capturing an estimated 400 tonnes more material a month. This is not only important in its own right environmentally, but also in light of the forthcoming national 'extended producer responsibility' scheme. Under this scheme the original producers of waste are required to fund the lifetime costs of its recycling and disposal—and councils will be required to demonstrate as efficient and effective recovery of packaging as possible.

In short, goods and packaging are manufactured around the UK, and indeed the world. Recycling and recovery of these materials is also carried out nationwide and worldwide.

New strategies to come to committee in March

Two new environmental strategies are to be presented to the County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee in March—a Tree & Woodland Strategy for management of trees and hedgerows on the council's own land (including road verges), and a Biodiversity Strategy.

Waste water treatment decision delay

A decision by Government on the move of the waste water treatment plant from North East Cambridge to Honey Hill has been delayed until April.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

A10 BP roundabout crossing consultation

A public consultation on a proposed new crossing of the A10 BP roundabout is now open, closing at 11:59PM on Wednesday 5 March 2025.

The proposals include two bridge options and one signal crossing option, each with different design features, benefits and costs. As an active travel route, the new crossing would be designed for walking, cycling and travelling by wheelchair or mobility aids.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority is funding the project and Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for delivering the scheme. To find out more, residents are invited to attend a drop-in event or webinar:

- Tuesday 4 February, 7:00-8:15PM (online webinar)
- Tuesday 11 February, 3:00-7:00PM, Witchford Village College (drop-in)
- Wednesday 26 February, 1:00–2:15PM (online webinar)
- Thursday 27 February, 10:30AM-2:30PM Ely Library (drop-in)

Throughout the consultation, residents can also visit an unstaffed exhibition at Ely Library during library opening hours to find out more about the proposals. Library staff will not be able to answer questions but there will be information banners and printed copies of the consultation brochure for residents to read.

The consultation findings will help inform a future decision to be made by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Cambridgeshire County Council regarding the preferred option to be taken forward.

For further information, including to complete the survey and register for a webinar, visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/ely-witchford-crossing

Street Light LED replacements

The programme to replace fluorescent street lights with more environmentally friendly LED ones.

A number of complaints have been received, locally and across the county, which are being investigated. The new fittings intentionally shine the light more directly down, and this is an issue in areas where a lot of street lights were removed when management of the lighting was contracted to Balfour Beatty, leaving pools of darkness between street lights. Councillors are also asking officers to review some of the lights against the agreed specification.

The county-wide LED replacement programme throughout Cambridgeshire details are on this link: <https://lightingcambridgeshire.com/about-us/led-replacement-programme-2024-2026/>

Programme summary from the link:

Below are links to our indicative programme of works, so you can see when we are planning to be in your area. Like any programme of this size, the dates are subject to change. We will continue to update this page with updated versions of the programme.

Follow the links below to download the latest versions of our programme. A PDF file will open in a new tab, which you can search and find your street or town, and see the month/s we are expecting to work there.

Please click [Here](#) to view the full programme at town level.

- Oakington – Jan 2026
- Longstanton – May – June 2026
- Over – June 2026
- Westwick – June 2026

Please click [Here](#) to view the full programme at street level.

20MPH Funding 2025/26 Applications – Open

The 2025/26 20mph funding programme is now open again for applications. The process is open for new applications, as well as providing existing applicants within the long list who weren't successful for funding last year to review, update and reapply if they wish.

Our website pages can be found at the following link: [20mph Funding - Cambridgeshire County Council](#). We have reviewed some of the information included on those pages to reflect the feedback we have received from last years process – our thanks to those whom have contributed to that. We have kept the examples of previously successful applications for reference, but have not included any Supporting Documentation that were provided with them.

Applicants are now able to make applications until **17:00PM on Friday 28th March 2025**.

Please note, we are also expecting to host a virtual engagement session prior to the closure of the 20MPH application window on **Thursday 20th February 2025 between 12.00 and 13.30pm**. If you would like to attend, please make contact with the above Local Projects email alongside any queries you may have, and we can provide you with the Microsoft Teams link for it.

Should you have any questions or comments please send these to the Local Projects inbox:

Local.Projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

The Traffic Management Centre (TMC)

The TMC responded to 143 incidents on the road network throughout Cambridgeshire in December covering 22 weekdays. This figure is similar to that of what we reported in January 2024 and an increase to that of Decembers.

Please see the table below which illustrates the number of incidents over the last 6 months, compared to the same period last year;

Incidents by month/year

	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
2023/24	61	103	88	144	81	163
2024/25	75	159	156	191	88	143

MEETINGS ATTENDED and COMMUNITY WORK 5 January to 3 February 2025

Local meetings:

Oakington & Westwick Parish Council (13 Jan), Over Parish Council (14 Jan), Homes England and Ian Sollom MP (17 Jan), Road Safety Matters at Pathfinder (22 Jan), Northstowe Delivery Group (23 Jan), E-Scooter Expansion (27 Jan), Northstowe Town Council (28 Jan), Northstowe Learning Campus (31 Jan), Keepmoat, Homes England and Ian Sollom MP (3 Feb).

County Council meetings:

Children & Young People – Chair & Vice Chair (9 Jan), Director of Education (9 Jan), Cambridgeshire School Forum (10 Jan), All Chairs & Vice Chair (14 Jan), CYP committee pre-meet and Committee meeting (14 Jan), LGA National Workshop – Growing Up and Moving On, Preparing for Adulthood (29 Jan), CYP Spokes (30 Jan), Adult & Health Committee – CCS Quarterly Liaison Group (3 Feb),

Community work:

Parish/Town Council monthly report, Column write ups within Northstowe News, Oakington & Westwick Journal and Over News online magazine. Northstowe Foodies

Private case work:

Most Councillors will have private case work that they are dealing with, details of which cannot be shared due to GDPR – current themes are Transport mainly Stagecoach's bus increase since January, SEND transport, Highways.

WARD NEWS

A14 Upgrade: Bar Hill Bridge

Over a year ago, National Highways committed to installing monitoring equipment on the sinking Bar Hill bridge to assess its long-term stability. However, it has now been revealed that this crucial monitoring never took place. In the meantime, the County Council funded a temporary fix, but without the promised monitoring, there is no data to guide long-term repairs. This continued inaction means the County Council cannot keep covering the cost of short-term solutions while National Highways fails to act.

We were initially assured that monitoring would take place over 12 months to inform the next steps, but with no equipment ever installed, the situation remains unchanged. This issue is not limited to Bar Hill and B1050 bridges—several other structures along the A14 corridor have also shown signs of movement. Immediate action is needed to address these concerns and ensure long-term stability rather than further delays and unfulfilled promises. We have written to National Highways and have done a press release, which was picked up by Cambridge News – now awaiting confirmation. The project manager that we had been working with has been moved on to another project and the new contact is currently working on the A428 project.

Surface Treatment Sites 2025/26

- Oakington – Dry Drayton Road, Gripfibre Treatment, section from speed bump to the junction which was missed last year
- Over – Gravel Bridge Road/Longstanton Road, Gripfibre Treatment, pre-patching took place on 18 December, there are some outstanding patches
- Over – Glover Street/Long Furlong, Micro Asphalt Treatment,

[Types of road surface treatment | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

St Ives Greenway

The preliminary design for the Oakington to Cottenham route is now finished, supported by ecological surveys and environmental assessments. Work will now take place to produce detailed designs and undertake safety assessments. We hope to complete this work before the end of the year to start construction in 2026.

[St Ives Greenway](#)

Oakington & Westwick: Delegated Decision meeting – 23 January

Decision to consider objections to a proposed 20mph speed limit on Station Road, Oakington & Oakington Rd, Westwick & proposed speed cushions on Cambridge Rd/Oakington Rd, Oakington & Westwick & Girton took place between Sonia Hansen, Head of Parking and Traffic Management and Councillors Firouz Thompson and Edna Murphy (representing Longstanton, Northstowe and Over and Bar Hill electoral divisions) objections to the proposed speed limit changes in Oakington and Westwick and Girton Parishes and proposed traffic calming measures on Cambridge Road/Oakington Road, Oakington and Girton Parishes (Ref. PR1039) were determined and it was confirmed that the proposed speed limits and traffic calming measures (speed cushions) should be implemented as proposed (as set out on the plan at Appendix 1 and 2 of the meeting report).

A copy of the meeting record can be found along with the meeting report here [Council and committee meetings - Cambridgeshire County Council > Meetings Calendar](#)

Longstanton: High Street outside Hattons House

Works will be taking place on 13-14 February to repair the section of road between the verges outside Hattons House, link on One Network with two-way travel signals <https://one.network/?GB141999765>

MEANWHILE on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority

The Transport & Infrastructure Committee unanimously recommended to the Mayor that he agree to introduce franchising of bus services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. This would put control of routes, fares and timetables into democratic hands, and enable profit-making routes to subsidise socially needed but less used ones.

Member of Parliament – Ian Sollom

Surgery appointments are available with our MP Ian Sollom to discuss any issues or concerns. Ian regularly holds surgeries across the constituency, with recent visits to Cambourne, Orchard Park, Northstowe, and St Neots. Additional locations will be added in the future. For security reasons, venues are not advertised in advance. To book an appointment for an in-person or online surgery, please email ian.sollom.mp@parliament.uk

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

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

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

[Report a highways fault - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

[Report a flood - www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/report-a-flood](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/report-a-flood)

NOTE: Homes England areas in Phase 2 Northstowe including Northstowe Avenue and new B1050 roundabout – any estates or maintenance issues should be report to 24/7 helpdesk number 0845 603 1485 (which is the same cost as a local rate). The number is manned 7 days per week 24 hours per day and all calls are placed in an auditable system to ensure matters are progressed.