

CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT – FEBRUARY 2025
LONGSTANTON, NORTHSTOWE, OVER, OAKINGTON & WESTWICK

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

All principal local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough need to respond to the Government no later than Friday 21 March to outline what they are considering for new, larger, unitary councils for our area.

The criteria continue to include an expectation that the new councils will cover populations of at least 500,000 unless there are special circumstances; and that existing district council boundaries will be the building blocks, again unless a strong argument can be made against this.

A further submission will need to be made to the Government in the autumn.

There will be advantages to moving to a unitary council system, not least more clarity and accountability over who is responsible for services such as streetlights or waste. But it's clear that the Government is wanting a 'quick' solution, rather than taking the time—and consultation—to do it properly.

COUNCIL SHORTLISTED FOR FOUR NATIONAL AWARDS

Cambridgeshire County Council has been shortlisted as a finalist in four categories of the Local Government Chronicle Awards.

- Community involvement: two projects from the Fenland Youth Work Network supporting young people aged 11-18 who are at risk of serious violence, exploitation, and involvement in county lines.
- Health and social care: Cambridgeshire Shared Lives Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Project, working with survivors of domestic abuse with learning disabilities and/or autism.
- Future places: innovative connectivity projects including a private 5G Open Radio Access Network (RAN), development of an augmented reality experience, and enhanced mobile coverage analysis.
- Innovation: Cambridgeshire's 'Dig Once' policy, integrating fibre ducting into new transport infrastructure projects, resulting in a large CO₂ reduction and significantly less disruption to road users.

The winners will be announced at a ceremony on 11 June.

ASSETS & PROCUREMENT

Old Shire Hall, Caste Hill

The sale of (old) Shire Hall in Cambridge is on the agenda of the Assets & Procurement Committee for Friday 7 March.

The premises was put back on the market for disposal in February 2024, and attracted fifteen bids. Following evaluation this number was reduced to a shortlist of four.

An exclusivity period with Bidder A ended in October 2024 without a sale being completed. Subsequent discussions took place with the other bidders on the shortlist. An unconditional long leasehold bid from Bidder E has been recommended for acceptance, together with draft Heads of Terms.

Pending Committee approval, the Heads of Terms will be agreed, and an exclusivity period will be entered with Bidder E, with a view to exchange contracts within this three-month period.

County Farms

The annual meeting of county council farm tenants in Landbeach took place early last month. The county council's rural estates team introduced the event saying that the council is looking for innovation and a reduction in its carbon footprint.

Martin Lines from Nature Friendly Farming Network, who farms near St Neots, spoke about improving farms' bottom line, biodiversity, and carbon footprint, and illustrating the multiple benefits of a nature-friendly approach to how he farms.

We need to eat less meat, but better meat, he says. And climate change is the biggest challenge. "We need to change agricultural practices, including a shift towards regenerative system thinking."

Many farmers have been affected by hare coursing and are concerned how vulnerable rural communities are.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Free Breakfast Club pilot

Fourteen primary schools across Cambridgeshire are set to run a free breakfast club as part of the pilot for a new Government scheme in April. 750 schools across the country have been selected to take part in an 'early adopters' scheme which will test the delivery of the programme before it is implemented nationally.

The pilot is set to launch in April and will run until July, before it is introduced across the UK. The schools chosen for the pilot will offer a free breakfast to all pupils and at least 30 minutes of childcare before school. The fourteen Cambridgeshire schools selected are:

- Buckden CofE Primary School, St Neots
- Peckover Primary School, Wisbech
- Mepal and Witcham CofE Primary School, Ely
- Hartford Junior School, Huntingdon
- Hartford Infant and Pre School, Huntingdon
- Stapleford Community Primary School, Cambridge
- Upwood Primary Academy, Huntingdon
- St Laurence Catholic Primary School, Cambridge
- Great Wilbraham CofE Primary School, Great Wilbraham
- Meldreth Primary School, Royston
- The Spinney Primary School, Cambridge
- Kings Hedges Primary School, Chesterton
- Northborough Primary School, Peterborough
- St John Henry Newman Catholic VA Primary School, Peterborough

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said that the free breakfast clubs would help break the link "between background and success" for families.

The scheme has been welcomed by the headteachers' union, though they fear that the funding allocated by Government will fall short of the cost and have said it is 'crucial' that concerns are addressed before the national rollout.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)

Security support for domestic abuse survivors

The council has renewed a scheme which helps survivors of domestic abuse to feel safer and more secure in their own homes.

The scheme provides additional security measures which can delay or prevent a perpetrator from entering a property. It supported 525 people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between April 2023 and March 2024.

Measures offered depend on the level of risk, and may include window alarms, additional bolts, lock changes, security advice, video doorbells, dummy cameras, and response lights. The service is available for all types of housing, whether owned, privately rented, or social housing.

The contract will be funded by a Safe Accommodation grant from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), enabling the council to carry out its statutory duty.

Benefits of play

The committee received a report last month on the benefits of play, which concluded: “five place-based teams within the Communities service will continue to provide support to community organisations, including town and parish councils, who have an ambition to create or update spaces for young people. This support extends to training in good practice in engaging young people throughout the process.”

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Sunnica update

There is no programme in place yet for delivery of the Sunnica solar farm. Sunnica have said it will take time to mobilise and prepare. The relevant local authorities believe it is unlikely they will receive any documents for discharge of requirements any time soon—this may not be until 2026. Sunnica needs to start within five years of consent being granted. Responsibility for the majority of these next steps will be for East Cambridgeshire District Council and West Suffolk Council.

A Battery Fire Safety Management Plan will be required, and this will go to both County Councils to consult with the respective Fire and Rescue Services. Sunnica have yet to confirm the type of battery as new types with different materials are coming to market all the time; this is a key ask when Sunnica start to produce details for submission to discharge requirements. The Health and Safety Executive has stated it does not wish to be a consultee to the Battery Fire Safety Management Plan.

Augmented reality at the Corn Exchange

The project—Cambridgeshire Open RAN Ecosystem—shows how 5G and Open RAN technology can contribute to live entertainment and digital experiences.

An event at Cambridge Corn Exchange took place and Lorna Dupre, Chair of Green & Investment Committee attended. Upon arrival, they were equipped with a backpack, headset, and headphones. With these, they were able to see a transport exhibition, with a black cab, Delorean, bicycle, and Sinclair C5 appearing in front of us in succession. They were able to walk round them, climb into them (being very careful about sitting in the seats as those seats aren't real!) and use two big control buttons to summon the next vehicle along. The Delorean took off into the air in very spectacular style! Following that they saw three music performances on the Corn Exchange stage showing how it would be possible to use this technology to present concerts in future.

The difference between virtual reality and augmented reality, was that virtual reality cuts off your real external environment: you are completely immersed in the world in your headset. With augmented reality, however, they were able to see the room, the people we were with, and hear what was going on in real life, but with added computer-generated moving imagery.

The trial is one of nineteen across the country funded by government. It's led by Connecting Cambridgeshire and a consortium of technology experts, with support from Cambridge City Council, the Corn Exchange, and the University of Cambridge.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Fen roads trial

A trial to investigate new and innovative ways to repair soil affected roads is being considered by the council.

£1.5M of external funding has been secured, and an extra £5M of capital funding has been assigned specifically to repair and reconstruct soil affected roads before the end of the next financial year. The £1.5M from Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority is for the development, design, and delivery of possible long-term solutions to address roads built over peat soils.

Some of the trial options could include using lightweight recycled products, an 'ultra-low' carbon material, or a technique that involves treating materials on site to improve their strength and durability. The exact processes will be decided on following further design and development work.

The plan is to trial this on the B1099 Upwell Road near March. This is because it is built over peat soils, forms part of Cambridgeshire's rural road network with both heavy vehicle and agricultural traffic making it comparable to a lot of other similar routes and is due for renewal soon.

If approved, design work including on-site investigations and stakeholder engagement would start in May. The aim is for the trial to begin in summer next year.

Flood affected roads

Flooding at Mill Lane Little Paxton and other key flood affected roads is being discussed at the Highways & Transport Committee on Tuesday 4 March.

Mill Lane in Little Paxton forms an important link between St Neots, Little Paxton and the A1 trunk road in Huntingdonshire and has two bridges over the River Great Ouse. High rainfall in 2024 led to the road being closed due to flooding on four occasions. These closures were lengthened by the damage to the road surface caused by fast-moving floodwater. In October 2024, the road was repaired and strengthened at a cost of approximately £15,000.

St Neots Flood Action Group have already carried out considerable research into the historic drainage of the area surrounding Mill Lane. Officers from the Flood Risk team met them on site in January along with officers from the Environment Agency. The chair of the Flood Group has identified some small scale works that could be completed to reduce the frequency and duration of flooding of Mill Lane and these are subject to further investigation.

Work to investigate and address flooding across Cambridgeshire more widely is already under way and St Neots is included within this project. The Environment Agency is also undertaking a Great Ouse Strategic Intervention Study to better understand the current and future flood risk from river and surface water sources across the Great Ouse Catchment.

A programme to upgrade electronic flood signage is also under way. The first place to receive this will be Little Paxton, and new signs are also planned for Earith, and for Welney Wash in conjunction with Norfolk County Council. These are all expected to be installed by June.

If agreed, £100,000 will be allocated towards short-term interventions to support flood risk and improved recovery times at Mill Lane Little Paxton, and £150,000 for a high-level options assessment for three key flood affected roads at Little Paxton, the A1123 at Earith, and the B1040 at Whittlesey.

Highways procurement

The current highways contract in place with Milestone Infrastructure is set to expire on 30 June 2027, with an option for up to five years extension dependent on performance. The contract has not delivered the efficiencies and service levels expected or required by the Council.

The current model of sub-contracting under the contract does not enable value for money to be easily demonstrated and there is a lack of contract options and investment in skills, processes and systems. CDM [Construction (Design & Management)] and health and safety compliance has been poor in the past but is improving. Response times and quality of work are continued concerns.

Based on an assessment of options for the future post-2027 council officers have recommended a mixed economy model which would include:

- In-house delivery for Asset Management, Design, Commercial Management, Client Management, routine maintenance works
- Contract(s) for reactive/cyclical works, emergencies, winter maintenance

- A Professional Services Contract
- Use of Frameworks to deliver planned maintenance and major schemes.

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 who 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**.

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

Local.Projects@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

MEETINGS ATTENDED and COMMUNITY WORK 4 February to 3 March 2025

Local meetings:

Fen End and Longstanton Road/Gravel Bridge Rd inspection (7 Feb), Oakington & Westwick Parish Council (10 Feb), Over Parish Council (11 Feb), Northstowe Tenure Integration Group (14 Mar), Longstanton 20mph/highways (14 Mar), Ian Sollom MP/District Councillor Natalie Warren Green/ Willingham Medical Practice (24 Feb), Wilson's Road Solar Farm presentation at Oakington & Westwick Planning meeting (24 Feb), Northstowe Town Council meeting (25 Feb), Northstowe Delivery Group (27 Feb).

County Council meetings:

Children & Young People (CYP) – Chair & Vice Chair (4 and 27 Feb), Introduction to Climate Risk and Adaptation and how it affects CCC's Services (4 Feb), CYP Committee member training: Place Planning and Sufficiency (4 Feb), Full Council meeting (11 Feb), Senior Responsible Officer for Northstowe (14 Mar), Director of Education (19 Feb), Spotlight Awards (20 Feb), CYP committee (25 Feb)

Community work:

Parish/Town Council monthly report, Column write ups within Northstowe News, Oakington & Westwick Journal and Over News online magazine. Northstowe Foodies. Met with Northstowe Hub re: Midsummer Festival (12 Feb)

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 in Northstowe, Facilities in Northstowe, Highways – potholes and roadworks.

WARD NEWS

Highways spending from Highways & Transport Committee – 4 March papers

1. Capital Highway Maintenance Programme 2025/26

On Tuesday 4 March the Highways & Transport Committee will consider proposals for spending on capital maintenance and improvements. This includes the additional £8.146M from Government for highways maintenance.

The total capital budget for highways maintenance and improvements in 25/26 is £59.332 million. This is funded through a combination of grant funding and council investment.

Specific items for Longstanton division in the coming year's programme include the following:

- **Dry Drayton Road, Oakington** – Cambridge Road to raised table, continuation of works that could not be completed last year
- **Gravel Bridge Road/Longstanton Road, Over** – Ramper Road to Speed limit
- **Glover Street/Long Furlong, Over** – West Street to High Street
- **Byway BY21 (Furtherford/Hither Way Track/Long Lane), Over** - Fill compressions and ruts (drainage work may be required) alongside southernmost section. Vegetation clearance required and tree works.
- **Footpath FP11 (Overcoate Road to Fen End), Over** – Solving the eroding bank issue
- **Church End, Over** – Keep clear markings

A full list of proposed capital maintenance and improvement works for Longstanton division and the rest of Cambridgeshire can be found at

<https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2350/Committee/62/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>

Details are in Item 7, Appendix A, South Cambridgeshire pages 34-39.

2. Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

The LCWIP routes, as approved at the October 2022 Highways and Transport Committee are being progressed through a multitude of different funding streams from different bodies such as Active Travel England, National Highways, District Councils, and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, the County Council and from new development or developer contributions when appropriate.

<https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2350/Committee/62/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx> (Item 8, Appendix 3 South Cambridgeshire pages 20-23)

Appendix 3 – refers to:

- Girton to **Oakington** route from new Road to Oakington Junction.

3. Active Travel hierarchies

Work has been undertaken to create a hierarchy for active travel routes across the county. This will be used to help prioritise maintenance and repairs of routes used by pedestrians and cyclists in future.

The updated hierarchies can be seen on the online map at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/active-travel-hierarchy-map> and maps for each district area are also available at <https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2350/Committee/62/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx> (Item 10, Appendices 12-13 South Cambridgeshire)

Appendix 1 – refers to:

- **Station Road, Oakington** – update to 4 from draft hierarchy ranking of 6
- **Water Lane, Oakington** – update to 4 from draft hierarchy ranking of 5
- **Dry Drayton Road, Oakington** - update to 3 from draft hierarchy ranking of 4

Longstanton: High Street outside Hattons House

Works took place on 28 February to repair the section of road between the verges outside Hattons House, unfortunately these works were not completed to satisfaction, and it has been raised to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability which will pick up with the contractors to ensure work is rectified. Thanks to owner of Hattons House for raising this issue.

Oakington potholes:

After several complaints about potholes in Oakington via Parish Council and on the Oaky Facebook group. I reported the concerns to the Executive Director of Place and Sustainability, the main pothole on the bridge was filled pretty soon afterwards – but also have questioned if this work is completed to satisfaction – as I visited Oakington yesterday and sent further pictures of the patch outside of Holmes Close with a video of a car going to the other side of the road to avoid the patch. Also took photos of potholes on Cambridge Road, just after the bus stop and outside no. 13. I will share any details that I hear, but if you see any works being repaired, please do let me know too.

MEANWHILE on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority

The Mayor has now signed into effect a decision 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. However, as he is not standing again in May, this will be for his successor to implement.

The Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee considered plans for the completion of the Local Nature Recovery Plan by the end of this calendar year.

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

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<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.