

Cambridgeshire County Council

MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2026

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

FULL COUNCIL

Reform UK held the Ramsey and Bury county council seat on Thursday 16 July.

The non-aligned Independent on the council (elected as Reform in 2025, later became Independent, briefly joined Advance UK, then returned to being Independent) has now joined the Conservative Group. This leaves the council with the following composition:

Liberal Democrat and Independent	33
Conservative	11
Reform UK	9
Labour	5
Green	3

The next meeting of the full county council will be held on Tuesday 13 October.

Local Government Reorganisation

On the last day of Parliament before its summer holiday, the [then] Secretary of State for local government announced that he would be delaying a decision on new councils for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. He said a decision would be made 'by October'. Following the installation of a new Prime Minister, he is no longer Secretary of State.

The Government has said no further information is required from the existing councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough before it makes its decision.

Before the delay was announced, it had been rumoured that the Government would announce Option D as its preference, splitting Huntingdonshire down the middle. Peterborough MP Andrew Pakes, who along with North West Cambridgeshire MP Sam Carling drew up and promoted Option D, however said in Parliament in response to the Secretary of State's announcement that none of the four options was 'good enough for Peterborough'.

The Government has said that it expects local elections to the new councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to go ahead in May 2027, regardless of the delayed announcement. The Association of Electoral Administrators says that six months is the minimum time needed to prepare for an election, so this timetable puts huge pressure on the councils running the elections next May. It also gives very little time to complete preparations for apportionment of assets and liabilities between the councils, and to set up new services- two or (probably) three services for highways, social services, education, and more.

A question was raised in Parliament by neighbouring MP Charlotte Cane (Ely & East Cambs) as to what further consultation there would be with local communities before a decision is made, and also whether there would extra support for election officers. The Secretary of State said the decision would be taken 'in good time for the appropriate electoral arrangements to be put in place' and did not answer the question about additional consultation. Pippa Heylings MP has also challenged the Secretary of State around the limbo that the Government's lack of decision on LGR in Cambridgeshire leaves the region in.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Significant improvement in children's services

Ofsted carried out a focused visit to Cambridgeshire in June and has recognised significant improvements in the County Council's provision of appropriate placements for Cambridgeshire children in care since their last visit in 2024.

The summary also identifies four areas for improvement:

- the sufficiency of accommodation to meet the needs of children in care in Cambridgeshire;
- the quality and consistency of children's case records to reflect decision-making and children's journeys through care;
- the quality and effectiveness of supervision in progressing children's plans; and
- the quality and effectiveness of quality assurance activities to implement learning and develop social work practice.

A comprehensive action plan is developed after each inspection of Cambridgeshire's children's services, and the council will continue to work hard to develop a wide range of care options for children who cannot remain at home. Ensuring that children in care live in the best available homes that are full of love, care and support remains an absolute priority. <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50307019>

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & 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 an urban 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.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Agricultural water resilience grant scheme launched

A new grant scheme for farmers and growers has launched to help boost agricultural water resilience across Cambridgeshire. Farmers, growers and horticultural businesses can now apply for grants of between £2,000 and £50,000 from a £1.3M grant scheme designed to improve water efficiency, strengthen resilience to drought, and support sustainable food production.

With funding provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the scheme is being delivered by Water Resources East (WRE) in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council as part of the Cambridge Water Efficiency Programme.

The launch comes as Cambridgeshire's agricultural sector faces growing pressure on water resources due to climate change, population growth and increasing environmental demands. Improving on-farm water efficiency is key to securing future water supplies, protecting sensitive river environments, and supporting long-term food production.

The first window for applications is now open to agricultural and horticultural businesses operating within Cambridgeshire. Applications will be reviewed at three intervals, based on applications received by 11:59PM on Sunday 27 September 2026, Sunday 29 November 2026, and Sunday 17 January 2027.

<https://wre.org.uk/agricultural-water-resilience-grant/>

Minerals and Waste local plan

Consultation on this stage of the plan is still open and closes on 10 October.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/mwlp-review

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

£5m invested in winter readiness

The County Council's Highways & Transport Committee has agreed how to spend an additional £5M to help prepare more of the county's roads for the winter. This comes on top of record levels of highways maintenance funding, with over £78M allocated for

highways in 2026-27.

Only £31.3M of the council's highways maintenance budget comes from the Government with the rest being funded by the council itself.

The council will also run a pothole innovation trial in October. This will test new equipment and materials under real-world conditions to identify the most effective approaches for future highway maintenance.

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. The effectiveness of 20mph was discussed at the [Highways & Transport Committee on 1 September](#) and the Committee will continue to review the data moving forward.

Contract awarded for innovative road repair trial

Cambridgeshire County Council has appointed Winvic Construction Ltd to deliver an innovative trial aimed at tackling the long-standing challenges of maintaining roads built on peat soils.

The soil affected roads innovation trial will test new and more resilient ways of repairing highways affected by peat and weak soils, an issue that impacts a significant proportion of the county's road network, including 97 per cent of roads in Fenland. Whilst these roads are not regularly used by the majority of our residents, their impact on our highways spending cannot be understated, and tackling the issues of soil affected roads will benefit highways across the county by freeing up budget to be spent elsewhere.

The trial will take place on the B1099, Upwell Road in March. A section of the road towards its junction with the B1098 (Sixteen Foot Bank) will provide an ideal location to trial a range of new engineering approaches in real-world conditions.

Construction will be followed by a twelve-month monitoring period to assess the performance of each treatment.

[Soil affected roads innovation trial | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

“Rewiring the State”

[The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority has been granted Established Mayoral Strategic Authority](#) status by the Government. Mayoral Authorities with this status will be in line for more powers to be passed from the Government to Mayors.

A statement by the Government at the end of July called [Rewiring the State](#) gives an idea of what this might involve. It includes giving Mayors control of budgets for 16-19 education, commuter rail services, social and affordable housing, with deputy mayors responsible for services from health to policing to education. A number of Planning powers are also proposed to be granted to Mayoral Authorities, with the [Government currently out for consultation on this](#).

From 2028 Mayors will also receive a share of local income tax and councils will retain more business rates.

In London the Mayor is held to account by a full, elected London Assembly. Outside London, it's not clear from the Government's proposals that much if any attention is being given to an increase in the effectiveness of scrutiny to match this accumulation of power.

County Councillors for the Sawston and Shelfords Division

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