

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT OCTOBER 2024

ADULTS & HEALTH

New Director of Public Health

Cambridgeshire County Council has a new Director of Public Health, Sally Cartwright, who joins us from Luton in January. The Director of Public Health is responsible for identifying and improving the health and wellbeing of residents, reducing inequalities in health outcomes and protecting local communities from public health hazards, such as infectious diseases and environmental threats.

Vaccination update

Vaccinations are now available for eligible people against a range of conditions including Covid, flu, pneumonia, shingles, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

Local GP practices are calling up eligible patients, or you can find out more at <https://www.cpics.org.uk/the-vaccinators/> and book with a local pharmacy or attend a convenient drop-in session without an appointment.

I've had my pneumonia and shingles jabs, and have booked my Covid and flu jabs at Haddenham pharmacy. I'm not eligible for the RSV vaccination as I'm neither aged 75 to 79 years, nor 28 weeks pregnant.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

School place appeal panel volunteers

Volunteers are urgently needed to hear appeals when children are not offered a place at their preferred school.

All parents or carers have the right to make an appeal to an independent appeal panel if their child is not offered a place at their preferred school. The role of the panel is to decide whether a child who has been refused a place by Cambridgeshire County Council should be given a place.

All parties involved must be given an appeal hearing that is transparent, accessible, independent and impartial. The appeal panel is independent of the local authority and its decisions are binding on all parties, unless overturned by the courts.

Volunteers will sit on the independent admission appeal panels and ensure that parents feel they have had a fair and independent hearing and have been given every opportunity to put their case and have been taken seriously.

Panel members must be able to listen to two sides of a case and weigh up evidence objectively and impartially. They must also be able to:

- Communicate effectively with a wide range of people
- Read and assess information and identify key points
- Listen to key information
- Ask questions to obtain information and clarify points being made
- Analyse information and use it to form opinions and conclusions
- Obtain and weigh up evidence to reach a decision
- Work as part of a team, take advice and develop their own skills

All volunteer Panel Members receive initial and annual refresher training and will be fully supported by the Appeals Service.

The time commitment depends on how much time volunteers are willing to give. While appeals are held throughout the year, the peak months are between April and July. The appeals are arranged either for half a day or a full day, and hearings are currently held online using Microsoft Teams.

Anyone interested in applying or who would like an informal chat about the role should contact **clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk**

Witchford Village College expansion

Works to expand Witchford Village College to increase its capacity to 975 places which had been put on hold were considered at the meeting of the Children & Young People Committee on 10 September and should now be going ahead.

New homes for children with complex needs

Cambridgeshire County Council's Assets & Procurement Committee has selected two former farmhouses close to each other in Soham as a pilot project to increase the number of local places available for children and young people with complex needs. Both properties, currently vacant, are owned by the Council. They will be fully refurbished and a provider will be offered a contract for up to ten years to provide care services to best meet the needs of the children.

Locally and nationally there is a growing need for placements, with children having to be placed out of the county due to a lack of local places and a limited number of registered settings being available. This project offers an opportunity for local and more stable placements, as well as avoiding over £635,000 of costs each year on private placements.

Looked after children

The Council's residential strategy for looked after children will be referred to the Strategy, Resources & Performance Committee. There remains a shortage of care placements for looked after children across the country.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Climate change progress report and carbon footprint

The County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee will receive on Thursday 3 October a progress report on its Climate Change & Environment Strategy, and the annual Carbon Footprint report.

This is the sixth annual Carbon Footprint report, and covers both the County Council's own carbon emissions, and those of Cambridgeshire as a whole.

Carbon emissions are classified into three 'scopes'.

- Scope 1 is direct emissions such as from gas or oil boilers and vehicles.
- Scope 2 is emissions from purchased electricity.
- Scope 3 is indirect emissions such as those of contractors and suppliers

The Council's Scope 1 and 2 are 42 per cent lower than in the baseline reporting year of 2018/19. Scope 2 is now always zero as the Council buys electricity through a zero-carbon contract. The Council's Scope 3 emissions for 2023/24 account for around 99 per cent of its carbon footprint, and were 111,307 tonnes CO₂e excluding the Council's rural estate—39 per cent lower than in 2018/19.

During 2023/24 the Council procured expert support to identify baseline carbon emissions for its rural estate, and more work needs to be done to agree an achievable target.

For Cambridgeshire as a whole, in 2022—the most recent available data—total greenhouse gas emissions were 6.45 million tonnes CO₂e, a three per cent fall from 2021. Transport (27 per cent) remains the highest emitting sector in the county, followed by land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF) (23 per cent), agriculture (15 per cent) and domestic energy use (13 per cent).

The risk of not reaching the Council's carbon targets has reduced but still remains considerable. Delivery of these targets relies on collaborating with our partner organisations.

Newly discovered Roman town given heritage protection

A newly discovered Roman small town south of Great Staughton has been given heritage protection as a scheduled monument by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport on the advice of Historic England.

Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for maintaining information about scheduled monuments in the county, and requested that test trenches be dug at Great Staughton during archaeology prior to the submission of proposals for a solar farm. As a result of the findings, panels will not be installed on that part of the site.

This site is now Cambridgeshire's second largest Roman Scheduled Monument after the walled town of Durobrivae, five miles west of Peterborough, and I was delighted to be asked on to BBC Radio Cambridgeshire to talk about it.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Local Highways Improvement schemes

The Highways & Transport Committee meeting on Tuesday 1 October is asked to agree which Local Highways Improvement (LHI) bids will be approved for the coming year. These are divided into complex and non-complex schemes.

Complex schemes

In East Cambridgeshire the complex schemes recommended for approval are

- Improvements to the crossing point at the B1102 crossroads (Lode)
- A speed limit change on Malting End Road and Woodditton Road (Kirtling)
- Speed reducing measures on Mildenhall Road (Fordham)

A further six schemes were not recommended because the first three schemes would use up all this year's available budget for complex schemes in East Cambridgeshire. These include the long wished-for weight limit for Sutton; two schemes in Ely, and schemes in Haddenham, Kennett, and Littleport.

Non-complex schemes

The non-complex schemes recommended for approval are

- Signing and road marking on Brinkley Road (Brinkley)
- An options report for the A1123 near Wilburton (Wilburton)
- Signing and road marking on Dane Hill Road (Kennett)
- Buffer zones on Bradley Road (Burrough Green)
- Mobile speed activated signs (Coveney)
- Parking restrictions such as double yellow lines or controlled parking on Bell Road, Tunbridge Lane and High Street (Bottisham)

A further three schemes—in Witchford, Wicken, and Chippenham—were not recommended for lack of funding.

Unfortunately the Local Highways Improvement process, though extremely popular, is very much a lottery, depending on officer or councillor scoring and the number of applications in any given year.

I raised this with officers and they have now proposed that any unsuccessful complex schemes like Sutton's are also added to the transport planning database for prioritisation through the council's Delivering Transport Strategy Aims programme. Unfortunately, as officers admit, 'this is also a process with a limited amount of funding which is competitively prioritised'.

Next year's application round

The application window for the next LHI application round will be as follows.

- Application window opens: Friday 1 November 2024
- Application window closes: Friday 10 January 2025
- Feasibility studies undertaken: February—May 2025
- Panel meetings: June—July 2025
- Report to committee including prioritised list for approval: October 2025

20MPH schemes

Local 20MPH schemes still prove hugely popular, with 91 schemes submitted by local communities for consideration, and a further eleven withdrawn for consideration under other proposals.

Only eight of the 91 schemes are recommended to the Highways & Transport Committee on Tuesday 1 October for implementation this coming year, again for lack of funding:

- Waterbeach (village-wide)
- Stow cum Quy (village-wide)
- Elm (village-wide)
- Bottisham (village-wide)
- Little Paxton (village-wide)
- Earith (majority of village)
- Swavesey (majority of village)
- Steeple Morden (central area of village)

Applications which were unsuccessful this time included Sutton's application for The Row, Painter's Lane, West Lodge Lane, and Mepal Road; Witchford and Wilburton's applications for the whole of their respective villages; and the A10 through Stretham.

A petition is being brought to the County Council's Highways & Transport Committee on Tuesday 1 October against the 20MPH installation in Ely.

Witchford cycle path

I am continuing to work with County Council officers to seek a solution to the *impasse* over the project to create a cycle path from the eastern end of the village to Lancaster Way business park.

The funding for the scheme awarded to the Parish Council by East Cambridgeshire District Council derives from Cambridgeshire Horizons, which requires the money to be spent by May 2027. The County Council says it can build the scheme in the summer of 2026, but will not guarantee that the work will not overrun past the deadline for the money to be spent—leaving the Parish Council holding a very expensive baby. I have asked County Council officers once more how they can resolve this, and am awaiting further information.

Witcham to Mepal pedestrian route

Following a request from Witcham Parish Council to reinstate a pedestrian route between Witcham and Mepal, I approached officers to ask what could be done. They agreed they could certainly make a difference by cutting back the overgrowth and creating a safer walking environment for pedestrians, and are pursuing this with contractors now that the nesting season is at an end.

Our Local Highways Officer Neal Stevens has also been doing a lot of work to address issues on Headleys Lane Witcham.

Little Downham sink hole

The local IDB approached me about a sink hole at the entrance to a farm off Ely Road. This followed the collapse of the culvert under Ely Road which receives flow from the Middle Fen and Mere IDB drain. I was able to impress the urgency of the matter on to the Council, and officers instructed their contractor to attend and make safe as an emergency. They are now seeking a permanent resolution to the issue.

Byway 12 Wardy Hill

The work to clear Byway 12 at Wardy Hill was not completed as expected. I took this up following a report from the parish council, and the Rights of Way officer noted that while contractors were sometimes held up by bad weather and other commitments, he expected the work to be finished by the end of September.

Stile at Sutton Gault

I received more than one report about the partial repairs to the stile leading to the walk from Sutton Gault down to Earith. A number of horizontal planks had been put in place filling the gap between the metal gate and the stile, through which less agile walkers—and their dogs—had previously been able to cut. Meanwhile the stile was left with just one high step, making it hard for some pedestrians to negotiate. This is an Environment Agency responsibility, and the Rights of Way officer has taken this up with the EA at my request.

Mill Road (Cambridge) closure

A special meeting of the Highways & Transport Committee takes place on Friday 4 October to determine afresh the application for a Traffic Regulation Order. This would restrict traffic over the bridge by motor vehicles, except local buses, taxis, Private Hire Vehicles, blue badge holders' registered vehicles, and other authorised vehicles. Access would be maintained for cyclists and pedestrians.

The Mill Road decision quashed by the court in August, and the statutory consultation relating to it, is not being taken into account, and the matter is being determined by a different group of councillors.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has now been released from the 'Best Value Notice' placed on it in January 2023 as the Government has recognised the improvement in the organisation.

The Authority's Transport & Infrastructure Committee is recommending that the Board allow older people and those with disabilities to use their bus passes before the current 9:30AM start.

The new Tiger Pass offers bus travel for £1 per journey for those aged up to 25. Details of how to apply for the new pass can be found at <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/onepoundbusfare/>

I was pleased to see that the Vision Zero road safety project is being revived. Its aims are to reduce the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on our roads and the social and financial impact of this, and to develop financially sustainable models of road safety activity. The original prospectus in 2020 aimed for zero killed or seriously injured by 2040 though this seems unlikely to be met.

A reminder that the Combined Authority's consultation on bus franchising continues until 20 November. Short and long questionnaires can be found at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation/>

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will be in the school Community Room on Monday 7 October and Monday 4 November at 6:30-7:30PM.

I hope to attend

- **Witchford** coffee morning Wednesday 2 October 10:30
- **Sutton** Timebank coffee morning Tuesday 8 October 10:00
- **Coveney** soup lunch Wednesday 16 October 10:30
- **Little Downham** book café Friday 11 October 10:00

Please note that these dates may be subject to change.

I can also be contacted

- by email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- on Facebook
- by phone on 07930 337596

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division