

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

To nobody's very great surprise, it has been revealed that the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government failed to undertake its own analysis of the financial implications of the ongoing local government reorganisation, relying instead on analysis by consultants PwC.

Fresh analysis of those figures shows that replacing the two-tier system with 58 new unitary councils with populations as low as 300,000 could end up costing £850 million over five years and deliver no long-term savings.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Cambridge Children's Hospital contractor appointed

A building contractor has been appointed to Cambridge Children's Hospital, which will be built on the same site that houses Addenbrooke's and Royal Papworth hospitals. Bouygues UK is expected to start within the next 18 months.

The facility will be the first specialist children's hospital in the East of England—the only region in the UK currently without one. The five-storey building will include 108 inpatient beds, sixteen paediatric intensive care beds, forty-two day-case beds, seven operating theatres, imaging and diagnostics, and a hospital school alongside a new research institute.

'Good' rating for adult social care services

Cambridgeshire County Council's adult social care services have been rated as 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), with its assessment finding that early support and flexible options are helping people stay independent longer.

Assessment began in November 2024, with a site visit in early April. It found that people who draw on the council's care felt supported, listened to and offered choices, with care being co-ordinated in a planned way considering people's interests and what was important to them.

A range of successes and areas of good practice were highlighted in the report, including:

- Prevention and Reablement success: Quick assessments and goal-focused care are enabling people to stay at home and thrive.
- Strong provider relationships: Staff build trust and offer tailored care packages, supported by robust quality assessments.

- Leadership that listens: A stable leadership team is driving cultural change and boosting morale.
- Wellbeing at work: Staff feel supported through flexible working, wellbeing initiatives, and caring leadership.

The report also includes a number of areas for improvement, including:

- Direct payments: The number of people receiving direct payments is significantly below the national average. This needs to be increased to give people more choice and control over their care.
- Equity and inclusion: The council needs to improve its use of demographic data to understand the needs of underrepresented groups in Cambridgeshire.
- Unpaid carers: The council should build on the work of its All Age Carers Strategy 2022-2026 to ensure unpaid carers have consistently good experiences.
- Transitions and continuity of care: The council should work to improve transitions from children's services to adults' services for young people, ensuring this is timely and well-coordinated.

www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/cambridgeshire-0825

Integrated Care Boards 'between a rock and a hard place'

NHS Integrated care boards (ICBs) have been left between a rock and a hard place over taking forward redundancy schemes to hit demanding cost reduction targets set by the Government.

In March, the Government announced that it was scrapping NHS England over the coming years and set a target for integrated care boards to reduce running costs by 50 per cent by the end of the third quarter of this year. It later refined this target to keeping running costs within £18.76 per head of population, meaning that ICBs face different cost reduction targets depending on their starting point. Redundancies will be essential to meet this target.

However, it has subsequently become clear that there is an expectation that all redundancy costs should be self-funded. However, this leaves ICBs facing the prospect of launching a redundancy scheme, where the costs have not been included in their financial plan, or putting schemes on hold and missing their target to reduce running costs.

ICBs are now stuck between a rock and a hard place, without the additional funds needed to pay for their own restructuring.

To meet the cost cutting requirements of the Government, most ICBs have agreed 'clustering' arrangements. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB has

clustered with Bedfordshire Luton & Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire, with a population of around 3.3 million people.

Annual Healthwatch summit

Healthwatch is an independent patient champion organisation consisting of a national body, Healthwatch England, and local Healthwatch groups focused on specific geographical areas. The current leadership team at Healthwatch Cambridgeshire have been active supporters of health scrutiny, including submitting reports and attending public scrutiny sessions to share the patient voice.

This years' annual summit is focusing on mental health and making local mental health services accessible to everyone. The event is taking place on Wednesday 8 October 2025 between 9:00AM and 2:50PM at the Delta Marriott Hotel, Kingfisher Way, Huntingdon PE29 6FL. It is free to attend and open to all. Booking required.

www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/form/sign-up-to-join-our-annualsummi

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Improvements in support for care leavers

The County Council has improved the support and stability it provides for care leavers in Cambridgeshire, according to a recent Ofsted report.

Ofsted carried out a focused visit in July, looking at the council's arrangements for care leavers. They concluded that arrangements have strengthened since their last visit in 2024, though there is still work to be done.

Inspectors commented that:

- 'Leaders are ambitious to support care leavers into employment, further education and training opportunities [...] The local authority is trailblazing the use of bursaries for care leavers over 19, supporting care leavers to remain longer in further education or giving care leavers who wish to return to employment, education or training, these opportunities.'
- 'Care leavers now have stronger and more purposeful relationships with their personal advisors and investment in additional staffing in the service is helping to reduce staff turnover and workloads.'
- 'Most care leavers live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs and increasing numbers are supported to remain living with their current carers through effective Staying Put arrangements.'
- 'Political and corporate leaders and care leavers have co-produced a convincing and aspirational pledge which sets out their commitment to help care leavers fulfil their full potential.'

The summary also identifies four areas for improvement:

- The quality and impact of front-line manager's supervision to promote and provide reflective practice for personal advisors
- The quality and impact of front-line managers oversight to ensure purposeful and considered case direction
- The quality and consistency of pathway planning
- The range and accessibility of suitable accommodation to meet care leavers needs.

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50285468>

Could you be a foster carer?

Cambridgeshire Fostering Service is looking for compassionate individuals and families across Cambridgeshire to become foster carers. By offering a stable, loving home, you can make a life-changing difference for children and young people who are unable to live with their families. Fostering doesn't have to be a long-term commitment—the council also needs carers for short-term fostering and respite care. Find out more

- 0800 052 0078
- www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/fostering-and-adoption
- Facebook www.facebook.com/CCCFosteringService/
- Instagram www.instagram.com/cambsfostering/

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION

Dementia Friendly Communities

The Communities Service has been supporting the work of East Cambs Dementia Friendly Communities to bring together and support people living with dementia and their carers. Together, local organisations have been offering fun activities and a chance to connect with others who understand and share similar experiences—including drop-in craft sessions in Littleport, dementia support groups at Ely Library, and singing groups in Ely and Soham.

For more information

- watch an animation from local artist Bob Banks which showcases the activities on offer at **<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCEfz3t3rmE>**
- or call Tracey Knott, Neighbourhood Carers Lead for Ely Primary Care Networks, on 07523 269754.

Cambridgeshire Skills course guide

Whether you're looking to boost your career, gain essential qualifications, or explore a new passion, there's something for everyone at Cambridgeshire Skills - from functional skills in English and maths, to horticulture and counselling.

Courses are delivered in venues across Cambridgeshire, with flexible learning options and expert tutors, making it easier than ever to learn locally.

Explore the full course guide on the Cambridgeshire Skills website or contact your local centre for more information.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/adults/cambridgeshire-skills-adult-learning

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Firm action to reduce disruption on Cambridgeshire roads

Cambridgeshire County Council is taking firm action to reduce disruption on the county's roads, issuing fines totalling £483,000 to utility companies and developers for non-compliant and over-running roadworks during 2024–25.

In total, the council processed more than 32,000 street and roadwork permits last year, regulating when and how works can take place on the highway.

- £185,000 was issued through Fixed Penalty Notices for 1,655 offences, including works that lacked a valid permit or breached the conditions of their permit.
- A further £298,000 was recovered from 201 works that overran, resulting in 1,191 extra days of disruption for road users and residents.

51 utility companies are entitled to work on Cambridgeshire's roads—and when that work is deemed an emergency they can legally start work even before notifying the council.

However, as the highways authority, the council does have powers to challenge how long emergency and urgent works remain in place. In 2024-25:

- Over 1,460 emergency permits were challenged for requesting excessive duration – more than 25% of all emergency permits.
- 254 immediate permit applications were rejected where they did not meet the legal criteria for emergency status.

One option the council is currently exploring is a lane rental scheme, which would allow the council to charge companies for the time that roadworks occupy the highway—with higher charges for works on the busiest streets at the busiest times. The council currently talking to other authorities about their experiences of lane rental.

Excessive and misleading signage

I'm challenging the council and its contractors over excessive and misleading road closure signage, particularly in the Little Downham and Pymoor area.

Recent projects have seen road closure signage giving the impression that drivers cannot access areas of our villages that are open, and sending them instead on unnecessary detours to Littleport and along the A1101.

Plans for signage of forthcoming roadworks on Ely Road Little Downham near Cowbridge Hall Road, and on Hundred Foot Bank, seem quite excessive, and I'm asking for them to be reviewed and reduced where possible.

New shuttle bus to Welney Wetland Centre

People can now access Welney Wetland Centre, near Littleport, by public transport thanks to a grant from Greater Anglia's Customer and Community Improvement Fund.

The train operator granted £9,334 to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust for a trial shuttle bus service connecting Welney Wetland Centre and Ely railway station, to help encourage more people to enjoy car-free days out.

The free minibus will run on Tuesdays and Saturdays, departing Ely railway station at 11:00 and 12:00, and departing Welney at 14:45 and 15:45.

The bus will run for a trial period from Tuesday 2 September to Saturday 29 November.

New highways system to go live in September

The County Council's new Asset Management system Aurora goes live on Monday 22 September. The current system will be taken offline on Thursday 18 September, and residents will not be able to log issues or defects online between 18 and 22 September.

Under the new system:

- Customer reports will be automatically directed to the correct officer or team, ensuring they are handled by the right person first time.
- All Highways Maintenance Officers will now be equipped with tablets, allowing them to inspect defects, raise work orders, and update customers directly while on-site.
- New workflows automatically escalate reports that are not progressed within agreed service level timescales, helping to prevent delays and improve response times.
- Performance dashboards will ensure no cases are overlooked.
- Officers can send updates directly from the system, meaning residents receive regular progress updates on their reports.
- Reports can be managed dynamically by officers in the field, and loaded into inspection routes so they can be reviewed at the same time.

- The system will task officers with inspecting completed work and identifying any defects. If defects are identified these will be flagged to contractors and corrected.

Road works programme

A reminder that the council's road works programme can be found at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/road-improvements

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

Sutton surgery

Cllr Mark Inskip and I hold our monthly surgery at Joy Bistro 65 High Street Sutton. Forthcoming dates are Monday 6 October and Monday 3 November, 18:30-19:30.

Or catch me on ...

- Wednesday 10 September, 11:00-12:00, Scott Court Sutton (Nellie's)
- Tuesday 16 September, 10:00, The Glebe Sutton (Timebank coffee)
- Wednesday 17 September, 10:00, St Andrew's Hall (Witchford coffee)
- Wednesday 17 September, 14:00, Little Downham Village Hall (book café)
- Wednesday 24 September, 10:30, Coveney soup lunch

The above dates may change at short notice subject to late changes to my diary.

I can also be contacted ...

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

County Councillor for the Sutton division