

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT MAY 2026

FULL COUNCIL

Fenland county councillor Andy Osborn (Roman Bank and Peckover), elected as a Reform UK councillor, is currently a non-aligned independent and is suspended from duties after being found guilty of breaking electoral law by making or publishing a false statement about an opposing candidate.

Mr Osborn remains entitled to hold his seat until any appeal has been lodged and discharged. No vacancy can be declared until, at the earliest, the period in which an appeal can be lodged has first expired. The earliest date for the seat to be declared vacant is 6 May, if Mr Osborn chooses not to appeal. If he appeals, the seat will not become vacant until 15 July, unless the appeal is discharged earlier than this date.

At the time of writing, the composition of the county council is therefore as follows.

Liberal Democrat	32
Conservative	10
Reform UK	8
Labour	5
Green	3
Independent	2
Non-aligned Independent	1
Total	61

The Annual Meeting of the County Council will take place on Tuesday 19 May.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

More children offered first choice primary school place

94.7 per cent of Cambridgeshire children have been offered places at their first preference primary school this September, up 0.6 per cent on last year. The proportion offered a place at either their first, second or third choice school has marginally increased to 98.9 per cent. Just over one per cent of pupils (65 children) have been allocated places at schools not among their expressed preferences, the second lowest proportion recorded in the last five years.

This year saw a slight reduction in the total number of applications received for a primary school place—from 6,457 in 2025 to 6,313 this year.

Successful Healthy Child Programme extended

Councillors have agreed to extend the Healthy Child Programme partnership for two more years. The partnership with Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust (now part of the new East of England Community Health & Care NHS Trust) is a national public health programme which aims to achieve good outcomes for all children from before birth through to age nineteen. It includes health visiting for 0-5s, and school nursing for 5-19s.

Since the agreement began a year ago, health visiting performance has steadily improved and in many categories Cambridgeshire is now above regional and national benchmarks.

The percentage of Cambridgeshire children achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the reception year at school has also seen recent improvements, particularly for children on free school meals. New oral health sessions have been delivered in primary schools, alongside parent/carer webinars to support primary to secondary transition, and the creation of new resources for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Meanwhile the Family Nurse Partnership, a dedicated programme to support vulnerable young parents which is delivered as part of the scheme, has seen positive outcomes encouraging breastfeeding and reducing levels of smoking and teen pregnancies.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

New vehicle for mobile library service

Cambridgeshire Libraries has been awarded £150,000 by Arts Council England to replace an ageing mobile library with a new, modern vehicle. This is likely to be deployed largely in Fenland.

Digital Hubs second round of funding now open

Connecting Cambridgeshire is now accepting applications for the next round of Digital Hubs funding. Community spaces can apply for grants of up to £4,200 to provide residents with free WiFi and digital devices and offer support with digital skills.

www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk/about/help-to-get-online/apply-to-become-a-digital-hub/

Slow cooker offer from Cambridgeshire ACRE

Cambridgeshire ACRE are currently running a programme across East Cambridgeshire to support people with the cost of living, focusing on practical, low-cost ways to prepare nutritious meals while keeping energy costs down.

As part of this work, they can offer a slow cooker donation and information-only option for community groups, food banks, and food support sessions. This would include

- donation of slow cookers for people who don't already have one and feel it would help them at home
- clear, easy-to-read information on safe and effective use of a slow cooker
- simple, affordable recipe ideas using low-cost ingredients commonly available through food support

This option is designed to be very light-touch and can be delivered discreetly alongside existing sessions, without adding pressure for volunteers or people using the service.

Cambridgeshire ACRE are also offering, where practical, free slow cooker demonstrations that can be delivered within community groups or food support sessions. These sessions are designed to be flexible and low-key and can work alongside food parcel distribution or existing activities. The session would include

- a short, practical demonstration using low-cost ingredients commonly available through food support
- information on running costs and safe use of slow cookers
- simple, affordable recipe ideas
- the option to provide free slow cookers to people who don't already have one, where appropriate

More information from Rachel.Mason@cambsacre.org.uk

The Library Presents

Details of the latest *The Library Presents* season (16 May to 25 July) are now out. www.library.live/the-library-presents

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Grunty Fen landfill fires

A high-level multi-agency meeting took place on 28 April regarding the ongoing situation at Grunty Fen.

The County Council's lead member for the landfill site, Cllr Tom Hawker-Dawson, joined representatives from the Environment Agency, Police, Fire Service, district council, county council officers and the site operator for detailed discussions on recent incidents, site operations, air quality, litter, highways concerns and the impact on the local community.

Tom made clear the strength of local feeling and reinforced the concerns residents have raised with us.

A live regulatory assessment process is being conducted by the Environment Agency into recent incidents and site compliance. The Environment Agency has advised that it will keep us updated as soon as this process concludes.

We also raised residents' concerns regarding hazardous waste. We were assured that hazardous waste is not accepted at the site, and that waste loads are subject to robust checking procedures monitored by the Environment Agency.

While last week's fire was understood to have resulted from a hot waste load, previous deliberate fire-setting incidents remain firmly in mind. We were advised that a number of additional security measures have been introduced since the most recent such incident, and that site security arrangements continue to be kept under review.

Residents' concerns regarding highways impacts have been formally escalated, and we have been assured that the operator is implementing measures to prevent litter from escaping into the surrounding area.

We understand that waste importation is still expected to conclude by the current restoration deadline of 31 December 2026. This is an important factor in considering potential next steps—the sooner the site is restored, the sooner the site can close permanently. Although waste importation is expected to finish on time, final finishing works may continue into 2027.

We will continue to keep residents updated as further information becomes available.

Isle of Ely Villages Nature Recovery Project

A new project developed by Sustainable South East Cambridgeshire and Surrounding Areas (SSECAM) encourages the Isle of Ely parishes—Coveney, Haddenham, Little Downham, Little Thetford, Mepal, Stretham, Sutton, Wentworth, Wilburton, Witcham, and Witchford—to join forces to create a landscape where nature and people thrive side by side. This includes existing community groups as well as new people.

At the centre of this is growing a team of Nature Detectorists: local residents who care about their surroundings and want to play an active role improving habitats on their doorstep.

Who is a Nature Detectorist?

A Nature Detectorist is any community member who enjoys exploring their local area and spotting opportunities to help wildlife. You don't need to be an expert—just curious, observant and willing to get involved. Much like metal

detectorists uncover hidden treasures, Nature Detectorists uncover hidden potential for biodiversity. Together, they help identify opportunities such as:

- Planting hedgerows or native trees
- Restoring or creating ponds
- Improving streams, ditches and wetlands
- Enhancing woodland management
- Encouraging wildlife-friendly gardens
- Installing bird boxes, bat boxes or hedgehog highways
- Identifying land for community nature spaces

This is about neighbours working together to protect the landscapes they love. Contact Peter Bates at peter@ssecam.org if you are interested.

£1.48M grant to boost water resilience

Councillors have approved plans for a new £1.38 million grant scheme to help farmers and growers across Cambridgeshire use water more efficiently and reduce pressure on the county's chalk streams and water resources.

The Government-funded Water Resilience Grant Scheme will be delivered by Water Resources East (WRE), and will support practical measures such as rainwater harvesting, on-farm water storage and more efficient irrigation. These improvements will help farms become more resilient and access alternative water sources, helping to manage overall water demand across homes, businesses, and the environment.

Detailed design is still being worked through, and more information on how and when farms can apply will be shared in the coming weeks.

Cambridgeshire is already facing growing pressure on water resources. Helping farms and horticultural businesses reduce the amount of water they need to take from rivers and chalk streams will increase water resilience whilst supporting wildlife and protecting sensitive habitats.

More information will be published on the county council and WRE websites when available.

HEALTH SCRUTINY

The new Central East Integrated Care Board was officially launched on 1 April 2026. There is a new Central East ICB website which includes the new Board's five year strategy, called *Our Way*.

www.centraleast.icb.nhs.uk/

www.centraleast.icb.nhs.uk/about/icb/five-year-plan/

A new pilot scheme enables patients from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with worrying breast cancer symptoms to be referred directly to specialist clinics at Addenbrooke's, Hinchingsbrooke or Peterborough hospital, without needing a GP appointment. The new self-referral service is available via NHS 111 online or the NHS App and means patients do not need to wait for a GP appointment and subsequent hospital referral, offering eligible patients faster access to diagnostic care. Patients complete a symptom assessment via NHS 111 online.

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

The latest update from East of England Ambulance Service reports an improved average response time of 28 minutes 15 seconds for Category 2 emergency calls like chest pain or symptoms of stroke. This is within the thirty-minute target set for all ambulance trusts by NHS England; and it is the local ambulance trust's best monthly average since May 2021.

Ahead of the building of the new Cambridge Children's Hospital which is due to start next year, the project has been bringing together the project team, construction team, parents, staff and other stakeholders to review the final designs for the hospital. Meanwhile a new study is looking at how health impacts school readiness. Called BLOOMS (Babies' Longitudinal Outcomes, Omics and Milestones Study), it aims to predict which babies in Neonatal Intensive Care Units are most likely to need additional help to prepare them for school. Although BLOOMS starts recruiting children in 2026, several years before the new hospital opens, it will be one of the Cambridge Children's Research Institute's flagship programmes.

The Care Quality Commission has published the findings of a community mental health survey of over 12,000 service users. Results for individual trusts can be found including those for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT). The Commission served a warning notice on Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust on 12 March 2026 for failing to meet the regulations related to person-centred care, dignity and respect, safe care and treatment and good governance at Fulbourn Hospital and the Cavell Centre in Peterborough.

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/provider/RT1/surveys/134>

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Local Highway Improvements

Four parishes in the Sutton division have submitted Local Highway Improvement applications this year.

- Mepal: MVAS units (two)
- Witcham: speed limit change (village-wide)
- Witchford: priority narrowing (Main Street)

- Coveney: various signage eg road narrows, single track road no passing places, pedestrians in road, and distance subplate (near Wardy Hill)

Indicative timescales for determination of applications are as follows.

Complex applications

- April–May: Feasibility report preparation and distribution
- June–July: Scoring panel sessions with applicant presentations
- August–September: Finalisation of prioritised funding lists

Non-complex applications

- April–June: Ongoing scoring of applications
- July–August: Finalisation of prioritised funding lists

Funding award

- Tuesday 6 October: CCC Highways & Transport Committee

Sutton to Mepal cycleway

Work is ongoing to investigate a new segregated cycle route across the A142 from Sutton to Mepal. The aim is to install a new signalised crossing and speed reduction on the A142, with upgrades to the existing paths at either side to provide a safer active travel route.

Street lighting

The county council's programme of LED street light replacements is continuing, with work planned for Sutton, Wentworth and Witcham in August.

Road updates

Straight Furlong, Pymoor: as a result of the recent works, the verge now slopes much more steeply down and less road width is safely usable. At the time of writing, options are being considered and costed to address this.

Station Road, Sutton: this project completed ahead of schedule and has been well received.

Prioritisation for road maintenance 2027/28: the condition of the road network across Cambridgeshire will be mapped in the coming weeks, and the results reviewed to help determine priorities for funding from April 2027.

Cambridgeshire's road hierarchy will also be reviewed in 2027. Road types in the hierarchy below motorway level are as follows.

- Strategic route
- Main distributor
- Secondary distributor
- Link road

- Local access road
- Minor road

'Close pass' campaign for cyclists and horse riders

A new campaign is being launched by Cambridgeshire County Council to highlight a change in the Highway Code which came into force in 2022.

Following the change to Rule 163, motorists may overtake only when it is legal and safe to do so and now need to leave at least 1.5 metres between their vehicles and people on bikes when driving at speeds up to 30MPH—and more space at higher speeds. The rule also makes clear that drivers should give motorcyclists, cyclists and horse riders at least as much room as when overtaking a car.

For pedestrians walking in the road—for example where there is no pavement—motorists should allow at least two metres and pass slowly. When passing horse riders and horse-drawn vehicles, drivers should slow to under 10MPH.

Motorists are also instructed to take extra care and give more space in bad weather including high winds and at night. Rule 163 makes clear that drivers should not overtake if it is unsafe or if it is not possible to meet these clearances.

As part of the campaign to reduce close passes, temporary signs will be installed on lampposts on roads throughout the county through to the end of 2027. Adverts are being run on Stagecoach and Whippet buses along with social media promotion and messages across the county's roadside Variable Messaging Signs. www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/close-pass-campaign

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 1 June and Monday 6 July, 18:30-19:30.

On Wednesday 27 May I hope to be at the Coveney coffee morning at 10:30AM and Little Downham Book Café at 2:00PM.

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 divisi