

County Councillor Monthly Report - Sawston & Shelford Division

(includes Sawston, Little and Great Shelfords, Stapleford, Babraham, South Trimpington, Hauxton, Harston, Newton and Haslingfield)

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Congratulations to Harston Village Hall on its 100th Birthday

Huge thank you and congratulations to all involved in organising the Harston Village Hall centenary celebrations. We have both attended the live broadcast of BBC Radio 4 'Any Questions' on 3rd November which was an interesting and enjoyable experience. All other planned celebrations were an equally huge success.

LHI Scheme window open

The LHI application window has now reopened. The window will remain open until **Friday 12th January at 5pm**.

More information can be found on our website at the following:

- Application form and associated guidance – Applying for a Local Highway Improvement (LHI) - Cambridgeshire County Council
- Measures and indicative costs – Local Highway Improvement funding - Cambridgeshire County Council

As well as this you can find further information on those schemes currently in our LHI delivery programme here: [Local Highway Improvement Delivery Programme - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Flooding

Storm Babet and Storm Cieran hit Cambridgeshire on 20 October, leaving some households with external or even internal flooding to their homes, or without flushing toilets, as well as seeing a number of roads closed. County Council highways officers have been working through the various incidents logged, and the Flood & Water team is pulling together an overall picture of events. If you were affected by flooding, and have not yet reported it to the County Council, please do so, as it is really important to build up a full picture of what happened.

- You can report flood issues affecting your home or property at cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Flood_reporting (This is not the place to report flooding in an emergency.)
- You can report highways-related flooding (blocked road drains, sewers, gullies, for example) at highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk

East West Rail

The National Audit Office has agreed to Cambridge Approaches' and local MPs' requests to review the EWR business case – such as it is. This investigation will examine:

- how the context for the East West Rail project has changed over time
- the Department for Transport's assessments of the economic and strategic case for the East West Rail project
- the cross-government working to plan and deliver the intended outcomes

The investigation is scheduled for Winter 2023/2024, so we are unlikely to receive any results before March 2024 the earliest.

Supermarket vouchers continue

The supermarket voucher scheme will continue to operate for all eligible families in Cambridgeshire with Cambridgeshire County Council running the scheme until the February 2024 half term using the Household Support Fund from the Department for Work & Pensions and additional funding provided by the Council. Eligible families get a £15 voucher via email or text to be used at a choice of ten supermarkets. The voucher scheme has been a huge success since it was introduced and appreciated keenly by families struggling in the current financial climate. A survey revealed that over seventy per cent of families said the vouchers had helped them cope with the rising cost of living.

Care quality initiative

A new initiative to improve the quality of care and support for Cambridgeshire residents has been approved by the council's Adults and Health Committee and is to be launched by the County Council. The new initiative for the adult social care workforce, supported by investment of over £1M, seeks to address problems of recruitment and retention in the sector, support skills development, and drive up the quality of services.

The County Council already requires care providers with whom it contracts to pay the Real Living Wage. The Council will now also seek to embed the new approach to build skills in the workforce into future contracts with care providers. A high-quality Care Certificate will be offered by the Council at low cost to care providers and to care workers themselves.

Next stage approval for Children's Hospital

Cambridge Children's Hospital, which will be the first specialist children's hospital for the East of England, has been given the green light to proceed to the final stage of its business case development. The hospital, which was awarded planning permission in March 2022, is being built on the Biomedical Campus, and will care for children and young people across the whole of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It will be the first hospital designed to truly provide mental and physical health care together, delivered by staff who are trained in both. While the hospital will be built in Cambridge it will act as a central hub, working with services all over the East of England to provide care and support for children who may never visit the hospital itself.

Healthwatch Primary Care access survey – please share

Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is launching a survey on 1st November 2023 to gather people's experiences of accessing Primary Care services, such as GP services. This survey, which will remain open until 17th December 2023, is being conducted independently by Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with the support of NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.

NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough understand how important local access to health services are, such as your GP Practice, and are keen to hear your experiences, feedback and thoughts on ways in which you currently access local GP services and how these could be improved.

<https://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/form/primary-care-access-survey>

Climate scorecard

Campaigning organisation Climate Emergency UK once again published a 'scorecard' for each council to measure how it was responding to climate change. As the methodology changes every year it is not possible to compare present against past scores. Cambridgeshire was ranked fifth out of all county councils on this year's scorecard, with a gold star for our work on decarbonising buildings and heating. We scored lower than average on biodiversity, and on waste reduction and food. This is unsurprising, given that Cambridgeshire is the most biodiversity-deprived county in the country, and that the Waterbeach waste facility is out of action while the council and its contractor Thalia seek to resolve compliance issues.

<https://councilclimatescorecards.uk/scoring/county/>

County Council budget gap

Cambridgeshire County Council's estimated budget gap for 2024/25 has increased from a predicted £16M to more than £23M—largely due to increases in demand for services and inflationary pressure. Without action being taken this gap will grow, and is predicted to be more than £20M in the following year, and a further £19M and more the year after that. Cambridgeshire is not alone.

The Local Government Association currently reports that councils across the country face an 'inflationary storm' with a predicted £4Bn funding gap over the next two years. A report from the Council's Chief Executive says: "In 2023-24, pressures on our budget have arisen principally due to several very high-cost children's social care placements and a delay in receiving income from a newly constructed solar farm (which requires connection to the electricity grid). In addition, we are seeing that demand for bed-based care for older people is also rising, following a period of reduction in demand and then stability stretching back for some time, to the beginning of the pandemic."

The report also points to wider national and international issues which have an impact on the council's pressures—such as interest rates which the Bank of England has said are likely to remain above five per cent until 2026. This will affect all goods and services the council buys, the cost of borrowing, and pay award costs for council workers as well as for a large externally commissioned workforce which includes staff working in residential care for vulnerable adults and children.

The report highlights how all services in the council have been the subject of a comprehensive exercise to find efficiencies, alongside a number of specific reviews into particularly high cost areas such as home to school transport, children's social care placements, and high levels of historic adult social care debt. Proposals to set the Council's 2024/5 budget will be discussed by councillors in December before a period of scrutiny during January, including an opportunity for residents to comment on the plans.