

County Councillor Report for Parishes June 2025 Councillors Laurence Damary-Homan and Peter Fane Sawston and Shelford division

COUNTY COUNCIL

Following the election, the make-up of the 61-seat council is:

Liberal Democrat	31	Labour	5
Conservative	10	Green	3
Reform UK	10	Independent	2

ANNUAL MEETING 20 May 2025

The meeting appointed Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees. Cllr Peter McDonald is the new chair of Council, Lucy Nethsingha continues as Leader with Lorna Dupre as Deputy Leader.

Laurence Damary-Homan is vice-chair of Communities and Social Inclusion committee, which meets 5th June. Peter Fane is vice-chair of the Audit and Accounts committee.

ADULTS AND HEALTH

NHS England has published what has been described as a 'draft blueprint of the future model of ICBs' (local Integrated Care Board) which are responsible for planning, funding, and commissioning NHS services for their local populations. Spending per head by ICBs, which varies across the country from £20 to £50, is to be cut to £18.76 per head. Plans on how ICBs will meet this new and demanding target have yet to be submitted.

There will also be a shift in the functions of ICBs, including to neighbourhood health providers. Boards were told in March they must cut their running costs by around half by October 2025 and to focus on reducing duplication when making cuts. Health minister Karin Smyth recently revealed that no impact assessment had been conducted of the decision to reduce ICB running costs.

Adult learning services – good and outstanding

Ofsted found that learners and apprentices studying through Cambridgeshire County Council's adult learning services thrive due to the warm, nurturing and inclusive learning environment and substantial new knowledge and skills they learn.

Cambridgeshire Skills offers education and training for adult learners, the largest programmes of which are tailored learning, adult skills and family learning. Courses are run by sub-contractors and are offered online and in around 87 community venues across Cambridgeshire, including community centres, libraries and schools. The service works closely with the county council's **Learning and Development team** to provide apprenticeship opportunities.

The Ofsted inspection of the two teams, which took place in late April and early May, reported that the overall effectiveness of the service to be 'Good.' It judged the behaviour and attitude of learners to be 'Outstanding', with a rating of 'Good' awarded in every other category.

The report highlights a range of areas of good practice, including widening participation and transforming lives. They noted that subcontracted partners are selected carefully so that courses are targeted precisely at communities most in need, such as traveller communities and refugee centres. Inspectors also found that: 'Curriculums are well structured allowing learners and apprentices to build their learning in meaningful steps. Tutors plan logically, allowing learners to build foundation knowledge before tackling more complex topics.'

The report praises the behaviour and conduct of learners as being exemplary, adding: 'They benefit from a warm, nurturing and inclusive environment where they thrive, gain confidence to make new friends and develop their social networks.'

Also recognised by inspectors is the support for learners and apprentices with SEND: 'Leaders have suitable arrangements to identify and support learners and apprentices with SEND. Tutors provide a range of appropriate support mechanisms, such as in-class support and individualised learning resources. As a result, learners and apprentices with SEND progress well on their courses.'

The report includes three areas where the service needs to improve. The teams have taken steps to address them:

- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills mathematics qualification at levels 1 and 2.
- Help tutors teaching accredited courses to provide learners with useful feedback on how they can improve their work and skills further.
- Provide effective career information, advice and guidance for learners on accredited courses.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

National inspectors from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published their report (May) on provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in the county.

The County Council and the NHS are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of these services as part of the Cambridgeshire Area SEND Partnership, for children and young people with SEND in Cambridgeshire. The partnership has been given the middle rating of three possible outcomes.

The inspectors highlighted several areas of good practice, including a clear and coherent strategy, the capacity to improve provision, and strong relationships across the partnership.

It made five recommendations for improvement:

1. Improved timeliness and quality of Education Health & Care Plans.
2. Improved access and shorter waiting times for specialist mental health pathways and neurodevelopmental assessments.
3. Better opportunities for 'co-production' with children and young people with SEND, so their voices and views are more fully included.
4. Improved support for children and young people with SEND as they prepare for adulthood, especially in mainstream schools.
5. Better communication of the local area partnership's offer, so that schools, services and families know about and understand what the area seeks to provide.

The council has already invested £500,000 to manage the increased demand for Education Health & Care Plans and approved a further £920,000 annual investment in February this year.

The full report is at <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50276860>

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION

Cambridgeshire Libraries give access to Ancestry, the database where you can search millions of historical documents and genealogy resources, including the 1921 census. Ancestry is available at the County Council's 33 libraries and is free to access with your library card.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Disposable vapes - From 1 June it will be illegal to sell or supply disposable vapes. The government ban is being introduced to tackle the impact of these items on the environment.

It is also hoped the move will help cut the number of children and young people vaping. Retailers caught breaking the law in England face a minimum £200 fine, with a prison sentence of up to two

years for repeat offences. Trading Standards will be able to seize any single-use vapes they find. It is estimated that almost five million single-use vapes a week are either littered or thrown away in general waste in the UK. It is regrettable that re-useable vapes are being manufactured to look almost indistinguishable for disposable vapes and at a similar price point; the fear is that re-useable vapes will be disposed of as disposable vapes were.

Battery charging - safety reminder

Charging batteries have caused six fires in homes across the county so far this year. Firefighters have been called to fires involving batteries being overcharged, resulting in thermal runaway from the lithium-ion contained in them and causing significant damage to people's homes.

The fire service is urging residents to only use **official charging cables and devices, avoid overcharging**, and never buy cheap battery conversion kits that may not meet UK safety standards.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

The Highways and transport committee meets on 17 June.

A1307 (old A14) maintenance works continue

Maintenance work continues on the A1307, with 40MPH speed limits expected to be lifted by the end of the summer. The County Council took over responsibility for this road from National Highways in 2024.