Cambridgeshire County Council

MONTHLY REPORT NOVEMBER 2026

Sawston and Shelfords Division (Cllrs Damary-Homan & Fane)

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government announced at the end of October that it has still not drawn conclusions about new council boundaries for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Minister has committed to coming back to Parliament with updates on outcomes in another set of areas by Christmas, and to work to ensure that every area will have an outcome by early next year. The Government now advises that there will be shadow elections to new unitary councils in 2028, and that the new councils will be up and running in May 2029.

FULL COUNCIL

The Full Council meeting on Tuesday 13 October

- agreed to ask the county's Vision Zero partnership for a more proactive approach to road safety
- asked for better coordination of utility works and invited water companies to work more collaboratively with the council on highway impacts, leaks and infrastructure planning
- called for better public awareness of e-bike and e-scooter rules
- backed greater engagement with the national 'Big Conversation' on Care

Armed Forces Covenant

At the full council meeting, Cambridgeshire County Council formally signed the Armed Forces Covenant, reaffirming its support for serving personnel, veterans, reservists, and military families across the county.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a national pledge that recognises the contribution made by current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families. Signatories commit to ensuring that members of the Armed Forces community are treated fairly and not disadvantaged as a result of their service.

In June this year, councillors agreed to formally sign the Armed Forces Covenant, bolstering the support provided through the 2011 Armed Forces Community Covenant and making a public declaration of support for and commitment to the Armed Forces community.

The Council already plays a key role in supporting the Armed Forces community by hosting and part-funding the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Coordinator and helping to coordinate the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Armed Forces Covenant Partnership, which brings together more than 50 organisations to strengthen support across the county.

It is also helping create new routes into employment for veterans and military families through organisations including the Career Transition Partnership and Forces Families Jobs. Through its library network, the Council provides free community spaces for Armed Forces groups and practical support for veterans, including help with applications for Veterans Badges and signposting to specialist services.

STRATEGY, RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Council budget

A reminder that the council's public engagement process on this phase of its budget planning closes on Sunday 15 November, and can be found at https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business-planning/27-28-phase-1-engagement/

ADULTS & HEALTH

Neighbourhood Health Plan

The Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Neighbourhood Health Plan has been developed in response to national NHS plans. This has involved joint working between councils, NHS, voluntary organisations and the Combined Authority.

The Plan focuses on prevention, reducing health inequalities, supporting independence, and bringing services closer to communities.

The plan proposes four shared priorities for these organisations:

1. Improved access to prevention, early diagnosis and healthy environments.
2. Proactive neighbourhood health teams.
3. Improved access to advice, diagnostics, specialist support and ongoing management of long-term conditions closer to home.
4. Better community-based alternatives to hospital care, supporting people to remain independent wherever possible.

The Plan will be owned by the NHS but has significant implications for how the County Council delivers some of its services. Four areas in which the Council can make a difference to health outcomes have been identified:

- Poverty, including fuel poverty and warm homes
- Community transport and health
- Best start in life for young children, and family hubs
- Frailty including falls prevention

Day opportunities: adults with learning disabilities and autism

The council's Adults & Health Committee has agreed a new way of purchasing day opportunities for adults with learning disabilities and autism. Valued at £64M over eight years, the replacement arrangements have been shaped by the people who use these services, their families and carers, and service providers.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION

High impact A&E use

Cambridgeshire County Council has secured more than £600,000 in funding to continue delivering a pioneering High Impact Use (HIU) service, helping residents with complex needs access the right support while reducing their visits to hospital Accident and Emergency departments by at least 40 per cent.

A new agreement with NHS Central East Integrated Care Board (ICB) will bring over £600,000 of funding for 2027/28. This will enable the Council to continue hosting the High Impact Use Operational Team throughout the 2027/28 financial year in partnership with the Integrated Care Board, local hospitals and the East of England Ambulance Service.

The HIU Service works with residents who frequently attend A&E but whose needs are often rooted in wider social, emotional or practical challenges rather than medical issues alone. Since launching in October 2024, the service has delivered positive outcomes for residents while helping to reduce pressure on frontline health services. Health-related costs for an initial group of service users fell from an average of £18,333 per person per year to £3,401 per person per year.

Cambridgeshire County Council remains the only local authority in the country to host a High Impact Use service directly. The innovative model has attracted national as well as local recognition.

Domestic abuse refuges

Councillors have given approval to procure three domestic abuse refuges across Cambridgeshire from 1 April 2027, maintaining 32 places for women and accompanying children. The proposed contract is for three years with optional extensions, funded from the ring-fenced Safe Accommodation Domestic Abuse Grant.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT

Free tree and hedgerow packs

Applications are open for a free tree and hedgerow giveaway to landowners, community groups, parish councils or organisations looking to create wildlife habitat,

connect existing green spaces, or enhance local landscapes.

Delivered in partnership with the Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission, this ambitious community-led nature recovery programme hopes to increase tree and hedgerow cover across the county, restore natural habitats on council land and support community-led nature recovery projects.

Each tree pack funded by the Woodland Trust contains 50 native broadleaved trees and 1.2 metre tubes and stakes, and is suitable for planting approximately 0.03 hectares of new tree cover. Organisations may apply for a maximum of two packs.

Each hedgerow pack funded by the Forestry Commission contains 250 native hedgerow shrubs, guards and protection and two to three hedgerow trees, and is suitable for creating approximately 50 metres of new hedgerow. Applicants may apply for a maximum of three.

People or groups applying for the free packs can apply for a hedgerow pack, a tree pack or both and must confirm that trees or hedgerows will be planted by the end of February 2027. Applicants must agree to follow planting and maintenance guidance and continue ongoing maintenance of the trees and hedgerow.

To sign up for a tree or hedgerow pack, or for more information, please visit https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cambridgeshire-free-tree-hedgerow-pack-giveaway-202627-tickets-2003129163250

Tree and hedgerow packs will be available until all packs are allocated. Packs will be available for collection from a central Cambridgeshire location during National Tree Week (21-29 November 2026), or February half term 2027. Successful applicants will receive further details after registering.

New contracts to operate and maintain council's solar farms

The council has approved plans to procure new contracts to operate and maintain the council's large-scale energy assets. The decision supports the continued operation of the council's two solar farms near Soham, which generate clean energy, reduce carbon emissions and provide income that can be reinvested in local and frontline services.

- Triangle Solar Farm generates around 13 million kWh of electricity each year, enough to power around 3,000 homes, and delivered approximately £780,000 in net revenue to support council services in 2025-26.
- North Angle Solar Farm can produce enough renewable electricity to meet the annual needs of around 12,000 households. Since becoming operational, it has generated £4M for the council and supplies power directly to the Swaffham Prior Heat Network energy centre.

The solar farms form part of the council's wider portfolio of energy projects, which also includes the Swaffham Prior Heat Network and smart energy grids at the St Ives and Babraham Road Park & Ride sites.

The new contracts will cover routine inspections, performance monitoring, fault repairs and site management activities, helping ensure the solar farms remain safe, compliant and operating efficiently.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Education Health & Care Plans

Councillors have resolved to commit up to £2M to tackle long waiting times for families applying for Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) assessment in Cambridgeshire.

The council's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) team has been working to increase the percentage of assessments completed within the statutory 20-week timeframe while also prioritising applications from those who have been waiting the longest.

The council's latest data confirms that total plans delivered this year has increased significantly compared with 2025 (from an average of 38 per month January-May 2025, to 96 per month January-July 2026). However, over the same period, new assessment requests have also continued to rise from an average of 159 per month to 208 per month – resulting in a net increase of 784 applications to the current backlog.

The Children & Young People committee will receive comprehensive and regular updates to show how the extra investment is working. Meanwhile, over £4.8M has been released by the council to support mainstream schools experiencing the greatest pressure from delayed EHCP assessments.

Children in Care Awards

On Friday 9 October, more than 120 children, young people, carers and supporters came together at Inflatebounce in Huntingdon to celebrate the achievements of Cambridgeshire's children in care.

The annual Children in Care Celebration and Awards is an opportunity for Cambridgeshire County Council to recognise and celebrate the successes, talents and achievements of children and young people in its care.

Ahead of the celebration, staff and carers submitted more than 600 award nominations, highlighting the remarkable achievements of over 440 Cambridgeshire children in care. The nominations recognised everything from academic success and personal growth to acts of kindness, resilience and determination. Together, they paint a picture of a group of young people whose talent, resilience and ambition continue to inspire those around them.

Foster Carer Awards recognise 450 years of service

More than 50 foster carers were recognised at an awards ceremony held at Burgess Hall in St Ives for their dedication to supporting Cambridgeshire's children in care.

The Foster Carer Awards provide an opportunity for Cambridgeshire County Council to recognise and celebrate the extraordinary commitment of the council's foster carers and the difference they make. This year, the awards recognised 45 different fostering households, celebrating milestones of five, ten, fifteen, twenty and fifty years of

dedicated service.

Together, these fostering households have contributed more than 450 years of collective fostering service, reflecting decades of care and support for local children and young people.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT

Contractor ‘incentives’ active

The ‘incentives’ in the highway maintenance contract extension with M Group have now come into force. The Council now has the ability to penalise the contractor for failing to meet the agreed timescales from the point of order of defect repairs, notwithstanding permitting delays, and for sub-standard works. Yellow markings around defects show that works should typically be completed within 21 days, with white markings showing longer periods for works to be delivered. It is worth also noting that yellow markings around smaller issues that are often marked with an “mb” show preventative works planned and these are not necessarily subject to the same incentives scheme.

Where defects have been marked up in yellow and not repaired within 21 days, please do make Peter and myself aware so we can follow up with officers and ensure that the contractor is held to account. A report number and location are incredibly helpful bits of information in this. As always, it is very useful for residents and parish councillors to report defects that need attention as, whilst we and officers do our best to monitor highway conditions, reports are the best way to alert the team to issues that need resolving.

The standards for intervention can be found here
https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Highway-Asset-Management-Strategy.pdf

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County Councillors for the Sawston and Shelfords Division

Cllr Laurence Damary-Homan
Laurence.damaryhoman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
07527368891

Cllr Peter Fane
Peter.fane@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
07802256861