

County Councillor Monthly Report - Sawston & Shelford Division

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

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EAST WEST RAIL CONSULTATION PERIOD

East West Rail (EWR) are concluding their Non-Statutory Consultation: the closing date is 24 January 2025.

The information on the consultation events and the documents with the current proposals can be found at

<https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>

The impact of the currently proposed solutions for Cambourne to Cambridge part of the EWR route on all our villages is going to be fundamental. In that regard it is reassuring to see all our Parish Councils working hard to share the relevant information with the residents, and explain the finer points of the current plans via village meetings, leaflets and visual aids. Thank you!

Good communications lines between Parish, District and County councils, as well as between parishes, are hugely important to ensure the responses to the consultation are consistent in their proposals and transparently represent the views of residents.

WINTER GRITTING

At the time of writing this report (7-8 January), gritting vehicles are out on the roads several times a day, due to a cold weather spell.

Here is a quick reminder about gritting on Cambridgeshire's roads. Cambridgeshire County Council's 37 gritting vehicles cover 44% of the county's road network.

Cambridgeshire is split into three gritting areas:

- Fenland and East
- Huntingdonshire and South
- Cambridge

Which roads are gritted and when will depend on forecast temperatures in each of these three areas, so there may be occasions when some parts of the county are gritted but not others. Roads on the gritting network are classified as primary or secondary routes. Primary routes are the priority for gritting, because they serve as major connecting routes for communities and allow people to get to work and access essential services. Secondary routes are gritted in addition to primary routes as and when resources allow when there is a forecast of a prolonged cold spell, where road surface temperatures fall below zero, or when snowfall is forecast. You can find which roads are primary or secondary gritting routes at

<https://maps.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

In the Map categories menu to the left of the screen, choose Transport and Streets, then select Primary Gritting Routes and Secondary Gritting Routes from the drop-down menu. The Council checks detailed weather forecasts throughout the day, and at midday every day during winter receives road and air temperatures from twelve weather stations around the county. This information guides where and when to send out the gritters and how much salt needs to be spread. You can find more information about winter gritting in Cambridgeshire here: [Gritting roads, cycleways and paths | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)



ADDITIONAL FUNDS FOR ROAD MAINTENANCE

The Government has announced how much each council area will receive for highways capital maintenance for 2025/26. For the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough area it's £10 million, with a quarter of that amount to be held back until the respective councils have proved they will meet certain—still to be announced—criteria.

£10 million sounds a lot, but

- The Government may hold back twenty-five per cent of it
- It includes Peterborough as well as Cambridgeshire
- In Cambridgeshire alone the backlog of highways maintenance is around £600 million.

While this is better than nothing, it is not the amount which can make the transformational impact we all require as residents, taxpayers and road users.

FULL COUNCIL DECEMBER 2024 MOTIONS

Two notable motions have been passed at the latest Full Council meeting in December 2024.

Being a 'trauma-informed' council

This motion was about those delivering council services needing to be aware of the effects of trauma on residents with whom they come into contact, and how to support trauma survivors.

As councillors many of us have experience of supporting families of children and young adults whose experience of our children services or adult social care has itself been traumatising. That point has been made during the Full council meeting: the council needs to improve its own practice and stop traumatising people.

Special educational needs and disabilities

This motion asked the council to respond to the Government's review of the school curriculum, making clear the importance of an appropriate curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and to gather information from secondary schools in the county on how they are ensuring they are able to meet the needs of all pupils.

It also asked the Children & Young People Committee to consider how the child and adolescent mental health system is working, and gather information about experience of special educational needs and disabilities in early years and primary school settings.

COUNCIL BUDGET

Cambridgeshire County Council will set its budget on Tuesday 11 February, with recommendations being considered in advance by the Strategy Resources & Performance Committee on Tuesday 28 January.

Each year councils are required to set a balanced budget for the year ahead.

This has become more difficult in recent years for several reasons including

- Growing demand for services and increasing complexity of health and care needs
- Inflation
- Market failures in services such as provision for children in care, with high demand, insufficient supply, provider profiteering, and diminished council negotiating power.

The totality of the council's gross budget, including schools and services funded by specific grants, is expected to be over £1.1 billion for 2025-26. Of this, over half (£567 million) is proposed to be spent on children, education and families, and health and adult social care.

In December, councillors were told that efficiencies and savings or additional income of £34 million would be needed to set a balanced budget for 2025-26, and considered draft proposals to achieve this. However, the coming five years show an overall funding gap of £132 million, of which £73 million is not yet addressed.

URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE

The County Council's Adults & Health Committee received a report in December 2024 for their scrutiny on the performance of the NHS in urgent and emergency care. During 2024/25, performance has been below the planned trajectories submitted as part of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) operational plan, and below national standards.

Two key national metrics for urgent and emergency care are:

- Emergency departments should see and treat a minimum of 78 per cent of patients within four hours of arriving in the department by the end of March 2025
- Patients categorised by the ambulance trust as Category 2 emergency should have an ambulance response time within 30 minutes.

Both these targets remain behind plan, with the NHS under considerable pressure locally and nationally.

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) GRANT FOR INCOME MAXIMISATION

The County Council has agreed a grant of £800,000 over two years to Citizens Advice in the county for income maximisation. This is working with residents to ensure they are in receipt of all financial assistance they are eligible for, and helping people out of poverty across Cambridgeshire by providing a long-term solution to financial hardship.

Since income maximisation work began in 2023 5,455 Cambridgeshire residents have accessed the service, resulting in an income gain of £3,887,844.

THE FUTURE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER

Angela Rayner, Deputy PM and Secretary of State for Local Government, said government is “giving local leaders and communities the tools they need to deliver growth for their area” and it involves “a permanent shift of power away from Whitehall and into the hands of those who know their communities best (through) efficient and accountable local and regional government”.

The Government will give elected mayors “new powers over housing, planning, transport, energy, skills, employment support and more, backed up with integrated and consolidated funding”.

Local government reorganisation forms a key part of the White Paper published on 16 December.

The Government view is that “unitary councils can lead to better outcomes for residents, save significant money which can be reinvested in public services, and improve accountability with fewer politicians who are more able to focus on delivering for residents”. So government will facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation for two-tier areas like Cambridgeshire and has invited proposals from Councils in these areas.

It is anticipated that County Council elections in May this year will go ahead as planned but the District Council elections scheduled for 2026 are likely to be cancelled with a view to a new unitary council being formed by the merger of the councils, probably some time in 2027.