

Cllr Liam Beckett

MONTHLY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION

To nobody's great surprise, it has been revealed that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government failed to undertake its own analysis of the financial implications of the ongoing local government reorganisation, relying instead on analysis by consultants PwC.

Fresh analysis of those figures shows that replacing the two-tier system with 58 new unitary councils with populations as low as 300,000 could end up costing 850 million over 5 years and deliver no long term savings. I'll continue to update you with any news or progress as it occurs.

ADULTS & HEALTH

'Good' rating for adult social care services

Cambridgeshire county council's adult social care services have been rated as 'good' by the Care Quality Commission with its assessment finding that early support and flexible options are helping people stay independent longer.

Assessment began in November 2024: with the site visit in early April, it found that people who draw on the council's care felt supported, listened to, and offered choices; with care being coordinated in a planned way that considered people's interests and what was important to them.

A range of successes and areas of good practise were highlighted in the report including:

- Prevention and re-enablement success: quick assessments and goal focused care are enabling people to stay at home and thrive
- Strong provider relationships: staff build trust and offer tailored care packages, supported by robust quality assessments.
- Leadership that listens, and a stable leadership team that is driving cultural change and boosting morale.
- Well-being at work: staff feel supported through flexible working, well-being initiatives, and caring leadership.

The report also includes a number of areas for improvement, including:

- Direct payments: the number of people receiving direct payments is significantly below the national average. This needs to be increased to give people more choice and control over their care.

- Equity and inclusion: the council needs to improve its use of demographic data to understand the needs of underrepresented groups in Cambridgeshire.
- Unpaid carers: the council should build on the work of its All Age Carers Strategy 2022-2026 to ensure unpaid carers have consistently good experiences.
- Transitions and continuity of care: The council should work to improve transitions from children's services to adult's services for young people, ensuring this is timely and well-coordinated.

www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/cambridgeshire-0825

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Improvements in support for care leavers

The County Council has improved the support and stability it provides for care leavers in Cambridgeshire, according to a recent Ofsted report.

Ofsted carried out a focused visit in July, looking at the council's arrangements for care leavers. They concluded that arrangements have strengthened since their last visit in 2024, though there is still work to be done.

Inspectors commented that:

- 'Leaders are ambitious to support care leavers into employment, further education and training opportunities [...] The local authority is trailblazing the use of bursaries for care leavers over 19, supporting care leavers to remain longer in further education or giving care leavers who wish to return to employment, education or training, these opportunities.'
- 'Care leavers now have stronger and more purposeful relationships with their personal advisors and investment in additional staffing in the service is helping to reduce staff turnover and workloads.'
- 'Most care leavers live in suitable accommodation that meets their needs and increasing numbers are supported to remain living with their current carers through effective Staying Put arrangements.'
- 'Political and corporate leaders and care leavers have co-produced a convincing and aspirational pledge which sets out their commitment to help care leavers fulfil their full potential.'

The summary also identifies four areas for improvement:

- The quality and impact of front-line manager's supervision to promote and provide reflective practice for personal advisors
- The quality and impact of front-line managers oversight to ensure purposeful and considered case direction
- The quality and consistency of pathway planning
- The range and accessibility of suitable accommodation to meet care leavers needs.

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50285468>

HIGHWAYS

Grafham to Brampton Quietway

Designs and design features for the Brampton to Grafham Quietway have now been published on the county councils website. New features due to be installed include:

- Two new gateway features and signs welcoming users to the Quiet Lane
- Dropped kerb to connect footway to carriageway
- New 20mph advisory speed signs
- New wooden carved posts with public footpath sign
- New coloured road surfacing at intersections with public footpaths
- New passing bay
- New artwork on the railway bridge wall
- New 'slow' road markings on approach to bridge
- New carriageway edge lining
- Cycle parking stands and bench on the verge outside Brampton Wood car park
- Removed centre lines and cats eyes
- Resurfaced section of carriageway with new edge strips
- New bench and sculptural wooden carving post
- New traffic islands and kerbs
- New section of footway at the edge of Brampton

Funding for this project has primarily been **external** to the county council, and comes from the government department 'Active Travel England'.

The trial will last 12 months from implementation, and may involve changes to features throughout the trial.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/active-travel-in-cambridgeshire/grafham-to-brampton-quiet-lane-pilot-project>

Firm action to reduce disruption on Cambridgeshire roads

Cambridge County Council is taking firm action to reduce disruption on the county's roads issuing fines totalling £483,000 to utility companies and developers for non-compliant and over running road works during 2024 and 2025.

In total the council processed more than 32,000 streets and road work permits last year, regulating when and how works can take place on the highway.

- £185,000 was issued through fixed penalty notices for 1,655 offences including works that lacked valid permit or breached the conditions of their permit
- a further £298,000 was recovered from 201 works that overran resulting in 1,191 extra days of disruption for road users and residents.

51 utility companies are entitled to work on Cambridgeshire roads and when that work is deemed an emergency they can legally start work even before notifying the council.

However as the highways authority the council does have powers to challenge how long emergency and urgent works remain in place.

In 2024-2025:

- Over 1,460 emergency permits were challenged for requesting excessive duration - more than 25% of all emergency permits.
- 254 immediate permit applications were rejected where they did not meet the legal criteria for of urgency status.

One option the council is currently exploring is a lane rental scheme which would allow the council to charge companies for the time that road works occupy the highway - with higher charges for works on the busiest streets at the busiest times. The council is currently talking to other authorities about their experiences of lane rental.

Excessive and Misleading Signage

I've been challenging the council and its contractors over excessive and misleading road closure signage, particularly in Buckden recently. Recent projects have seen road closure signage giving the impression that drivers cannot access areas of our villages that are open, and sending them instead on unnecessary detours to The Offords via the A1. Plans for signage of forthcoming roadworks in Brampton seem quite excessive too, and I'm asking for them to be reviewed and reduced where possible.

New highways system to go live in September

The County Council's new Asset Management system Aurora goes live on Monday 22 September. The current system will be taken offline on Thursday 18 September, and residents will not be able to log issues or defects online between 18 and 22 September.

Under the new system:

- Customer reports will be automatically directed to the correct officer or team, ensuring they are handled by the right person first time.
 - All Highways Maintenance Officers will now be equipped with tablets, allowing them to inspect defects, raise work orders, and update customers directly while on-site.
 - New workflows automatically escalate reports that are not progressed within agreed service level timescales, helping to prevent delays and improve response times.
 - Performance dashboards will ensure no cases are overlooked.
 - Officers can send updates directly from the system, meaning residents receive regular progress updates on their reports.
 - Reports can be managed dynamically by officers in the field, and loaded into inspection routes so they can be reviewed at the same time
 - The system will task officers with inspecting completed work and identifying any defects. If defects are identified these will be flagged to contractors and corrected.
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LOCAL GRANTS – CURRENTLY OPEN TO APPLICATIONS

S2 Partnership Community Fund

The S2 fund offers grants of up to £5,000 for community projects within a 10-mile radius of Elsworth. S2 are keen to support projects that:

- Benefit children, young people, and families
- Provide support for educational events and experiences
- Focus on STEM, health & wellbeing, and environmental initiatives
- Improve local green spaces

Apply by 1st November 2025

Thalia WB Community Fund

The Thalia WB (formerly Amey) Community Fund is part of the national Landfill Communities Fund scheme. The fund offers grants for capital projects to improve the local environment, including public buildings and amenities, habitats and architecture. Grants between £10,000 and £50,000.

Apply by 1 December for projects starting March

The Cambridge Building Society Community Fund

The fund offers grants from £2,500 up to £10,000 to support organisations that are undertaking charitable work with a connection to homes or housing. We are within 15 miles of the St Ives Branch, meeting the eligibility criteria.

Apply by 1st November, 1st May

Councillor Surgeries

I intend to have a full schedule of ‘Meet your Councillor’ sessions available for residents by October. These work particularly well when we have a representative from Parish, District and County Councils available on the day and I’m attempting to coordinate this over the next month to maximise their impact.

I can be contacted at...

- By email liam.beckett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
 - By phone 07312 081892
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Cllr Liam Beckett

County Councillor for the Brampton and Buckden Division