

Cllr Liam Dewey-Beckett

Monthly Report, October 2026

Cabinet Member for Audit & Governance, Huntingdonshire District Council | County Councillor for Brampton & Buckden Division, Cambridgeshire County Council | Chair, Health Scrutiny Committee

News for Brampton, Buckden, Diddington, Grafham, the Offords and Southoe, and from the County Council across Cambridgeshire.

FULL COUNCIL & GOVERNANCE

Local Government Reorganisation: Government Pauses the Process

On 7 September the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Angela Rayner, announced a pause and review of local government reorganisation in a number of areas, including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. She said she wants to be satisfied that the right process is in place, that it is robust, and that it complies with the law.

No timescale for the review has been given. The Government has confirmed that local elections due in May 2027 will go ahead on existing council boundaries, and your current councils carry on delivering services in the meantime.

The uncertainty is already shaping day-to-day work. The County Council's Active Travel Programme report, for example, sets out how funding agreements and scheme responsibilities would have to pass smoothly to any successor authority if reorganisation goes ahead. Planning for more than one outcome takes officer time, so I'd like the Government to give clarity as soon as it can. I'll keep residents updated as more detail emerges.

The Government's announcement: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-of-local-government-reorganisation-launched>

Have Your Say on the County Council's Budget

Every year the County Council has to set a legal budget that balances what it needs to spend against what it can raise. Demand for children's social care and for support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) keeps growing, and the same budget also has to pay for adult social care, education, highways, libraries and registration services.

The first phase of the County Council's budget engagement survey is now open. It asks residents where spending and savings should be prioritised in the years ahead, and it closes on Sunday 15 November. Budget proposals for 2027/28 will be debated at Full Council in February.

Take part here: <https://yourvoice.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business-planning/27-28-phase-1-engagement/>

Please take part, and encourage younger members of your household to do the same. Many of the hardest choices in this budget are about services for children and young people, and their views deserve to be heard.

Quality of Life Survey 2026: What Residents Told the County Council

The County Council's fourth annual Quality of Life survey has been published. In total 6,912 residents took part: 5,501 in a representative sample of around 1,100 in each district and city area, and a further 1,411 through an open online survey.

- 84% of residents say they feel happy, consistent across all four years of the survey.
- 24% say they often feel lonely and 26% say they struggle with their mental health. Both are down on last year (30% and 28%), but the impact is greatest on younger residents.
- 87% are personally concerned about the cost of living, the same as last year.
- 60% feel the County Council keeps them well informed, up from 50% last year.
- 55% trust the council to make decisions about local services, above the national benchmark of 49%.
- Satisfaction with roads and pavements is up to 32%, from 21% in 2024.

It is encouraging that loneliness and mental health struggles are easing, but they weigh most heavily on younger people and that deserves attention. Satisfaction with roads and pavements has improved for a second year, but at 32% it is still well below services such as libraries and registration (both 87%) and waste management (81%). I'll keep pressing for improvement on our local highways.

Full results: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey>

HEALTH SCRUTINY

Doddington and North Cambs Hospitals: NHS Leaders Questioned

At the Health Scrutiny Committee's most recent meeting, members questioned NHS leaders about services that have been temporarily withdrawn from Doddington Hospital and North Cambs Hospital in Wisbech, both in Fenland.

The NHS told the committee that there are no plans to close or reduce services at either hospital. It acknowledged that some services have been moved for now, including endoscopy, which has gone from Wisbech to King's Lynn on patient safety grounds, and some clinics at Doddington that have stopped because of staffing pressures. The NHS expects ENT clinics at Doddington to resume within six months.

Several members were clear that a service moved out of a local hospital feels like a cut to the patients who struggle to travel to get it, particularly people without their own transport and people in rural areas. Scrutiny only works if it is followed through. This stays on the committee's work programme, and I'll make sure we check that what has been promised, including the return of ENT, actually happens.

Shaping the Health Scrutiny Work Programme Together

Committee work programmes are usually settled by the Chair after asking members for suggestions. I've decided to go further. I've arranged a separate meeting where members will design the programme together, so that every topic on it has the backing of the councillors who will be asking the questions.

The shortlist I'm bringing includes NHS waiting times, the financial pressures on NHS trusts and what they mean for patient care, workforce shortages, support for people with learning disabilities, the roll-out of neighbourhood health services, NHS dental access, hospice and end of life care, and how patient data is shared and governed as digital health records develop. The services at Doddington and North Cambs hospitals will stay on the programme too.

Residents are welcome to suggest topics. If there is a health issue you think the committee should look at, tell me and I'll make sure members see it.

Childhood Obesity: A Gap Linked to Deprivation

The County Council's Adults and Health Committee heard last month that obesity rates in Cambridgeshire are below the national average for both children and adults, but are still too high, particularly among children and young people and in lower income groups.

The gap is stark. 28% of Year 6 children in the most deprived areas of the county are living with obesity, compared with 13.2% in the least deprived. Rates are higher in some communities than others, particularly in Fenland.

Healthy weight is shaped by far more than individual choices. Access to healthy food, safe places to be active, education, work and the built environment all play a part, which is why councils, the NHS, schools and community groups are working on it together. No child's chance of a healthy start should depend on their postcode.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION

Safer Journeys to School: What the Active Travel Programme Means for Children

The County Council's Active Travel Programme for 2026/27 went to the Highways and Transport Committee on 6 October, with officers recommending approval. Alongside new walking and cycling routes, a good part of the programme is aimed at children and young people.

- **School Streets.** A three-year programme of schemes that restrict traffic outside schools at drop-off and pick-up times. They already operate in Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire and are open to every school in the county. They rely on volunteers, so they go ahead where a school is keen and enough volunteers come forward. The report also points to the potential for ANPR cameras to enforce School Streets where schools are supportive but cannot find enough volunteers. £80,000 a year is allocated for signing and lining.
- **Skills and inclusion.** A dedicated officer for school-based active travel, covering bike and scooter skills, learn-to-ride sessions, Dr Bike maintenance and led walks and rides, plus Bikeability training and adaptive cycling for people with disabilities or mobility impairments.
- **Safer crossings.** £54,900 a year to match fund school crossing improvements delivered through the County Council's Local Highway Improvement fund, such as zebra crossings, speed cushions, signage and road markings.
- **Histon.** A safe crossing at the A14 Histon Interchange, at the junction of Bridge Road and Cambridge Road, for students travelling between Cambridge and Histon, particularly those attending Impington Village College. It would be funded by moving £879,000 of Active Travel Fund money from the Whittlesford to Duxford scheme, subject to agreement from Active Travel England and the Combined Authority.

Safe, walkable routes to school help children reach the 60 minutes of daily activity recommended by the UK Chief Medical Officers, and cut their exposure to traffic pollution on the school run. The report also notes that they support the County Council's home to school transport duties by reducing the number of routes assessed as unsafe.

If your school or parent group would like to explore a School Street, get in touch and I'll raise it with officers.

Adoption: 35 Children Are Waiting for a Family

35 children across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are waiting to be adopted. 22 are boys and 13 are girls, 16 are under two and 14 are part of a sibling group. Children waiting with their brothers and sisters often wait longest.

Over the last twelve months, children placed through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Adoption Service were on average two years and six months old and had waited an average of seventeen months for a family, which is more than half their lives so far. Fewer people are coming forward to adopt than there are children waiting. The average age of people approved as adopters last year was 41, and one in ten were over 50.

If you have ever wondered about adoption, the service guides people from first enquiry through to approval, matching and placement, and supports families long after a child comes home. Adopters come from all walks of life. Call 0300 123 1093, email adoptionenquiries@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or visit <https://www.cpadoption.co.uk>

Free School Meals: Making Sure Families Get What They Are Entitled To

Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have won the Excellence in Partnership Working (The Fight Against Poverty) award from the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation. It recognises a joint campaign that used the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT), a data tool that identifies households likely to be eligible for support but not claiming it, to contact families whose children could be receiving free school meals.

The result is that 81 more children now receive free school meals, worth over £300,000 to their families across their time in education. Schools gain too, through additional Pupil Premium funding expected to total over £1 million.

The approach is now being extended to other districts. A child who is entitled to a free school meal and is not getting one loses out, and so does their school. Huntingdonshire families should have the same chance, and I'll be asking when this reaches us.

HIGHWAYS, TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

Brampton to Hinchingsbrooke Active Travel Route: £2.8m Allocated

The County Council's Active Travel Programme for 2026/27 includes £2.8 million to improve the walking and cycling route between Brampton and Hinchingsbrooke. The programme went to the Highways and Transport Committee on 6 October, with officers recommending approval.

The scheme will improve the existing shared and segregated paths between Brampton and Hinchingsbrooke. It puts safer access to Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon Station and the town centre first, and where it is feasible the paths will be widened to provide segregated cycle facilities. An assessment of the scheme found a benefit-cost ratio of 5.23, which the report describes as very high value for money. Construction is expected to be completed by August 2028.

The money comes from the Government's Local Transport Consolidated Settlement, allocated through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, whose Board agreed the programme on 23 September. The County Council will deliver it, subject to grant funding agreements (expected by December) and procurement. The report also flags that, if local government reorganisation goes ahead, funding agreements and delivery responsibilities will need to transfer smoothly to the successor authority.

This is a project for the next couple of years, so there is time to get the details right. If you use this route, tell me what works, what doesn't and what you would prioritise, and I'll pass it to the officers working on the scheme.

Active Travel Programme: £14.1m for Cambridgeshire and What Is Planned Near Us

Cambridgeshire's share of the Government's Local Transport Consolidated Settlement includes £14.118 million of capital funding for walking, wheeling and cycling schemes over four years from 2026/27, and £2.776 million of revenue funding over three years for training, school programmes and behaviour change. The Combined Authority Board agreed the allocation on 23 September, and the County Council's Highways and Transport Committee considered how to deliver it on 6 October.

There are 16 schemes in the capital programme. The ones closest to us are:

- **Alconbury Weald to Huntingdon, Phases 4 and 5 (£2 million).** Widening the shared path along Ermine Street and Stukeley Road from Great Stukeley and linking to Huntingdon Station via Stukeley Meadows, with a new controlled crossing at the Spittals roundabout. Construction began in July 2026 and is expected to finish by July 2028.
- **Brampton to Hinchingsbrooke (£2.8 million).** Safer access to Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon Station and the town centre, with completion expected by August 2028.
- **St Ives to Huntingdon corridor (£150,000).** Design work for improvements to the path from Houghton along the A1123 to the Blue Diamond Garden and Home Centre, to be completed by March 2029.

Elsewhere in the county, the larger schemes include Ely to Soham (£3.07 million), Guyhirn to March (£1.82 million), A505 Granta Park (£800,000), Burwell to Fordham (£700,000) and Stuntney to Ely (£600,000).

The programme also sets aside money every year for Active Travel Village Links (£75,000), for designing links between new developments and existing settlements (£70,000) and for removing barriers on existing routes (about £94,000). Village Links work is informed by surveys of residents about how they travel and what stops them walking or cycling. If there is a route in Brampton, Buckden, Grafham, Diddington, the Offords or Southoe that you would like to see made safer, tell me.

Roadworks Overruns Fall by Almost 42%

The number of days that roadworks overran in Cambridgeshire fell from 1,191 in 2024/25 to 692 in 2025/26, a drop of almost 42%, as the County Council stepped up enforcement against utility companies and others.

Over the year the council issued 1,443 Fixed Penalty Notices worth £196,286, for offences such as working without the right permit or breaking its conditions, and recovered a further £228,350 in charges for works that ran over their agreed time. That is more than £424,000 in total. It also issued 36,685 permits regulating when and how works could take place.

Emergency works, such as a burst water main, can legally start before the council is told. Overrunning works frustrate everyone who uses the road, so this is welcome progress. If you see works dragging on in Brampton, Buckden or any of our villages, send me the location and I'll raise it with highways officers.

CASEWORK & COMMUNITY

Mill Road: "SLOW" Markings Secured After Residents' Speed Campaign

Residents of Mill Road in Buckden have been campaigning to bring vehicle speeds down. They gathered evidence of the speeds they were seeing and agreed that I would submit a Local Highway Improvement (LHI) application on their behalf.

I'm pleased to report that the bid has been successful. "SLOW" markings will be painted on both approaches to Mill Road, and the County Council expects to install them within the next few months. The parish council is backing the project and has committed up to £3,000 towards it.

The markings are a first step. The aim remains a lower speed limit. There is no guarantee of one, but the County Council is more likely to agree if average speeds are already close to the limit being asked for. Anything that makes the road feel narrower, such as features on residents' own private land, can help, but please keep everything clear of the public highway. I'll keep residents updated as things progress.

COMMUNITIES & COST OF LIVING

Unclaimed Pension Credit: Check Whether You or a Relative Are Missing Out

Cambridgeshire County Council is working with the district and city councils to contact over 700 households who may be eligible for Pension Credit but are not claiming it. Between them, the households identified could gain up to £2 million a year.

Households will be contacted by their district council by letter, email or phone, told what they may be entitled to and offered help to apply. In Huntingdonshire that means Huntingdonshire District Council. Pension Credit has two elements, Guarantee Credit and Savings Credit, and some households qualify for both. It is the County Council's first targeted campaign to raise residents' incomes using the LIFT system, which was bought for the district and city councils with Government Crisis and Resilience Fund money.

You do not need to wait for a letter. If you or someone you know is of pension age and on a low income, you can check eligibility on the GOV.UK Pension Credit pages: <https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit>

If you are ever unsure whether a letter or call is genuine, contact the council directly using the details on its website, not any number in the message. Making sure people receive what they are entitled to is one of the most direct ways councils can help with the cost of living, and I'll keep championing it.

The Library Presents: Autumn Season Starts 16 October

The autumn season of The Library Presents runs from 16 October to 12 December in twenty-three Cambridgeshire libraries. Chosen by residents, it includes music, comedy, theatre and workshops in art, craft and dance.

New "Level Up" courses let people go deeper into one artform, such as ceramics. The ticket price covers the artist and materials only and is not for profit, and the regular two-hour workshops continue at subsidised prices. The programme is possible because of continued funding from Arts Council England, and Cambridgeshire is one of only a small number of library services able to offer it.

Details and tickets, including your nearest venue: <https://www.library.live/the-library-presents>

MEET YOUR COUNCILLOR

I can also be contacted:

- by email at liam.dewey-beckett@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- by phone on 07312 081892

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