



Annual Report 2023-2024 from Sawston & Shelfords Division Liberal Democrat County Councillors

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

MARIA KING (MARIA.KING@CAMBRIDGESHIRE.GOV.UK) and
BRIAN MILNES (BRIAN.MILNES@CAMBRIDGESHIRE.GOV.UK)

Movements in political alignments in the last year

Three years ago, on election, the Conservative party lost control of the Council when a Joint Administration of Lib Dems, Labour and Independents was formed. This last year a further attrition of Conservative numbers has occurred, with defections to the LibDems and Independents as well as by-election losses, meaning the LibDems are now the single largest party leading that Joint Administration.

Finances - Local Government Funding

Over the past year residents have continued to query why we have difficulty with basic services such as pothole filling. We appreciate the concern and are making huge efforts to improve efficiency of spending and prioritise necessary repairs, with funding increasingly constrained.

In 2023/24 local authority spending in England is £118bn. Of this £74 bn is spent on education, adult social care and children's social care, referred to as 'statutory services'.

Over the last 14 years local councils have seen a 50% fall in their spending powers and from 2010-2022 central government grant has been cut by 40% in real terms while seeing an increase in Council tax of 30%. Funding for all services is 10% lower than it was in 2010; and for services such as potholes, roads, transport, Libraries, leisure centres etc the figure is a cut of 43%.

As the demand for statutory services, which Councils must never forgo, rises, the amount of cash left for everything else decreases.

The Cambridgeshire County Council has managed to develop and approve a balanced budget for the year. But it needs stating that addressing all concerns will be increasingly difficult, especially when awaiting the Fair Funding review.

"Case for Cambridge" 2050

A Ministerial Statement from Michael Gove about his continued plans for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire arrived at the end of March. This continues his narrative for a doubling or tripling of housing numbers, despite the obvious constraints, especially water scarcity.

It confirms the establishment of a decision-making Growth Company, leading to a Development Corporation, with no elected representation on it.

It appears Council Leaders, the Mayor and an unclear number of others will be on an Advisory Council feeding into the Growth Company Board. The Growth Company will be a subsidiary of the Government's

own housing body, Homes England - a model that has not existed so far and does reinforce the impression left is that this is all about houses.

There is still no indication at all about where all these new houses (which amount to the equivalent of 3 cities of Cambridge) will go and this is causing concern especially in those villages around the City.

South Cambs District Council 50th anniversary celebrations

South Cambs marked the 50th anniversary of the creation of district councils with a civic ceremony in March preceded by the planting of a tree by Deputy Lieutenant for Cambridgeshire Jeremy Newsum. It was an opportunity to pay thanks to the dedication and commitment of all those who have served on and worked for the council over the years as well as the continued support of our residents and stakeholders.

State of the District Review

A "State of the District" Review was published in January 2024 with lots of really interesting information and data about our area <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/0tlljrvr/state-of-the-district-south-cambridgeshire.pdf>

Cambridgeshire County Council meeting

The Council met on 19 March, and received reports on senior manager pay, pay policy, and gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Five motions were proposed.

- To work with partners to ensure our Armed Forces Covenant Officer is properly resourced; and write to Government about support for veterans, Afghan refugees, and dependents of Commonwealth veterans (PASSED)
- To ask the Government to disband the Greater Cambridge Partnership and transfer its functions to the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority but still let us keep the money (DEFEATED)
- To oppose any new 'locally imposed forms of taxation', cost up lots of 'ambitious transformational strategic infrastructure interventions', and discuss with the Government how to pay for it. (DEFEATED)
- To ask the Government to introduce a proportional voting system for Police & Crime Commissioners and Mayors, and work with partners to encourage greater understanding of our tiers of local government and increase young people's participation in local elections (PASSED)
- To ask the Government to commit to making the benefits and opportunities created by growth in Greater Cambridge accessible to all residents of Cambridgeshire and to commit to essential infrastructure and services to deliver growth, establish ambitious targets for affordable housing, and invest in training and education (PASSED)

'High intensity users' of A&E services

Cambridgeshire County Council will host the 'High Intensity Users' team working with patients who frequently attend hospital A&E departments. Last year the NHS in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough spent an estimated total of £28 million on emergency care for 4,500 people who attended A&E departments between five and ten times a year. Many of these patients have complex needs, and identifying and supporting them early can save the NHS at least forty per cent of these costs.

EV charging cross-over pilot

A trial will take place across the county on a first-come first-served basis of EV car charging solutions that involve cables crossing the highway. We have encouraged council officers to be ambitious in this.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough will need ten thousand public plug-in stations by 2030, as more and more

residents without off-street parking and charging capacity will be wanting to make the switch to electric vehicles.

Domestic abuse survivors with learning disabilities

A campaign has been launched to find carers for people with learning disabilities who have experienced domestic abuse.

The initiative—the first of its kind in the country—is a joint scheme between Cambridgeshire Shared Lives and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Partnership. Its aim is to recruit Shared Lives Domestic Abuse Carers who will be self-employed with the scheme paying their fees. Carers can offer support just for a few hours in the daytime, for an overnight stay, or for an extended break. sharedlivesplus.org.uk/scheme/cambridgeshire-shared-lives-scheme/

Vape recycling

Vape recycling has been introduced at all of the council's Household Recycling Centres. The new bins offer a safe, environmentally friendly way for residents to dispose of single use and reusable vapes. These are taken to a facility where materials are separated and cleaned before being sent for recycling.

Anything containing batteries, including vapes, should never be placed in waste or recycling bins at home. Disposable vapes contain lithium-ion batteries which can catch fire if damaged. Three million vapes are currently thrown away each week across the UK, and research shows that electrical items including vapes disposed of in the wrong bin cause more than six hundred fires every year in refuse collection vehicles and at waste sites.

Encouraging cycling

Cambridgeshire is supporting Love to Ride, an initiative to promote cycling: you can register here: [Home : The Bike Month Challenge 2024 \(lovetoride.net\)](https://www.lovetoride.net/)

No Mow May update

Cambridgeshire County Council has noted Plantlife's call for organisations to take part in "No Mow May", an initiative to promote biodiversity, allowing a wider range of plants and insects to thrive.

The council is keen to support the initiative and will be taking part in areas where it doesn't cause safety concerns for residents or motorists.

The cutting of grass areas will be paused in some areas to allow plants like daisies, dandelions and clovers to flower, providing important food for caterpillars from some of our best loved butterflies and moths. Letting wildflowers and plants grow freely will provide much needed nectar for pollinators and allow other plants and wildlife to grow and flourish.

However, great care will be taken to ensure cutting continues in places where road safety would be in any way impacted by poor visibility or where pavements and cycle paths would have reduced width making them less safe. Residents are encouraged to contact the council if there are places where they become concerned about safety issues for drivers, pedestrians or cyclists.

The council is also encouraging their farm tenants to take part and county council owned buildings, including New Shire Hall, will see green space managers lock up their lawnmower and liberate the lawns for the month.

Best Wishes, *Brian* and *Maria*