

Cllr Jonny Edge

MONTHLY REPORT – JUNE 2026

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

Local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been expecting the Government to announce its proposed new council boundaries before parliamentary business ends for the summer on Friday 17 July.

However, with Essex, Hampshire and Norfolk all initiating legal challenges to the Government's proposals in their area, and with a change of Prime Minister imminent, it's less clear that an announcement for Cambridgeshire will be made in that timescale.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Cambridgeshire's SEND Reform Plan

The council have submitted their plans to meet the criteria covered by the government's White Paper. The submission sets out Cambridgeshire's aims to deliver a 3-year plan to change the SEND and EHCP environment by aligning with its Inclusion for All programme. This will bring support to children that need it to their local schools except in the most complex cases. A key contributor to this plan comes from 'Experts-at-hand' funding to help develop the workforce to support our schools and young people.

If the plan is accepted by ministers, it will result in up to 90% of the Safety Valve deficit the County holds being cleared by a government grant, this deficit was £96m as of 31st March 2026, so will be a welcome development.

Holiday activities and food

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme returns this summer, with holiday scheme places and nutritious meals for eligible school-aged children across Cambridgeshire from 21 July to 28 August.

The programme provides primary and secondary aged children with access to healthy food, fun activities and enriching experiences throughout the school holidays. Government funding for the programme is confirmed until December 2028.

More than 130 schemes are expected to run across the county, offering over 2,500 places for children. Activities will range from sports, outdoor adventure and play-based schemes to drama, technology, creative arts and youth-focused programmes.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-withthe-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme>

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION (COSMIC)

New ways of tackling poverty

Members of the council's COSMIC Committee have unanimously agreed new anti-poverty initiatives using the Government's multi-year Crisis and Resilience Fund.

The County Council is receiving a share of this fund, which replaces the Household Support Fund. It is required to be allocated to:

- support to those experiencing financial shock
- support that improves residents' financial resilience
- activities that connect and enhance local support, such as community food projects.

Councillors have agreed to use the fund to:

- procure a new crisis payment scheme, worth £400,000 this year and £1M in each of the two following years
- award £800,000 to Citizens Advice to continue to deliver an Income Maximisation service across Cambridgeshire until 2029
- award £1.5M over three years to fund an advice outreach service for residents who are isolated rurally or digitally, or otherwise unable to access mainstream support.

The income maximisation service delivered by Citizens Advice has so far supported 3,182 residents gaining a combined £3.7M in additional income.

Further income maximisation work will be provided through LIFT, the Low-Income Family Tracker which has already been used very successfully in South Cambridgeshire and will help identify residents who may be missing out on support they are eligible for.

Families previously in receipt of holiday food vouchers as well as low-income families with younger children will be prioritised for identification by LIFT and receive a targeted offer of personalised support. Families will also be encouraged to access the Holiday Activities and Food programme described earlier in this report.

Digital support for unpaid carers

According to the 2021 Census 52,236 people in Cambridgeshire are caring for a family member, friend or neighbour who is ill, older, or disabled. Caring responsibilities can impact people's health, finances, and employment opportunities.

Bridgit is an AI-enabled digital support platform developed in partnership with Caring Together Charity, who support carers on behalf of the County Council.

Bridgit provides a one-stop, 24/7, digital hub offering personalised advice on wellbeing, employment, finance, care options, and local support services. Since its launch in 2024, Bridgit has been accessed by more than 9,000 carers, generating over 13,000 personalised self-help

The system tailors its guidance to individual users and uses targeted social media outreach to help identify 'hidden carers'; people who don't recognise themselves as carers and may not realise that support is available.

Work is now under way to develop Bridgit Gen 2, which will be available later this year.

The council is also refreshing its All-Age Carers Strategy (2026–2028) to reflect rising demand and the changing needs of carers. This work has been informed by extensive consultation, ensuring that carers' voices, feedback, and what matters most to them are at the heart of the strategy.

The updated strategy will focus on earlier identification of carers, improved access to support, better support for young carers and parent carers, strengthened mental health and wellbeing support, and closer partnership working.

ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN INVESTMENT - PLANNING

Kingsway

The application for the Kingsway Solar Farm has been withdrawn. Early signs are that they will continue to work on the application for resubmission. It is unclear how much they will need to do to rectify any feedback they may have received from ministers.

Forest City 1

Following confirmation from Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook that the government will not centrally support Forest City's "speculative proposal", he indicated the developers could attempt to progress their plans through local planning systems, without Westminster's endorsement. Mr Pennycook went on to say, "When it comes to the East of England, the Government's focus is firmly on the establishment of the Greater Cambridge Development Corporation, and using it to deliver nationally significant growth in Cambridge and its surrounding areas in partnership with local leaders and communities".

This pie-in-the-sky concept is not going to get any traction any time soon, so although we need to keep our eyes open, we can all stop being concerned about it for now.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Highways contract renegotiated

The council has agreed an extension of its road maintenance contract with M Group, which will provide better value for taxpayers and stability during Local Government Reorganisation.

The contract was due to end in June 2027 but will be extended until June 2030. As part of the extension a number of enhancements have been jointly agreed between the council and M Group, prioritising improved value for money and quality control. The terms coming into effect in July this year.

In July 2025, the Government advised that authorities going through Local Government Reorganisation should ensure that their decisions do not negatively impact the sustainability of successor authorities or limit the ability of those future councils to deliver on their priorities, within their budgets.

This short-term extension will enable the future councils to procure their own road maintenance contract, rather than tying them into a long-term contract.

The collaboratively agreed enhancements secure an improved deal, including:

- an introduction of fixed costs for regular maintenance activities to secure better value for money and improved accuracy for budgeting
- a revised quality control regime that incentivises delivery of work on time and meeting standards
- direct penalties for failure to deliver to the required quality and time standards (in addition to remediation of work)
- tracking of all road maintenance vehicles to enable monitoring of their whereabouts and outputs to ensure we are getting an efficient service.

Bus services at risk

An independent review for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority warns that bus networks across the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area could see severe cuts.

Driven by a funding shortfall and Mayor Paul Bristow's announcement that he will not increase his mayoral precept, the report projects a ten per cent network cut by 2029 and a nineteen per cent reduction by 2035, with nearly thirty-eight per cent of services at risk. Services south of Newmarket that were already dismal are set to be further impacted as a result.

Local Highways Improvement bids

The East Cambridgeshire Local Highways Improvement panel meets on Friday 3 July to consider and score the eleven 'complex' bids submitted by councils and communities in East Cambridgeshire. This includes a bid from Cheveley in the Woodditton division.

We have six other bids from the division that are classed as non-complex and will be scored by officers.

All successful bids will be confirmed by the Highways and Transport Committee in October.

Local Maintenance

The postponed surface treatment on the B1063 from Newmarket to Silverly is currently being rescheduled for mid-summer delivery.

The B1061 outside of Dullingham is scheduled to be delivered late in September. In the meantime, I have secured some interim patching to see drivers through over the summer with the worst carriageway shadowed by the treeline.

Lines and signs

I've been working with our Highways Maintenance Officer to identify key junctions and safety features that need lines refreshing. This should start to be more noticeable as the summer progresses.

Footways

At the recent Highways Committee, I continued to raise concerns with our footways, the pavements in many areas being of really poor condition. The Councils performance reporting is very bias toward road safety, with no comparable data being utilised for our footways. They have now taken an action to find ways to use A&E and other NHS reporting to identify links to falls on our footways. Please do continue to report defects. Footways should be repaired considerably quicker than the roads and the new contract will result in fines for the contractors where this does not happen on time.

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