

**Local Government Reorganisation**

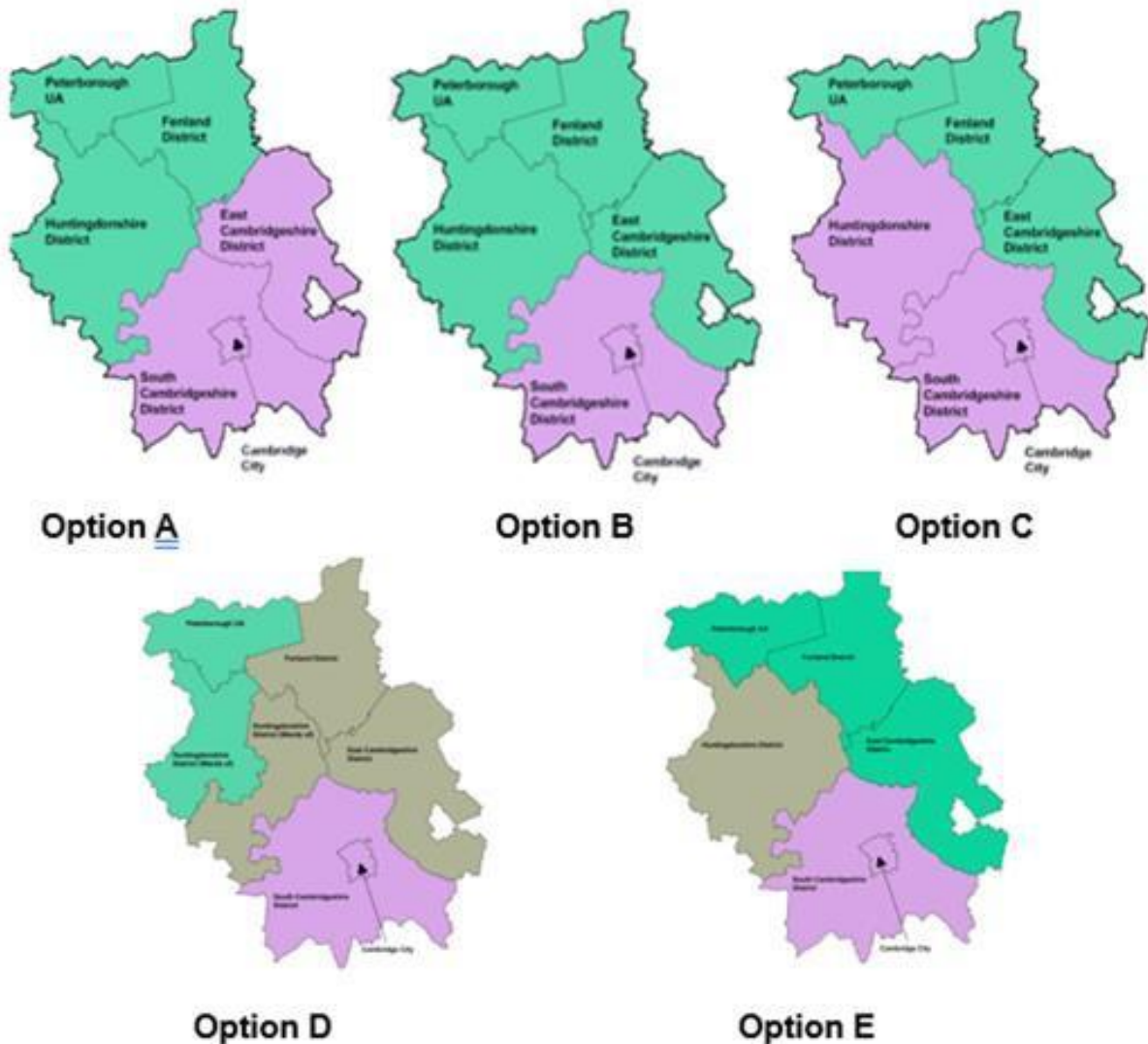
Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have between them submitted four different options to ministers to consider for Local Government Reorganisation.

Option A: put forward by Cambridgeshire County Council

Option B: put forward by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, and also supported by East Cambridgeshire District Council

Option D: put forward by Fenland District Council and Peterborough City Council

Option E: put forward by Huntingdonshire District Council



Option C was not submitted by any council.

The Government will launch a consultation on shortlisted options in the spring of 2026. The timetable the Government is operating to further states their decision will be announced in the summer of 2026 as well. The key issue will be whether elections for the shadow authority will be ordered to take place in May 2027, as this is required for the authority to begin operating formally in 2028.

There will be costs associated with the transition and these costs are to be borne by the new organisations, thus representing a loss of funding for services.

## **ADULTS & HEALTH**

### Integrated Care System

Thousands of NHS staff redundancies in England will now go ahead after a deal was reached with the Treasury to allow the health service to overspend this year to cover the cost of pay-offs.

Previously there had been a stand off as local NHS Integrated Care Boards were not being given any more money to meet the cost of the redundancies they are having to make in order to achieve the cuts of 50% in their running costs that the Government has required of them. The Government has now decided that the NHS will now be allowed to overspend in order to make people redundant, and repay the costs in future years.

## **ASSETS & PROCUREMENT**

### Procurements for schools

The council has approved the awarding of a single supplier contract for the procurement of ICT hardware, software and associated services for resale to schools. Approval has also been given to continue to procure insurance for schools, authorising payment of the supplier appointed by schools using funding received from schools' budget contributions. Schools can opt in if they wish and all but a very small number have done so.

### Procurement compliance

The council has considerably improved compliance with procurement rules. The Assets & Procurement Committee now receives regular reports of breaches of the rules by individual departments and services, and there is much greater awareness across the council of what the rules are and the importance of complying with them. Identifying breaches in this way ensures scrutiny at a high level and also helps to ensure that all appropriate follow up actions are carried out.

## **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

### Holiday Activities and Food Programme

A reminder that the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is offering free spaces to primary and secondary school children in Cambridgeshire who are eligible for benefit-related free school meals, giving them the chance to enjoy enriching experiences and nutritious food during the school holidays.

Around 20,000 HAF eligibility vouchers have been sent to families across the county by email or text this week. Each voucher offers sixteen hours of free access to a local HAF scheme during the festive period (subject to availability), helping families manage rising costs while keeping children active and engaged.

Delivered by approved providers and coordinated by Cambridgeshire County Council, the HAF programme offers a wide variety of activities, from sports, playschemes, drama and technology to outdoor adventures and youth sessions. Every child attending will also receive at least one healthy meal a day, along with guidance on healthy eating, wellbeing, and positive behaviours.

Parents and carers will also be signposted to local services and additional cost-of-living support, reinforcing the council's wider commitment to helping households stay safe, warm, and well this winter. Families eligible for free school meals can redeem their HAF vouchers to book places at participating schemes across the county.

Spaces are limited and offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/haf-provider-directory](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/support-with-the-cost-of-living/holiday-activities-and-food-programme/haf-provider-directory)

#### Best Start in Life – new grant funded programme

Cambridgeshire County Council has been awarded £200,000 under the government's *Best Start in Life* scheme, with a further grant of £1.2m pa for three years expected starting in 2026-27.

The overall funding is for three years, and is intended to ensure that by 2028 75.5 per cent of reception-aged children will be assessed as having a good level of development and being ready to start school. The money will be used to create a new services to support families thus improving existing services delivered via Children's and Families' Centres, as well as enabling the development of a digital offer.

### **COMMUNITIES SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION**

#### Bird flu

Following a confirmed case of bird flu near Ely, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have put in place a three-kilometre Protection Zone and a ten-kilometre Surveillance Zone to try to stop the further spread of the disease.

The zones introduce a range of additional rules for bird keepers, as well as those involved in fresh meat and meat products, transporters and those involved in bird gatherings. Within the three-kilometre Protection Zone, virtually all captive birds must now be housed and strict bio-security measures with record-keeping requirements in place as well as movement restrictions.

An interactive map showing where the zones are is available at [www.gov.uk/bird-flu](http://www.gov.uk/bird-flu). You can also view the Declaratory Order setting out the rules, and extensive guidance on things like symptoms and how to report them, housing birds safely and applying for movement licences.

Anyone with concerns about breaches of the Order should report the information to the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.

Road signs will also be placed by Cambridgeshire County Council on the main entry points to the zone on behalf of APHA, to make bird transporters aware they are entering an animal disease control zone.

Bird flu is perhaps obviously primarily a disease of birds, and the risk to human health is very low. Nevertheless, the public is being advised not to touch dead wild birds, but to report them to DEFRA at [www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds) or call 03459 33 55 77.

The Food Standards Agency has said that on the basis of the current scientific evidence, Avian Influenza poses a very low food safety risk for UK consumers. Properly cooked poultry and poultry products, including eggs, are safe to eat.

It is now a legal requirement to register all captive birds, even just a few hens in your garden. This will enable APHA to keep you up to date with bird flu developments. You can also sign up to APHA's animal disease text alert service.

### **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT**

#### Progress towards Net Zero Cambridgeshire

Low carbon heating schemes and lower carbon fuels in vehicles has helped the County Council reduce its overall carbon footprint by 32% since 2018.

Carbon savings have come from switching some highways fleet vehicles to biofuel and the continuation of a heat decarbonisation programme which has seen old gas and oil boilers replaced with air source heat pumps at 30 out of 59 council buildings with more under way.

Major energy projects have delivered over 3,000 tonnes of carbon savings and around £1.2M income for the council over the last year.

New Biodiversity and Tree and Woodland strategies have been adopted and published. To date, the low carbon heating programme has saved schools over £5.9 million on their energy bills.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) were installed in two schools in Willingham and St Ives. The council was rated A- in the Carbon Disclosure Project's global rankings, reflecting its strong performance and leadership in climate action, and ranked among the top-performing county councils in the country in Climate Emergency UK's Climate Scorecards 2025.

The current Climate Change & Environment Strategy runs until the end of 2025, with a new strategy in development. This will include new actions to support the council's ambition of achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for the county by 2045.

#### RECAP consultation

The Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (RECAP) Waste Partnership is intending to consult on a new Draft Interim Resources and Waste Strategy 2025-2031 and a new Draft Waste Management Design Guide.

The Waste Partnership is made up of all the local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It has been in existence since 1999 and has worked together on a strategic approach for collecting, managing and disposing of waste.

The Draft Strategy sets out the strategic direction for the Waste Partnership in the medium term and areas of consensus for future infrastructure projects, and priorities in waste collection, treatment and disposal.

The updated Draft Design Guide is a supplementary planning document to guide residential developers. Previously this guidance has been included as part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan but will now be reviewed and updated separately, though still linked to the Minerals and Waste Plan.

## **HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT**

#### Local Highway Improvements

Applications for the 2026/2027 LHI application round opened on Monday 10 November 2025 and close at 5:00PM on Friday 16 January 2026. Further information on the *Applying for a Local Highway Improvement (LHI)* on the county's website.

#### 20MPH schemes

Applications for the 2026/2027 20MPH initiative funding round opens on Monday 26 January 2026 and closes at 5:00PM on Friday 27 March 2026. Further information on the *20mph funding* on the county's website.

#### Busway safety measures

The council is currently implementing measures to improve safety on the Guided Busway. The speed limit has been reduced along the whole Busway including the maintenance track, and informal crossing points are being reviewed. Work began on 12 October to install fencing to

separate the maintenance track and the busway across its whole length. A plan is also being developed for perimeter fencing at Histon and there are discussions underway to consider how members of the public can safely cross at various points.

#### Peat soil roads

There has been noticeable deterioration of our fen roads over the summer and autumn. Several locations have required temporary traffic signals where significant localised subsidence has occurred. Roads where no capital scheme is planned this year are being patched so that the temporary traffic lights can be removed. On roads such as the B1050 Earith to Willingham the speed limit has been further reduced from 40MPH to 30MPH and safety inspection frequency has been increased as well as planned localised patching.

This situation is clearly unsustainable in the longer term. As previously reported, officers are awaiting the outcome of trials of different repair methods on a road in Fenland, and putting together evidence to present to Government for the multi-million pound investment these roads need.

Electronic roadside variable message and flood warning signs Existing signs around the county are being upgraded to low carbon LED technology, which can display clearer messages and images to road users.

Electronic flooding signage is also being improved with better sensors for accuracy, alerting drivers early at times when roads need to be closed for safety. Final installations are under way for both these projects.

#### Abuse of road workers

Cambridgeshire County Council is supporting a national campaign to stop abuse of roadworkers. The council is appealing to the public to show respect for people working on the highway after repeated incidents of physical and verbal abuse.

Workers continue to face daily verbal abuse as well as more serious cases. In one incident, in South Cambridgeshire, a woman drove at the highway officer, rammed her vehicle into barriers, became extremely aggressive, got out of her car, shouted personal abuse at him, threatened him, and then called the police.

In another incident in East Cambridgeshire an officer was responding to a customer report of a drainage issue and when attempting to discuss the issue with the resident who had reported it, was assaulted, with their hair being grabbed whilst verbal abuse was directed at them.

On recent major projects, such as the GCP's work on Milton Road in Cambridge, teams on the ground have experienced horrific behaviour, from being threatened with violence to being driven at while managing traffic.

The Stamp It Out campaign hopes to raise awareness of the issue amongst the public and help remove the abuse that roadworkers receive every day. Research by the group found that 50% of those in public-facing roles face weekly abuse, while 80% do not report it, as they feel nothing will be done. This is very concerning and dispiriting and we are determined that this will change. Highway workers have begun to wear bodycams and vehicles are fitted with dashcams. The council is also working with the police to report these incidents and pass on the recordings for further investigation and prosecution.

#### Getting tough on overstaying road works

Gas works on Hills Road in Cambridge were halted, permits withdrawn, and the company issued with 6 fines after work did not resume as planned after Remembrance Day. This failure by Cadent Gas caused complications for other utility companies, delays to buses, and

disruption for residents and businesses.

In 2024-25, Cambridgeshire County Council issued fines totalling £483,000 to utility companies and developers for non-compliant and over-running roadworks. The council processed more than 32,000 street work permits last year, regulating when and how works can take place on the highway.

#### East West Rail

East West Rail have announced new design proposals following consultation. A new Cambridge East station and an eastern entrance are two key proposed changes. If approved, these will help cut congestion in the centre of Cambridge and improve accessibility. There are also new proposals for a fully mined tunnel at the A428 Bourn Airfield crossing and a new road around Harston.

### **NEWS FROM THE GREATER CAMBRIDGE PARTNERSHIP**

The November meeting of the GCP Board:

- Agreed to extend its Smart programme, responsible for technological trials and innovations including autonomous buses, for a further year.
- Adopted a proposed approach to biodiversity net gain on its various projects—we have been pressing for biodiversity schemes to take place on-site as much as possible.
- Updated plans for its Greenways including a new starting point for the Swaffham Greenway in East Cambridgeshire.

### **NEWS FROM THE COMBINED AUTHORITY**

#### Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The Combined Authority has approved the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, subject to a 28-day period for ‘supporting authorities’ (local planning authorities and named partners) to object.

#### Budget and priorities

Mayor Paul Bristow’s plan to spend £1.2 million over the next two years to introduce free car parking in Peterborough and Huntingdonshire has raised concern that it could further reduce bus usage and be unfair on taxpayers across Cambridgeshire who would be funding free parking in selected areas.

Questions have been raised about whether the draft budget allocation for this is enough—Peterborough City Council leader Shabina Qayyum has estimated 24/7 free parking in Peterborough alone would cost £3.4 million. And Cambridge Area Bus Users group has warned that free parking elsewhere has led to lower bus ridership and higher fares. The cost of introducing free parking in Peterborough and Huntingdonshire would be paid by residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, whether or not they have a car or visit the places in question and at the expense of supporting specific bus routes and helping support fares.

#### Commissioner appointments under scrutiny

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee reviewed the Mayor’s appointment of a number of ‘Commissioners’ after concerns were raised by Board members. The Committee recommended that although the Mayoral Decision Notice was arrived at correctly and in accordance with the current procedure, the Mayor should ensure that terms of reference and job descriptions are shared with Board members before taking any further decisions on Commissioners.

**\*\*\*With best wishes for the holidays!\*\*\***

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