

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT JUNE 2021

Council election and change of administration

Firstly, thank you to the residents of Sutton division for re-electing me to serve as your County Councillor for a further four years. It has been a privilege to represent our local communities and I look forward to continuing to do so.

Secondly, the election on 6 May resulted in major changes to the County Council. No political group has an overall majority, and the new Council is as follows.

Conservative	28
Liberal Democrat	20
Labour	9
Independent	4

The Liberal Democrat, Labour, and Independent groups on the Council have signed an Agreement to form a Joint Administration to run the Council. The document includes a policy framework, protocols for working arrangements, and a new committee structure. The document is available at www.cambridgeshirelibdems.org.uk/joint_administration_agreement

The Council's new policy committees are as follows.

Now	Was
Strategy & Resources	General Purposes Commercial & Investment
Adults & Health	Adults Health
Children, Young People & Skills	Children & Young People
Communities, Social Mobility & Inclusion	Communities & Partnership
Environment & Green Investment	Environment & Sustainability
Highways & Transport	Highways & Transport

I am now Chair of the Environment & Green Investment Committee, and a member of Strategy & Resources and of Adults & Health. I am still Deputy Leader of my council group, but not of the Council.

The Council's AGM took place on 18 May at the Imperial War Museum Duxford—the only venue that could accommodate the Council safely under Government requirements to resume face to face meetings. Committee meetings will not resume until after 21 June when we hope some COVID restrictions may be lifted.

COVID-19

Cases

The past week has seen a slight rise in cases in Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge. All districts are well below the national and regional averages. All rises are from a low base.

Cases per 100,000 population, week ending 29 May	
Cambridgeshire	11
England average	32
East of England average	20

Hospital COVID admissions across Cambridgeshire have stabilised. Just five patients are currently receiving treatment in hospital. There have been no COVID-related deaths recorded in Cambridgeshire since 30 April.

Increased instances of the Delta variant (previously the Indian variant) continue to be of concern nationally. The Government should announce on June 14 whether restrictions will be eased on 21 June as planned. Until then it is vital that we all follow the rules for Stage 3 of the roadmap.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-response-spring-2021/covid-19-response-spring-2021-summary

Vaccinations

More vaccinations are being given across the country. It is vital that people have their second jab as soon as it is offered.

People aged 30 and over, or who turn 30 before 1 July, are now being called for their vaccine. Vaccinations can be booked online at www.nhs.uk. 532,596 people in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough have had at least one dose of the vaccine. 349,449 of these have had both doses.

Testing

Testing amongst secondary school pupils is not as high as it could be. Health professionals are encouraging pupils to take a lateral flow test twice a week. It is important to register the result. New posters will be in schools next week when students return after half term.

Information

Do check the Council's public health information messages about COVID which are updated regularly.

- <https://twitter.com/CambsCC>
- <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/coronavirus-covid-19-overview>



'Farmgate' report

One of the commitments in the Joint Administration agreement is to work with council officers to publish the long-awaited 'Farmgate' report to the greatest possible extent, and as soon as possible. The Council's new leadership is working with senior council officers on this.

Ely rail consultation

Network Rail's Ely area capacity enhancement (EACE) programme proposes to upgrade the railway to allow more trains to run through Ely. Phase 2 of the scheme is currently open for public consultation at phase2.elyareacapacity.com/

The programme's aim is to increase capacity through Ely for up to ten train services in each direction per hour from the current level. For this second round of consultation, Network Rail are inviting the public to comment on the options for development in the Ely south area. This encompasses

- [part of the Soham branch line](#)
- [Ely Dock junction and Ely station](#)
- [Stuntney Road bridge](#)
- [Cutter bridge](#)
- [Common Muckhill bridge](#)
- [Kiln Lane level crossing](#)

The consultation also includes questions about bridge styles and information about construction, sustainability, and the environment.

Of these, the most complex and controversial issue is likely to be the Kiln Lane crossing. More frequent train services would result in the Kiln Lane level crossing being closed for much longer periods each hour. Network Rail are therefore proposing to permanently close the crossing, and provide an alternative means of crossing the railway for pedestrians and an alternative means of vehicle access to commercial and leisure facilities.

Network Rail are offering four different footbridge options for pedestrians, and two options for vehicles—a 300 metre long and ten metre high viaduct across part of the Ely Pits & Meadows SSSI and agricultural grazing land, or a 60 metre long vehicle bridge across the River Great Ouse with road access from Queen Adelaide Way. The latter option could mean diverting a public right of way along the bank of the river, and would require deep piling to support the bridge.

The consultation closes on Sunday 4 July. There are various ways for the public to comment.

phase2.elyareacapacity.com/how-to-have-your-say/

Floodmobile on tour

A Floodmobile commissioned by the OxCam Property Flood Resilience project arrived in Alconbury on 27 May, showcasing dozens of practical measures which can be fitted to domestic properties to reduce the risk or impact of flooding. Pumps, flood doors, self-closing air bricks, non-return valves, and more were on show, and flood resilience expert Mary Dhonau OBE (@floodmary on Twitter) was on hand to demonstrate them.

With a large number of local properties in Cambridgeshire flooded at Christmas and New Year, and in many cases not for the first time, this information is extremely useful, not least when engaging with insurers and loss adjusters about what it is possible to do to improve your home's resilience after a flood event.

The Floodmobile will be a star attraction at a number of 'flood days' across the area between Oxford and Cambridge over the course of the year—and when it's not required for these, it will be available to bring to local communities. I have already put in an early pitch to bring the vehicle and display to several locations in this division including Little Downham and Mepal.

Meanwhile Mary Dhonau's website www.marydhonau.co.uk/ includes an excellent e-book full of illustrated stories from homes and businesses who have made adaptations to help them recover more quickly after a flood.

Swaffham Prior community heating project

A film crew came to Swaffham Prior last month to record a segment about the village's community heating project, as part of the run-up to the G7 meeting of world leaders in Cornwall this month.

Residents in Swaffham Prior have developed an impressive project to take around 250 homes in the village off oil and onto sustainable heating and hot water—and the County Council has been working with them towards making this a reality. A County Council-owned farm field will house 130 boreholes supplying heat from the ground, and a rebuilt barn will accommodate an energy centre from which heating will be delivered by a piped network to villagers who sign up to be supplied. County Council officers have also supported residents through the complex financial, legal, technical and other processes involved in realising this scheme.

Not only will energy be supplied in a more environmentally friendly way to these homes, but customers will avoid the high capital costs and complexity of installing their own technology, and will benefit from more stable energy costs rather than the fluctuating price of oil. The field housing the boreholes will be recovered to return it to its agricultural purpose.

The film crew took several hours to hear about the project and interview the impressive Emma Fletcher, local resident and Chair of the Swaffham Prior Community Land Trust, along with Janet Hall from community engagement consultancy Line Undrawn which is working with residents on this project, and myself as Chair of the County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee.

Shortly after filming, it was announced that Cambridgeshire County Council has been awarded more than £3.2M of Heat Networks Investment Project (HNIP) funding for the project. There are around 10,000 properties in Cambridgeshire still on oil heating, and it is hoped this trailblazing project will demonstrate the feasibility of putting in place similar schemes elsewhere in the county.

Road resurfacing update

Road resurfacing plans have been adjusted since my last report.

- The Orchards and Elizabeth Court, Sutton was resurfaced in May.
- The Brook, Sutton was resurfaced early this month.
- Cross Lane, Little Downham has been delayed from the spring programme due to one of the gangs completing works in another county.

Residents have expressed concern about the appearance of the recent resurfacing in Sutton. Highways officers advise that it takes several weeks or even months for the work to 'embed' and will end up looking better than it currently does—something for us to keep an eye on between now and autumn.

Gravel Head Bridge

Work on Gravel Head Bridge, Downham Common has had to be revisited after residents reported it had been left in a dangerous condition. Highways officers explain that the surface had dropped due to a void under the carriageway, which they attributed to settling ground combined with the high level of saturation when the original works were carried out.

LHI bids

The recommended bids are scheduled to be approved by the Highways & Transport Committee on Tuesday 22 June. As previously reported, in this division these are as follows.

- Little Downham: solar studs along the B1411 Ely Road
 - Witchford: pedestrian crossing near the school on Main Street
 - Coveney: gates and signing and lining on Jerusalem Drove Wardy Hill
-

A10 BP roundabout

Following concerns expressed by a large number of residents about (lack of) safety for pedestrians and cyclists at the remodelled A10 BP roundabout, I and my new Ely county councillor colleagues Piers Coutts and Alison Whelan have set up a petition calling on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority to put matters right and install safe crossings at the roundabout. The petition is at www.tinyurl.com/A10SafetyCantWait

We have also written to the new Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Nik Johnson, as follows.

“Congratulations on your election as Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough. We hope you will find this a rewarding role, with many challenges and opportunities ahead.

We are sure you have many urgent and important issues on your desk right now. We would however want to draw your attention to the dangerous situation left by your predecessor at the roundabout at the junction of the A10 and A142 at Ely (the ‘BP’ roundabout).

Even before ‘improvement’ works funded by the Combined Authority were carried out to the roundabout last year, it was judged by residents to be the most dangerous crossing in East Cambridgeshire for pedestrians and cyclists (source: East Cambridgeshire District Council walking and cycling surveys, March-May 2020).

The recent ‘improvements’, which consisted of installing additional entry and exit lanes to enable more cars to flow more quickly, have made the situation many times worse. An experienced cyclist has been knocked off his bicycle at the junction, and has said he knows of several other such instances, which are not being recorded. The dangers present at this junction deter others from walking or cycling into or out of Ely, which cannot be good on environmental grounds if for no other reason.

Considerable sums have been expended on cycling infrastructure from Sutton to Ely, which comes to a complete halt at this dangerous junction. The situation flies in the face of the Combined Authority’s commitments in its Local Transport Plan to prioritise sustainable modes of travel.

The stock answer to date has been that eventually the A10 will be dualled from Milton to Ely, and that some sort of solution will be incorporated into this speculative £0.5 billion project. However, even if such a scheme were desirable, no funding has been forthcoming from Government for such an expensive project, which would in any case take many years to come to fruition.

We believe that the safety of pedestrians and cyclists cannot wait that long, and that the Combined Authority owes a duty to these road users to right the wrong that has been done, and install safe crossing measures as a priority. We would welcome the opportunity to meet you, preferably on site, but if necessary elsewhere or electronically, to discuss this matter and seek your support for a solution.”

Ely Leisure Village B1411 traffic

I have been following up concerns expressed by residents about vehicles at the McDonalds drive-through at Ely Leisure Village queuing out onto the B1411 down towards the A10 roundabout.

The relevant Council officer has met with the new manager of the Leisure Village to discuss this situation, which they believe may be due to COVID restrictions leaving the drive through restaurant as one of the few catering outlets operating normally. (This may be a fair assessment, as I have also seen lengthy queues spilling out onto the Newmarket Road roundabout from the McDonalds drive-through at Wadloes Road in Cambridge.)

The manager has put the Council in direct contact with the franchisee who runs these outlets so that officers can emphasise the problem. The Council will continue to monitor traffic flows in the area and share information to obtain evidence and explore any opportunity to resolve them should they persist.

Online council meetings

I stood in for the Leader of the Council at a recent online briefing for council leaders from the Secretary of State for local government, Robert Jenrick. The question of a return to virtual council and committee meetings was raised, and the Secretary of State did not seem able to promise that these would be permitted any time soon.

Independent Remuneration Panel

The County Council is required by law to convene an independent panel every four years to review the scheme of councillors’ allowances and make recommendations. The last Panel was convened in 2017, so a fresh Panel has been called upon and is interviewing councillors this month as part of its fact-finding process. The Council will eventually consider the Panel’s recommendations, which it does not have to accept. The previous Council ruling group indeed did not accept the recommendations of the 2017 Panel, and substituted its own scheme of allowances which was much more generous to its own members.

OxCam arc

I stood in for the Leader of the Council at a recent online meeting of council leaders in the area of the Oxford to Cambridge 'arc', seen by Government as an area of opportunity for new housing, new jobs, and east-west rail transport to link with rail to the ports at Harwich and Felixstowe. There is a high level of Government interest in this, and much activity by civil servants.

Waste consultations

A number of Government consultations on waste are ongoing. Two of these, on Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Scheme, closed on 4 June. The third, on Consistency in Household & Business Recycling, closes on 4 July.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

A new Mayor, Nik Johnson, was elected on 6 May. Along with the change of representation to the Mayor's Combined Authority from the new administration at the County Council, this will significantly change the agenda.

The new Mayor has already stated that his predecessor's CAM metro will not go ahead in the form envisaged, and that the £100K homes scheme will be scrapped 'with almost immediate effect'. We will wait to see what his policy priorities will be as they emerge in the coming months—he did not have an election manifesto.

The change of administration on the County Council has also had an effect on the Greater Cambridge Partnership which covers Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, and includes representatives from both those district councils and also from the County Council. Much of the transport work of the Greater Cambridge Partnership has been drawn up in expectation of linking to a CAM metro system which will now not be going ahead.

Meet Your Councillor

Sutton ward district councillor Mark Inskip and I will be holding our virtual surgery via Zoom from 6:30 to 7:30PM on

- Tuesday 13 July 2021
- Tuesday 10 August 2021

Please contact Mark at mark@markinskip.org.uk to book your timeslot.

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division