

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT DECEMBER 2021

COVID-19

Overview

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Enhanced Response Area status for tackling the Covid pandemic lasts until at least Monday 6 December. More information at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/enhanced-response-area-status-vital-to-protect-nhs-and-vital-services>

Cambridge University Hospitals' Chief Executive Roland Sinker warned in early November that Addenbrooke's was 'ceasing to function as a hospital' and that 'You'd have to be asleep to not realise the profound nature of the crisis we're in'. At that time 150 of the 900-1,000 beds were closed due to infection control and pandemic-related reconfiguration. The hospital was caring for 58 people with COVID-19, 11 of them in the critical care unit. Ambulances were queuing outside the hospital, and one woman died in the back of an ambulance while waiting.

Covid in schools

Cases in schools have risen significantly in the last week and are expected to rise further. Pressure on staffing resources is now critical and a number of schools are close to closing classes due to safety considerations.

Attendance continues to be high, however. Cambridgeshire's school attendance benchmarking tool was sent to the Secretary of State for Education by his policy advisor as a case study of best practice on highlighting challenges with pupil attendance.

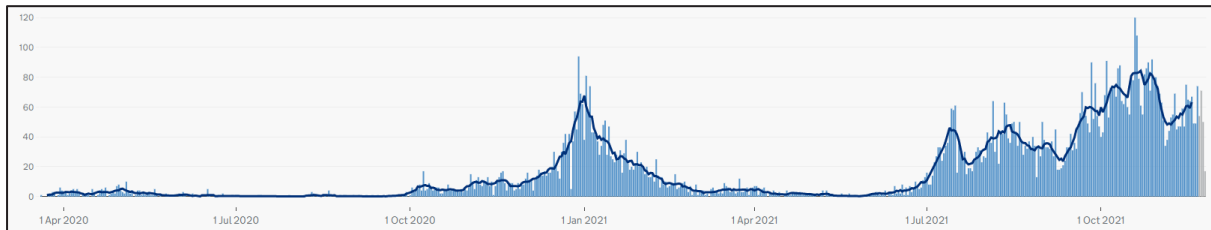
Vaccination rates among Cambridgeshire's 12-15 year olds are at or above the East of England average in all Cambridgeshire districts, and all are higher than the England average. Vaccination rates among 12-15 year olds in East Cambridgeshire are the second highest in Cambridgeshire. As at 23 November vaccination rates among 12-15 year olds were as follows.

Area	12-15 vaccination uptake
South Cambridgeshire	60.0%
East Cambridgeshire	56.5%
Huntingdonshire	54.7%
Cambridge	47.0%
Fenland	45.8%
East of England	45.8%
England	39.8%

Case rates in Cambridgeshire

As of 27 November:

- 3,139 cases were recorded in Cambridgeshire in the previous seven days—477.6 cases per 100,000 population. This is above the East of England average of 455.9 cases per 100,000 population.
- 443 of these cases were in East Cambridgeshire, an increase of 10 per cent on the previous week—491.3 cases per 100,000.



Cases in East Cambridgeshire since the start of the pandemic

There have been 29 cases of COVID-19 in Sutton and Downham wards in the seven days to 27 November, and 61 cases in Haddenham, Stretham and Witchford.

Vaccinations

- 71,228 people in East Cambridgeshire had been given their first dose of the vaccine by the end of 25 November.
- 65,461 people in East Cambridgeshire had been given their second dose.

Booster vaccinations are now being offered to those aged 40 and above who had their second dose of the vaccine more than six months ago. However the NHS is struggling with capacity to deliver the booster programme, meaning that a number of local residents are being offered their booster vaccinations in locations as distant as King's Lynn, and even people with pre-booked vaccination appointments are having to queue round the block at their chosen location.

Testing

Mobile testing vehicles continue to visit sites across the county, offering on-the-spot tests as well as kits to take away and complete at home. You can also order kits to use at home. More information at [ww.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/rapidtesting)

General Covid information

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



Holiday Activity & Food in Cambridgeshire

Enriching experiences and a nutritious lunch are being made available in the Christmas holidays for the children of families receiving benefits-related free school meals.

The Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme offers fun with friends and free food for primary and secondary school children in Cambridgeshire. Sessions will include a healthy meal, a variety of exciting activities or sports and the opportunity to socialise with other children. Any child receiving benefits-related free school meals is eligible for the programme.

Funded by the Department for Education (DfE) for the next three years, the HAF scheme enables councils like Cambridgeshire to coordinate free holiday childcare and enriching experiences locally. The programme will be delivered by approved providers, and co-ordinated locally by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Each eligible child will be able to access up to 16 hours of free holiday childcare or enriching experiences through the school Christmas holiday period. Bookings have already opened and information about how to book with participating providers can be found at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/haf

As part of the HAF programme, eligible children will be able to access:

- Fun and enriching play opportunities or new experiences that provide children with new skills and knowledge.
- At least one meal a day.
- Guidance on healthy eating and getting children involved in food preparation and cooking.
- Support for parents, carers or other family members with guidance on how to source, prepare and cook nutritious and low-cost food.
- Information and signposting to other services and support which might be helpful.

The Council is working with local schools, voluntary and community organisations, and childcare providers to deliver the HAF programme.

At the time of writing, the programme is available in East Cambridgeshire at Isle of Ely Primary School, Bottisham Community Primary School, Football Fun Factory at Littleport and Soham, Kids Club Ely Holiday Club, and Premier Education at The Hive Ely and Weatheralls Primary School Soham.

Registered Holiday Scheme Providers and childminders are welcome to sign up to deliver the programme, by emailing HAF@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. It would be great to see the programme expand into some of our larger villages locally.

Household Support Fund

Cambridgeshire's Household Support Fund, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, has been created to help people experiencing immediate financial hardship to pay for food, household energy or other essential items. The scheme will run until 31 March 2022.

Support is offered in two ways:

- Support with food, household energy and other essentials for individuals and families: residents are eligible to access this support if they earn less than £17,940 per year, or are in receipt of certain state benefits
- Direct food voucher scheme: as in previous school holidays, supermarket vouchers will be issued to families meeting the low income criteria for free school meals, funded childcare for two-year-olds, early years pupil premium, or sixth form students eligible for free school meals.

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund

Land Use Framework for Cambridgeshire

The motion on land use which I mentioned in my November report, and which I submitted for debate at the County Council's full council meeting on Tuesday 9 November, was passed by a majority, with members of the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent joint administration voting in favour of it, and the Conservative opposition voting against.

The motion will now be circulated locally by the Food Farming & Countryside Commission to be used as a model for partner organisations to use if they wish to indicate their support for this important piece of work.

I represented the County Council at the second meeting of the local project in mid-November, and we look forward to moving ahead with this work in 2022.

Full Council

Other items for the full Council meeting on Tuesday 9 November were:

- The appointment of Stephen Moir as the Council's new Chief Executive— Stephen used to work for the County Council some years ago and was a strong choice as the new Chief Executive.
- Various changes to the Council's constitution, which were agreed.
- The parental leave policy for councillors which was approved.
- The Pension Fund Committee annual report, which was also agreed,
- Motions on surface water flooding, resettlement of Afghan citizens, the Government's social care plan, and cuts to Universal Credit, which again were all agreed. The motion on Universal Credit resolved that the County

Council would work with partners to set up a funding scheme to support children and young people whose families are on Universal Credit or free school meals to have reduced cost access to out of school activities, in order to support them to reach their educational and personal potential.

Hundred Foot de-silting

Work continues to attempt to resolve the controversy over the Environment Agency de-silting works on the Hundred Foot, and local community concerns about the nature of the material dug up from the river. The Environment Agency has asked the opinion of a Reservoirs Panel Engineer who says there is no cause for concern. Samples of the arisings from the de-silting works are to be taken for analysis. Any further actions will depend on the results of this analysis.

An update from the Environment Agency was due on or around 22 November but has not been received at the time of writing this report.

Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The County Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee approved a draft revised Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which will go out to public consultation shortly. The overall objectives of the strategy remain the same:

1. Understanding flood risk in Cambridgeshire
2. Managing the likelihood of flooding
3. Helping Cambridgeshire's citizens to manage their own risk
4. Ensuring appropriate development in Cambridgeshire
5. Improving flood prediction, warning and post flood recovery

The new strategy will cover the period 2021-2027. It has been updated to reflect the effects of climate change, changes in policy and legislation, the increased importance of working in partnership—and of course the winter 2020 floods. The strategy identifies that there needs to be much greater clarity on the roles of each flood risk management authority, and greater reference to riparian ownership and and community involvement.

Sunnica planning application

Slightly later than envisaged, Sunnica have now submitted their application to the Secretary of State for their enormous solar installation stretching from the outskirts of Thetford Forest to Burwell. The County Council is working with Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and West Suffolk District Council to make the required response on the 'adequacy of consultation'.

Climate Change & Environment Strategy

A draft of the County Council's revised Climate Change & Environment Strategy will be considered by the Council's Environment & Green Investment Committee on 16 December. This follows a series of engagement meetings with parish councils, local businesses, and Council staff across the organisation. The final version of the Strategy will be considered by the Full Council at the budget meeting in February.

The Council's annual report on its carbon footprint will go to the Committee for consideration in January.

Climate-related research

Meanwhile, work is ongoing by postgraduate students from the University of Cambridge on two pieces of climate-related work.

- The first is considering the potential for a Cambridgeshire Decarbonisation Fund and how it might work.
- The second is considering how Local Area Energy Planning could work in Cambridgeshire. Local area energy usually refers to energy projects that are led by local organisations, whether public, private or third sector, and run for local benefit. Local area energy plans can cover lots of different activities taking place within a local area such as
 - Improving the energy efficiency of homes within a local area
 - Installing micro-generation, like solar panels on the roofs of houses and community buildings
 - Creating local generation, such as a local wind farm to produce energy exclusively for consumers in that area
 - Managing local distribution, potentially via a 'smart' local grid (a network that moves energy around a small geographic area)
 - Making public or on street electric vehicle charging points more widely available
 - Taking action on climate change including requiring low carbon heat in new buildings, creating heat from waste, or public and private transport/clean air priorities such as low emission zones.

We look forward to receiving the reports from the students in the new year.

More schools moving to renewable heating

In early November I attended the launch of what one pupil described as an 'air force heat pump' at a school in King's Hedges in Cambridge. The Council has a growing programme to replace school gas and oil boilers with greener options.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Combined Authority has introduced a new 'Sustainable Growth Ambition Statement' to accompany its budget. This Statement restates the commitment in the Devolution Deal signed between the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils and Government, 'to double the size of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough economy in the 25 years from the date of the Deal'. It also lists the six themes which will inform the Combined Authority's investment programme:

- Health and skills
- Climate and nature
- Infrastructure
- Innovation
- Reducing inequalities
- Financial and systems

The Combined Authority Board also considered the final report of the Independent Commission on Climate, and agreed to address the proposed actions for which the Combined Authority is responsible, and consider the additional recommendations for other 'stakeholders' such as local councils, businesses, Government, and others.

In *very good news*, the Combined Authority has recognised the need to develop a new Further Education campus in Ely to address gaps in provision. 'This is to meet sufficiency requirements for the projected growth in the 16-19 cohort, tackle 'cold-spots' in FE provision for adults and create new facilities for specialist curricula. The proposed provision will also expand access to Technical Education through expanding T-Levels and green skills courses. It will reduce travel times for students by providing local provision.' This will not happen quickly, but it is great to see this in the budget papers at last.

The Board also agreed to spend nearly £350,000 in Ely—on CCTV, the general appearance of some city centre business frontages, and signage and street furniture. This is part of the £1M awarded to each of the 'market towns' in Cambridgeshire, to fulfil the recommendations of a series of 'market town masterplans' produced by consultants. Soham is due to be putting in several bids, and Littleport (which wanted to spend the money on a roundabout) has been steered to work on other bids instead.

The Combined Authority has portioned out to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough the Capability Fund money received from Government for active travel. Cambridgeshire's share is £258,939, to be spent on workplace travel planning, school travel planning, active travel communications, updating of cycle maps, active travel scheme planning and design, data and evidence collecting, and Fenland to Peterborough national cycle network 63.

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 7 December 2021
- Tuesday 11 January 2022

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

And finally—season's greetings to all residents in Sutton, Mepal, Witcham, Wentworth, Coveney, Wardy Hill, Way Head, Little Downham, Pymoor, and Witchford, and all good wishes for the year to come.



Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division