

# Cllr Lorna Dupré

## MONTHLY REPORT JULY 2023

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### STRATEGY & RESOURCES

#### Financial update

Cambridgeshire County Council ended the past financial year (2022/23) with a overspend of just 0.2 per cent of its annual budget.

Despite growing inflation on all the goods and services the council buys, the council kept its overspend to just £728,000, a figure it had been predicting with some accuracy for the second half of the year.

The council set its 2022/3 budget in February 2022 at a time of great uncertainty, and during the year which followed inflation reached record highs, meaning that in-year the council had to manage more than £43M of additional pressures.

The final position shows that increases in some areas such as high levels of inflation in home to school transport, lower than expected income in some areas due to a slow recovery from COVID, and the impact of a national shortage (and consequent spiralling costs) of placements for children with very specialist mental health needs had largely been mitigated by underspends elsewhere.

The central issue remains however that Cambridgeshire County Council is woefully underfunded by central government, leaving residents of this county severely disadvantaged.

Cambridgeshire is a growing county, but despite this our funding formula remains fixed to population figures from more than ten years ago. In effect, while more Cambridgeshire residents are contributing to national taxes, our settlement has not been updated to supporting the area's direct local needs, leaving the council with problems to fix that will need many years of detailed work, not just short-term patching. The leaders of all four political groups on the county council wrote again to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up earlier this year, putting the case for change and a funding settlement which truly meets Cambridgeshire's local needs, but received no acknowledgement.

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### ADULTS & HEALTH

#### Priors Field

Two further public meetings took place in Sutton last month, led by NHS Cambridgeshire and with major input from the Patient Participation Group.

A new permanent building in Sutton is now part of NHS Cambridgeshire's Operational Plan for 2023/24. A reference group of local volunteers with relevant expertise is being set up to support the development of a new facility, and the PPG and NHS Cambridgeshire are working on the role specification and terms of reference for this group.

I met NHS Cambridgeshire with the PPG on Monday 3 July as part of their 'after action review' of what happened at Priors Field.

The county council's Adults & Health Committee met at the end of June, and have asked NHS Cambridgeshire to provide them formally with a copy of the resulting report so they can assess its contents. I addressed the committee and asked them to

- i. seek assurances from the NHS that it will consider how communication can be managed as effectively as possible in challenging circumstances such as the closure of a practice
- ii. press the NHS on how its various parts can work together more cohesively to identify and monitor GP practices at risk generally, and of closure in particular, and seek to act early to prevent this if possible, or to manage the process better for the community if not.

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## CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

### Holiday Activities and Food programme

The County Council's summer HAF programme, funded by the Department for Education, is open for bookings. Children in receipt of income-related free school meals can book a holiday scheme place for 64 hours, subject to availability. Each scheme offers enriching experiences, a meal and snacks.

The HAF Team can arrange transport for families unable to access the programme otherwise. Ukrainian and other refugee families are also eligible for places as well as families 'just about managing' financially. There is a video on YouTube [youtu.be/WSOEjJIXY5c](https://youtu.be/WSOEjJIXY5c) showing what's involved. And look out for the HAF Programme on Facebook and Twitter too.

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

### Special educational needs support

Support for parents and carers of the approximately 15,000 children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in Cambridgeshire is now available at the click of a button through a new information hub. The website was developed with local experts including parents, health professionals, and community organisations such as Speak Out Council and PinPoint. The tool was produced to

help families and young people to navigate the special needs journey and access information and advice.

**[send.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](https://send.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)**

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## **COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY & INCLUSION (COSMIC)**

### **Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund**

The Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund is now open for applications. Expressions of interest must be made by 24 September, and applicants who are successful at this stage will be invited to submit a Stage 2 application.

The upper limit for bids is £40,000, and these must be for community capital projects to improve or upgrade community buildings and assets, while supporting the council to achieve at least three of its strategic ambitions.

- Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.
- Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.
- Health inequalities are reduced.
- People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.
- People are helped out of poverty and income inequality.
- Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.
- Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

**[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshire-priorities-capital-fund](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/communities/cambridgeshire-priorities-capital-fund)**

### **Decentralisation projects**

The committee is being asked to endorse a series of pilot decentralisation projects, starting this month. In East Cambridgeshire two projects are proposed.

- A jointly led pilot to connect care leavers with universal support networks in the local community and the resources available to connect young people with their family history and life story through library and archive resources.
- Through East Cambs Climate Action Network (CAN) to explore how the county council can support a local community to develop a community energy plan, using the council's community energy policy.

### **Quality of life survey**

The County Council has launched a countywide survey, speaking to a random sample of 5,500 residents to understand their views on the quality of their lives.

The council aims to make this an annual survey so it can track the responses over time to see how council decisions and policies—and the work of other public sector bodies in the county—affect residents' views.

The telephone survey, run by an independent market research company Thinks Insight, aims to speak to 1,100 people aged 18+ living in each of the five Cambridgeshire district areas. The company will also be talking to people from specific groups who are less often heard from including people who may have been homeless or are from migrant or Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. If you are approached the market research team will identify themselves as working on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council and will give the council's main contact number to allow people to check. No one will be asked for identifying personal details, or any financial information.

The council is also planning a specific piece of work with younger people via our youth engagement teams.

However, anyone in Cambridgeshire who wants to do so can take part by responding online until Friday 4 August.

**[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey)**

## **Equality, diversity and inclusion**

The council has developed a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy. This focuses on the council's workforce, communities and services, with three guiding principles—taking evidence-based action, listening to the voices of everyone, and having a transparent and robust approach that delivers meaningful change.

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## **CONSTITUTION & ETHICS**

### **Changes to the council's constitution**

The council requested, and has now received, an independent review of its governance arrangements, carried out by the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny.

The report made a number of recommendations which were considered by the council's Constitution & Ethics Committee last month. The committee agreed to recommend these changes to the Full Council for consideration at its meeting this month. They include the addition of performance and strategic partnerships to the responsibilities of the Strategy & Resources Committee, and the creation of a new Assets & Procurement Committee.

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## **ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT**

### **Memory Wood**

On 15 June I was delighted to be invited to join the Leader of the Council and pupils from Fulbourn primary school to mark the naming of a Covid memorial

woodland at Lower Valley Farm in Fulbourn. The county council planted the woodland earlier this year, and the pupils held a competition to name it. Memory Wood was the winning entry, and we unveiled the name board.

### **Local Nature Recovery Strategy**

Defra has now published guidance on how it wishes to see Local Nature Recovery Strategies being prepared. The Combined Authority is responsible for the preparation of Cambridgeshire's strategy, and has contracted this responsibility to the county council together with Natural Cambridgeshire.

Meanwhile work on the county council's Biodiversity Strategy is progressing well, with survey work ongoing this month to provide a baseline of the biodiversity status of the council's important sites and help identify plans for enhancement.

### **Energy projects**

Babraham Park & Ride: all the panels on the solar carports in the main car park have now been installed, and work is to follow on the remainder of the car park. 35 EV chargers will be installed later this year, fifteen of these on behalf of the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

St Ives Park & Ride: all solar carports have been constructed, and the next step is to build the microgrid energy centre and substation which will allow the project to connect to the grid and switch on.

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## **HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT**

### **Local Highways Improvements**

The Highways & Transport Committee has delegated to the relevant Executive Director authority for the approval of recommendations for this year's Local Highways Improvement schemes.

Coveney's bid for signing, lining and marking at Gravel End is being recommended for approval, as is Witchford's bid for lighting at the A142 junction with Sutton Road.

Temporary disappointment however for Sutton whose weight limit bid is currently viewed as non-compliant with council policy. I have had a number of conversations with council officers about this bid, and have been assured that they will be continuing to work on it so that it can achieve compliance.

There was a notable shortage of applications from East Cambridgeshire and Fenland this year at 12 and 15 respectively, compared to Huntingdonshire (38), South Cambridgeshire (42) and Cambridge (55) where a large number of bids will be unsuccessful due to the intense competition.

The proposed application window for the next round of bids is as follows.

- Application window opens: Friday 27 October 2023
- Application window closes: Friday 12 January 2024 midday
- Feasibility studies undertaken: February to May 2024
- Panel meetings: June and July 2024
- Report to committee including prioritised list for approval: September 2024

### Road crossings on The Brook Sutton

Two crossings on The Brook—one between the High Street junction and Mostyn Close, and the other nearer the school—are due to be installed over the summer. The Brook will be closed between the High Street and Stirling Way during these works, except for access to properties between those points.

### Road safety schemes

Road safety schemes progressing this year are

- Puddock Road south of Ramsey Forty Foot
- Swaffham Heath Road conversion of crossroads to staggered junction
- A141 south of Wimblington investigation
- Various minor improvements countywide

### Keeping Trade on Track

A new report from England's Economic Heartland and Transport East shows the nationwide business and political support for increasing rail freight capacity at Ely junction.

The report, called *Keeping Trade on Track*, highlights the importance of delivering the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement scheme, which would significantly increase the amount of rail freight heading to the Midlands and north from Felixstowe, alongside improvements to regional passenger services.

A brochure was formally launched in Westminster on 19 June at a meeting of the East of England All-Party Parliamentary Group.

The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement scheme supports UK economic growth and levelling-up by increasing access to global markets to and from the Midlands and north, where 70 per cent of containers from Felixstowe are destined.

According to Network Rail, 2,900 extra freight services would be able to operate to and from Felixstowe each year, removing 98,000 lorry journeys from the road annually, reducing congestion by 5.6 million hours and cutting carbon emissions by 1.7 million tonnes over 60 years. Extra passenger services between Ipswich and Peterborough and from King's Cross to King's Lynn via Ely could also mean 277,000 extra rail passenger journeys. The scheme has a very high benefit-cost ratio, returning over £4.80 of benefits to the UK for every £1 invested



## FIRE AUTHORITY

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Authority councillors have been left surprised and concerned after being given notice that Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is withdrawing from its highly successful Combined Control collaboration at the end of 2024.

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### Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

I attended my first meeting of the Combined Authority's new Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee last month, where among other things I asked that notes should in future be published of the meetings of the Combined Authority's Climate Partnership.

I also attended an induction day at the Combined Authority, which brought together for the first time officers, Board and committee members, and Overview & Scrutiny and Audit & Governance members.

The Skills & Employment Committee has received Labour Market & Skills Profiles for each of the Cambridgeshire districts. East Cambridgeshire has ten per cent of Cambridgeshire's population, and has a similar proportion of residents at each qualification level to both Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and England. It has an employment rate of 86.1 per cent, and an unemployment rate of 4.7 per cent—both higher than Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and England. It has a higher population of retired people and a lower proportion of students.

In 2022 wages were four per cent lower than the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough average and one per cent lower than the England average. In 2019 the district was the 283<sup>rd</sup> most relatively deprived out of 317 English local authorities when looking at children who live in income deprived households.

Participants aged 19+ in further education and skills dropped by four per cent between 2020/21 and 2021/22, while apprenticeships increased by two per cent.

## MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will hold our surgery in the school Community Room on Monday 4 September and Monday 2 October, 6:30 to 7:30PM. There will be no Sutton surgery in August.
- **Witchford:** Cllr Dr Caroline Shepherd and I will hold our surgery in St Andrew's Hall in Main Street on Monday 21 August and Monday 18 September, 6:30 to 7:30PM. There will be no Witchford surgery in July.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall in Little Downham on Friday 21 July and Friday 25 August from 10:00 to 11:00AM.

Meanwhile I can also be contacted

- by email at [lorna@lornadupre.org.uk](mailto:lorna@lornadupre.org.uk)
- by Facebook Messenger
- by phone on 07930 337596

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## **Cllr Lorna Dupré**

County Councillor for the Sutton division