

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT FEBRUARY 2024

FULL COUNCIL

Changes to composition of the council

Councillors were saddened to hear the announcement at the start of the year of the death of Cllr Mac McGuire, the councillor for Yaxley & Farcet in Huntingdonshire and the longest-serving member of the County Council. Mac served on Cambridgeshire County Council from 1985 to 1992, and then again from 1997 until his death over the Christmas holidays. An election to fill the vacancy on the council will be held in due course.

Meanwhile Cllr Ryan Fuller (St Ives North & Wyton) and the Conservative Party have parted company with one another. Cllr Fuller will remain on the council as an independent councillor.

The composition of the various committees on the council will be adjusted to take account of these changes, and then readjusted once Cllr McGuire's replacement in Yaxley & Farcet is known.

STRATEGY RESOURCES & PERFORMANCE

Budget

At the time of writing, the county council's Strategy, Resources & Performance Committee is being asked to make its final budget recommendation at its meeting on Tuesday 30 January for Full Council to debate on Tuesday 13 February.

The county council's various policy committees have scrutinised the draft budget proposals, and three of them—Communities Social Mobility & Inclusion, Environment & Green Investment (which I chair), and Highways & Transport Committee—have all asked that the Strategy, Resources & Performance Committee give consideration to increasing the funding available for Emergency Planning, in view of the increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather leading to flooding.

ADULTS & HEALTH

Measles

Measles cases have been rising since last November, with the West Midlands seeing more than 200 confirmed cases, the largest outbreak outside London.

The UK Health Security Agency declared the outbreak a national incident on 19 January 2024.

Measles is highly infectious. Nine out of ten unvaccinated children can catch measles if someone in their class has it. It can be severe, particularly in the immunosuppressed and infants, and can be more severe in pregnancy. It can be mild for some children, but one in five will require a hospital visit. At its worst it can lead to complications such as meningitis and pneumonia and can in rare cases be fatal.

Currently there are no confirmed cases in Cambridgeshire and in 2023 there were only eight confirmed cases across the East of England. But there is a strong likelihood that it will spread to Cambridgeshire. Uptake of childhood vaccinations has been low in Cambridge and parts of Huntingdonshire and Fenland. A target vaccination rate of 95 per cent is considered necessary to prevent outbreaks, and both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have rates lower than this.

If the outbreak spreads to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, control measures such as isolating unvaccinated school contacts for 21 days may be necessary. This will have an impact on school staff, parents and the economy, and an outbreak of any size will stretch health care capacity at the busiest time of year.

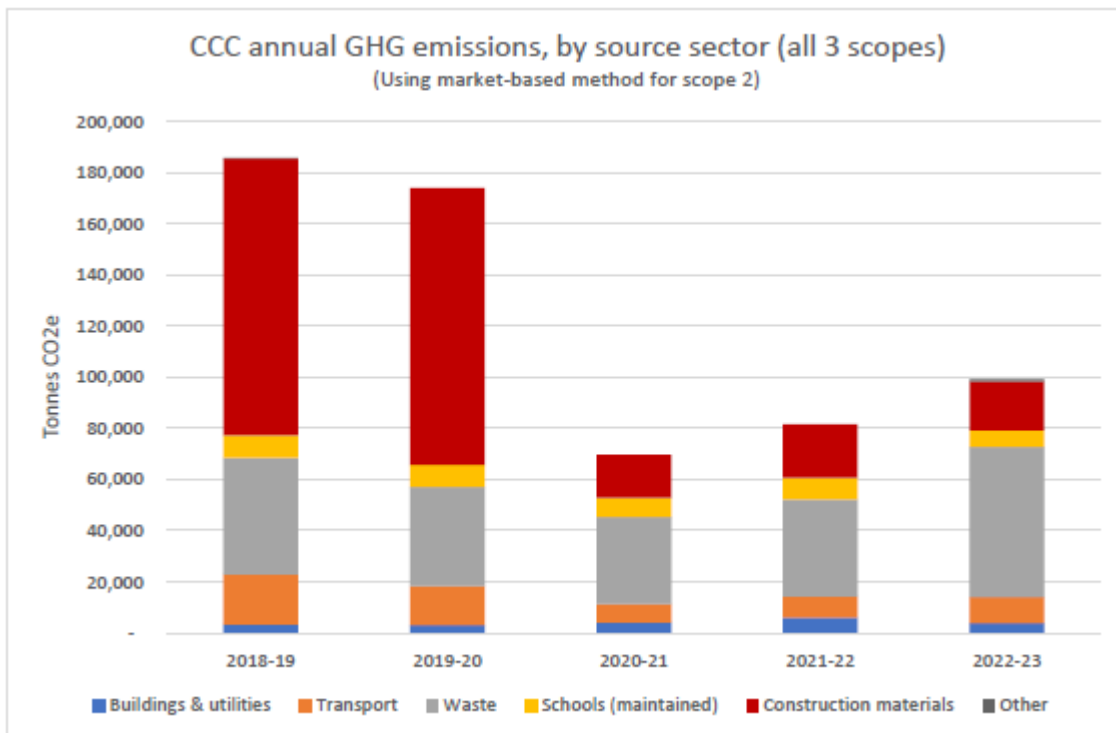
- Parents should have their children vaccinated if they have not already done so.
- Residents should call their GP or 111 if measles is suspected or if someone who is at risk has been in contact with a confirmed case. Typical symptoms include a high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy red-brown rash.
- Isolating when asked to do so is important if any outbreak is to be contained.
- There are a number of measles myths—such as the idea that it is a good idea to deliberately infect children with the disease at ‘measles parties’—which should be ignored.
- Information about vaccine outreach clinics can be found at <https://www.cpics.org.uk/measles>

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

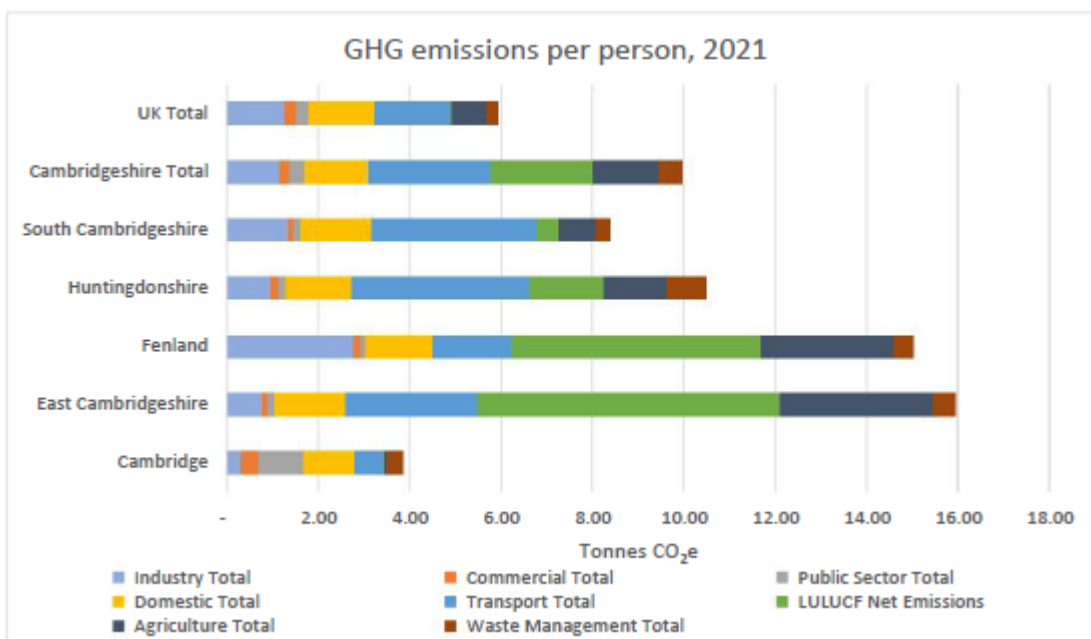
Carbon footprint

The Environment & Green Investment Committee last month received the council's carbon footprint report for 2022/23. As usual, this reports on the council's carbon emissions, and the carbon emissions of the county of Cambridgeshire as a whole.

The Council's total known greenhouse gas emissions in 2022-23 amounted to 99,104 tonnes CO₂e. The largest share, nearly sixty per cent, was from waste, with construction materials second at nineteen per cent, and transport third at ten per cent. This is 46 per cent lower than the council's baseline year of 2018/19.



For Cambridgeshire as a whole, the most recent year of data is 2021—the figures are published by Government. Total greenhouse gas emissions for Cambridgeshire that year were 6.78 million tonnes CO₂e. Transport was the highest emitting sector in the county, accounting for 27 per cent of emissions, followed by land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF), at 23 per cent.



East Cambridgeshire produced the highest volume of greenhouse gas emissions per person in the county, mostly from land use and agriculture.

There has been a twenty-five per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Cambridgeshire between 2005 and 2021. However, there was a 6.1 per cent increase in 2021 compared to 2020, because of the effect of covid in 2020.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Weeds policy

The council's Highways & Transport Committee has changed its policy on highways weed spraying. It will now be reverting to regular twice-yearly weed killing in the places where it used to do this before last year's policy change. Communities which do not want chemical weed spraying in their area will however be able to opt out in favour of manual weed removal by volunteers.

Cllr Alex Beckett, chair of the Highways and Transport Committee at Cambridgeshire County Council, said:

"I know we didn't get this change right, which is why I asked for a review of the policy. While some communities really appreciated the reduction in chemical weed killing, a large number did not. Local decision making is important, we have listened to that feedback and hope these new changes, if approved, will allow those communities who wish to continue without chemical weed killing to do so whilst allowing those who preferred the previous regime to go back to that."

Peat soil roads

The Highways & Transport Committee approved a report on action to address the problem of Cambridgeshire's collapsing fen roads. The report identified 156 such roads which are increasingly failing due to historic lack of maintenance, and more extreme weather. Most of these roads were not constructed to carry the volume and weight of traffic they are now seeing.

In Sutton division, these roads include:

Little Downham & Pymoor

- Adventurers Drove
- Black Bank Road
- California
- Head Fen Drove
- Hundred Foot Bank
- Main Drove
- North Fen
- O Furlong Drove

- Second Drove
- Straight Furlong*
- Westmoor Common

Sutton: Chain Causeway*

Wentworth: A142

Witcham: Hive Road

Witchford: Grunty Fen Road

In neighbouring areas the report also listed Hill Row Causeway* in Haddenham; Prickwillow Road and Padnal Bank* in Queen Adelaide; Twentypence*, Station Road and Whitecross Road in Wilburton; Shelfords Road* in Willingham; and a dozen roads in Littleport.

Roads marked with an asterisk have provisionally been identified as being in the 'top 25' of affected roads.

In 2018 £5M was spent on ten roads, and in 2021 a further five received investment. Further crack and safety repairs have been carried out to a number of roads in 2023. However, the problem has been growing for years, and is now growing much faster.

Various repair types have been used, some more effective than others. Individual routes are being managed through localised repairs, more extensive patching, signage, and weekly inspections. The council's Highways Operational Standards have been revised to reflect the risks.

Short term measures being used include temporary speed limits including on the A10 Lynn Road at Littleport, traffic signals, and consideration may be given to temporary road closures or weight restrictions.

In the medium term a number of roads have been included in the council's capital programme for more extensive works over the next three to five years. Locally these include the A1101 at Littleport, Chain Causeway in Sutton, and Hundred Foot Bank.

Longer term however, the primary focus must be lobbying together with partner organisations including parish councils to gain the required substantial amount of funding to provide a systemic solution. Council officers have already been working with the Department for Transport to raise awareness.

Active travel maintenance

The Highways & Transport Committee has approved changes to the Highways Operational Standards to improve recognition of, and response to, faults on cycleways and footways. These changes will help ensure a safe environment for cyclists and pedestrians, encouraging and facilitating active travel.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Mayor has proposed to increase his precept on the council tax from £12 to £36 per year for the average Band D property. This is intended to enable the funding of a number of new or improved bus services.

In the Sutton division, these include an additional Ely Zipper from Ely to Sutton and possibly Mepal; a new service between Ely and Longstanton Park & Ride via Witchford, Sutton, Earith and Willingham (something I have been campaigning for for a long time); and potentially a demand responsive transport service for Little Downham and wider communities.

The Government has issued a revised Best Value Notice in respect of the Combined Authority. The revised notice recognises the significant progress the Combined Authority has made as an organisation since January 2023, and also that some elements need further work. More importantly it makes clear that it wants Board members to work together with common purpose.

I serve on the Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee of the Combined Authority, and we were recently asked about how to deal with the resale of one of the '£100K homes' in Fordham in which the Combined Authority has an interest, whose prices are permanently capped. We asked officers to do more work on this, including considering whether we should seek to turn them into more usual forms of affordable housing on resale. I also asked the Mayor to reconsider whether the Combined Authority should declare a climate emergency or make a similar statement.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLORS

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will be in the school Community Room on Monday 12 February and Monday 4 March, 6:30-7:30PM.
- **Witchford:** I hope to be at the coffee morning in St Andrew's Hall on Wednesday 7 February from 10:30 to 11:30AM.
- **Coveney:** I hope to be at the coffee morning in the village hall on Wednesday 21 February from 10:30 to 11:30AM.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall on Friday 23 February from 10:00 to 11:00AM.

I can also be contacted

- by email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- on Facebook
- by phone on 07930 337596

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division