

Cambridgeshire County Council

MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2026

Sawston and Shelfords Division (Cllrs Damary-Homan & Fane)

FULL COUNCIL

The Council met early in February to approve the budget and business plan, including an update to our Strategic Framework. The budget was approved, with a late Administration amendment to commit £20m to highways funding (essentially, this commitment allows our Capital Maintenance Programme [resurfacing works] to run-annual £20m spend) through 2027/28, with the commitment for 206/27 already in the budget. More on highways later.

Like every year, the Councils budget has grown, with this year's gross budget set at £1.27bn. But, to quote the financial strategy document, "the scale of cost pressures facing the council is more than the projected increase in income". The majority of this continues to be taken up by statutory obligations, with the Children, Education & Families and the Adults, Health & Commissioning service areas accounting for the vast majority of the budget (nearly £1bn between them).

Some of this increased budget comes from a raise in Council Tax, with the *County Council* Council tax increase being raised by the maximum amount of 4.99%, with a 2.99% increase to the basic precept and a 2% increase to the adult social care precept. This creates an additional £21m of funding, taking the total Council Tax income to just shy of £420m.

What this means for residents can be seen in the tables below (with Band D as the benchmark) for the County Council changes.

Table 1: Rates and income of Council Tax

Band	Ratio	Annual Amount	Increase on 2025-26
A	6/9	£1,190.28	£56.52
B	7/9	£1,388.66	£65.94
C	8/9	£1,587.04	£75.36
D	9/9	£1,785.42	£84.78
E	11/9	£2,182.18	£103.62
F	13/9	£2,578.94	£122.46
G	15/9	£2,975.70	£141.30
H	18/9	£3,570.84	£169.56

The next table gives an overall position (using local Band D information and the ratio), before Parish Precept:

Band	County	South Cambs	Police	Fire	Mayor	Total Amount	Cash Increase
A	£1,190.28	£120.43	£209.58	£61.44	£24	£1,606.25	£73.27

B	£1,388.66	£140.50	£244.51	£71.68	£28	£1,873.35	£85.51
C	£1,587.04	£160.57	£279.44	£81.92	£32	£2,141.00	£97.74
D	£1,785.42	£180.64	£314.37	£92.16	£36	£2,408.59	£109.91
E	£2,182.18	£220.78	£384.23	£112.64	£44	£2,943.83	£134.38
F	£2,578.94	£260.92	£454.09	£133.12	£52	£3,479.07	£158.85
G	£2,975.70	£301.07	£523.95	£153.60	£60	£4,014.32	£183.18
H	£3,570.84	£361.28	£628.74	£184.32	£72	£4,817.18	£219.82
% increase	4.99%	2.99%	4.99%	5.68%	0%	+4.78%	

Consultations

A reminder that the following consultations are live:

NPPF changes (closes 10 March)

[National Planning Policy Framework: proposed reforms and other changes to the planning system - GOV.UK](#)

Local Government Reorganisation for Cambridgeshire (closes 26 March)

[Proposals for local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - GOV.UK](#)

Development Corporation (closes 1 April)

[Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge - GOV.UK](#)

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

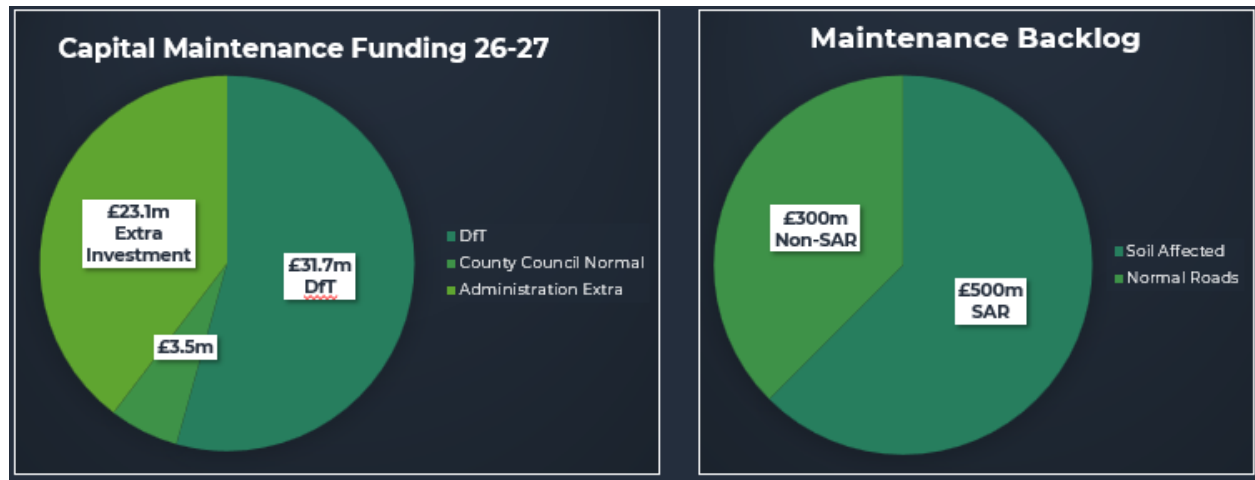
Capital Maintenance Programme

On Tuesday 4 March, the Capital Maintenance Programme was agreed for 2026/27, alongside changes to our Highways Asset Management and Data Strategies. Peter and I are really pleased that we are seeing over £1.7m invested in resurfacing within the Division, especially as the County budget is only £20m and <£4.6m has been allocated for South Cambs. We have 3 resurfacing projects approved; the A10 in Harston, the A1301 in Gt Shelford and Link Road in Sawston. Please note that there are some projects that were agreed as part of the 2025/26 programme but are still outstanding- these will be delivered, and there are other works in the 2026/27 programme that I have not mentioned here.

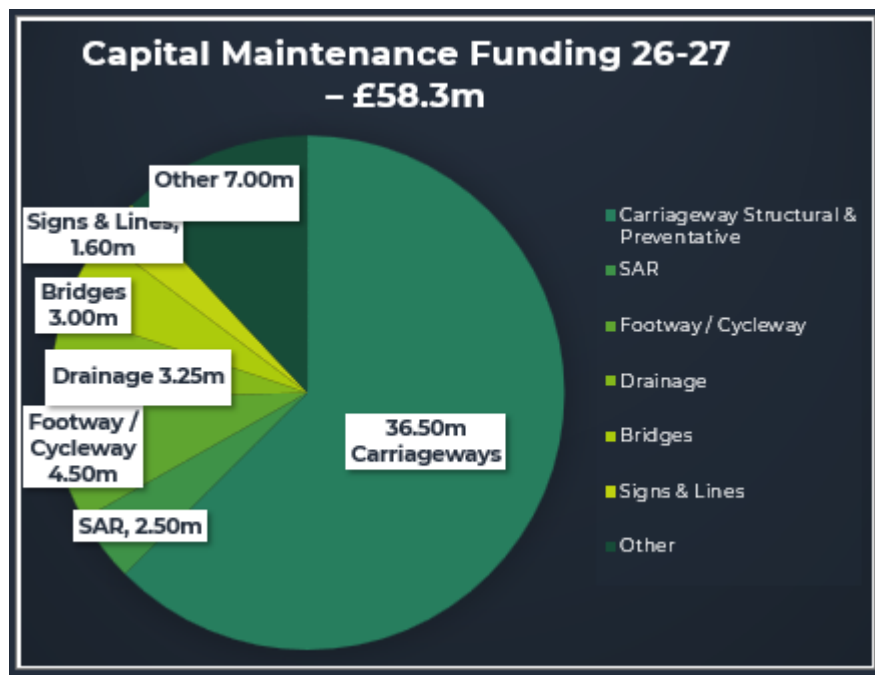
I appreciate that parishes (and myself) submitted a number of other areas for consideration and it is a shame that these cannot be included in this year's programme. However, I am happy to discuss individual matters/areas with Parishes and just because something wasn't approved this year, it doesn't mean it won't be next year. In the meantime, we will do what we can to get areas up to standard with patching etc.

Pothole management

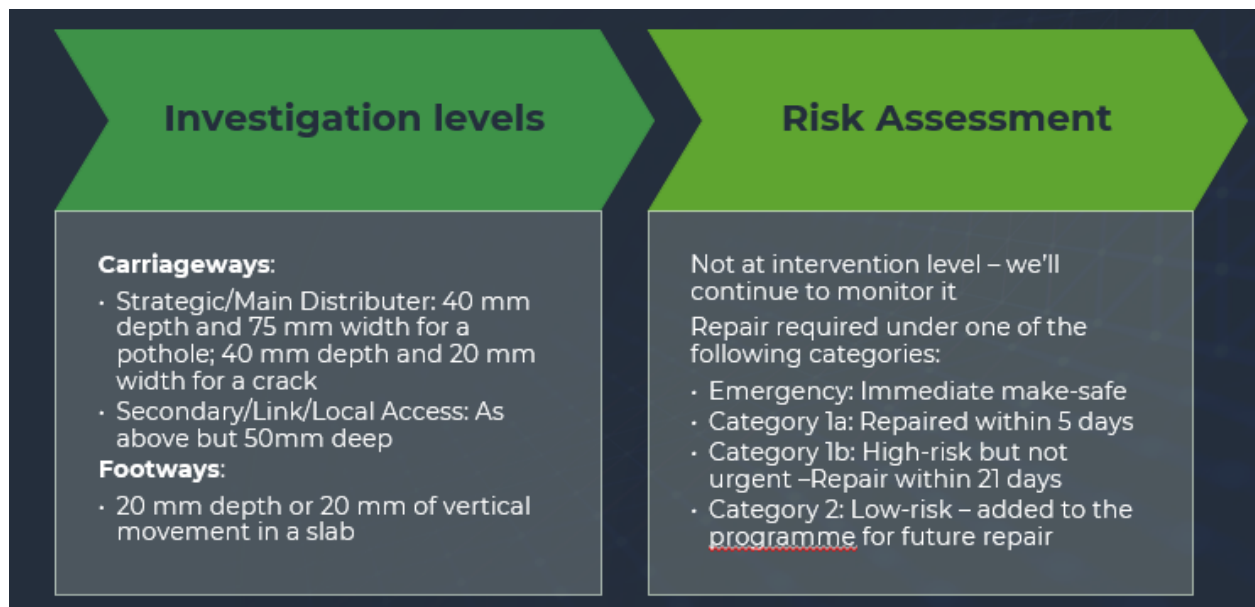
As we are all painfully aware, potholes have been a major problem locally over the winter (as well as nationally). I'd like to share some details of our budget and how we spend it, as well as what we've been doing to tackle issues on the ground.



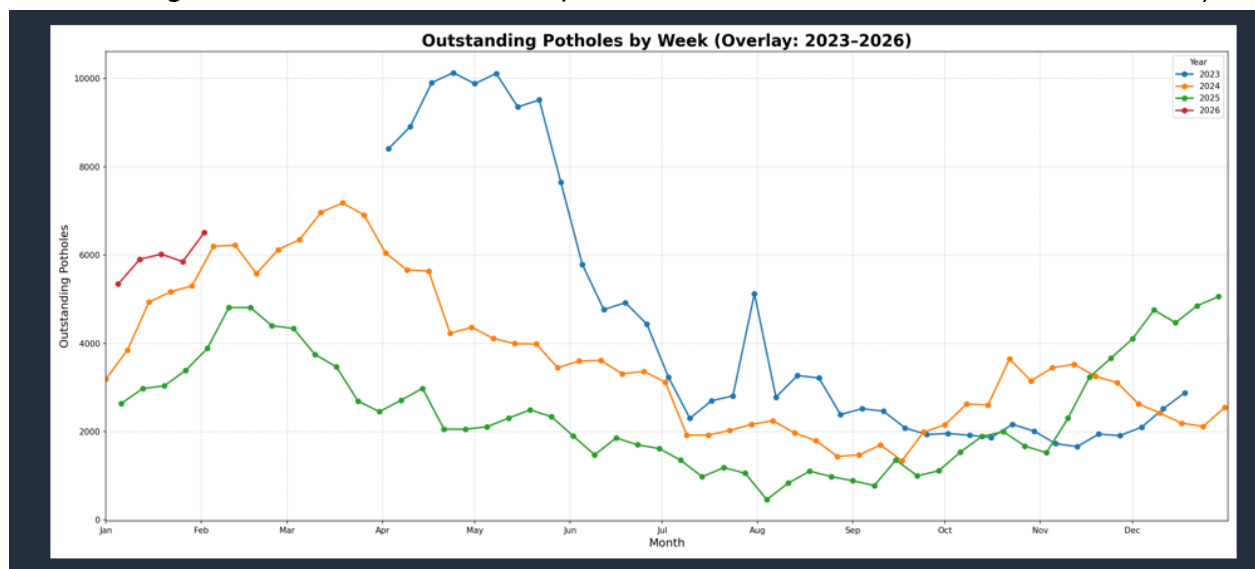
As seen above, the Government does not provide adequate funding to manage our highways (around £80m is required annually to maintain the roads, nevermind improve them). The County Council, in the 2010s, operated on an approach of managed decline of our highways. This and the previous administration reject this and know that proper investment in our highways is what our residents want and deserve, hence the £23.1m of extra investment (and we would invest more if we could!).



The above shows how our money is spent. It's worth noting that our Capital Maintenance Programme is highly dependent on the administration's extra funding. With regard to potholes themselves, we typically spend around £3m on repair works and we typically fill 40-60k potholes across the County each year. Roughly 75% of works arise from officer inspections, with 25% arising from reports. The below gives some detail on when reports are responded to with works orders (intervention thresholds)



The below shows the amount of outstanding potholes that the Council is aware of (it's worth noting the data starts in 2023 as prior administrations did not collect such data).



This winter has been particularly challenging. A mild winter has actually been worse for our roads and this has been the case across the country. We have very high levels of demand across the nation which can make it challenging for our contractors to recruit quality and (preferably) local crews. Repairs can also feel very slow as weather can prevent work from taking place, work completed in poor weather is much more likely to fail, and the complexities of traffic management and the permits required can slow the process- we can't just turn up and fix them. We are doing everything we can to deal with issues, and have now gone from our summer standards of 6 crews with 2 dragon patchers in operation to 24 crews and 3 dragons. The number of crews has been rising recently in response to the issues we are facing, with a normal winter having 10 crews in operation at once in the County. Internal changes are being made to improve efficiency of our Highways Maintenance Officer's practices and we will review this winter once things have settled down, preparing for next year in order to prevent such widespread, simultaneous degradation of our roads as much as we possibly can.

Locally, please do continue to report issues and raise significant ones with Peter and I. I have been very pleased to see a number of holes filled, with Peter and I regularly out and about inspecting the area and passing on our perspectives to officers, but much work is still outstanding. We remain committed to representing our area as well as possible in this field. Finally, thank you for all your engagement with us- it has been a

great help!

Foxcotte promotional signs

I have been made aware by some residents that a number of signs promoting the goods/services of 'Foxcotte' are popping up across the division. In many instances, these are attached to traffic lights or road signs which are not permitted.

Residents can help by reporting these signs as "unauthorised sign" on our reporting software, but it would also be useful to email me stating that a report has been made, alongside location details and a photo (if possible). We will remove these signs and I have discussed with the Council what wider action we can take.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Holiday food vouchers

This matter has been raised in previous reports, and we now have a better understanding of how we will proceed with the matter. To recap, holiday food vouchers had been provided by the Council to those eligible for Free School Meals. This was funded in part by the national Household Support Fund, with the County Council contributing £1.5m of its own funding to ensure that every eligible child could access support in the holidays. Around 22.5k vouchers were claimed each holiday, showing that this scheme was actively helping our residents, particularly those most in need.

The Government has ended the Household Support Fund, with the fund expiring at the end of the financial year. This will abruptly cut families off from this support and the County cannot fund the full scheme itself. The Government has introduced the Crisis and Resilience Fund which focuses on preventative measures (greatly supporting our anti-poverty work in Cambridgeshire- it is a positive scheme) which is welcomed but we have felt very concerned about the 'cliff-edge' for our families. The Government explicitly states in the CRF guidance that funds **cannot** be used for blanket voucher provision.

I have been calling for some sort of transition funding to support families for some months now, including on the record at the Children & Young People committee. With the budget, we have agreed that we will continue to provide vouchers to families through the summer, ending in September. We hope that this gives time for families to prepare, supporting them through the lengthy summer period, and our anti-poverty work will allow us to identify and target support for families most in need come September. We will be investing £2.7m into these vouchers to support in this transition period; the details of the vouchers themselves are yet to be finalised but it is likely that the amount per voucher will reduce at some point. I feel that we have struck a good balance between not suddenly cutting off families from this support without expecting local taxpayers to foot the bill for an endless programme (especially with the expansion to Free School Meal eligibility expanding in September).

Two new special schools for Cambridgeshire

Cambridgeshire County Council has asked the Department for Education to continue with the delivery of two new special schools in Gamlingay and March. Greensands Academy Gamlingay and Lime Academy March had been approved for delivery by the DfE under the previous government, and are expected to provide 270 new special school places in Cambridgeshire.

COMMUNITIES, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCLUSION

New system to tackle poverty in the County

The council has agreed to procure a data-led system that will allow more targeted support for low-income families to address and prevent poverty.

In May 2025, the final report of the Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission recommended helping low-income individuals and households to ensure they are receiving all the money they are legally entitled to and also reduce their avoidable financial outgoings. This process, known as ‘income maximisation’, aims to help tackle financial hardship by preventing crisis, stabilising household budgets and supporting residents to become more financially resilient.

A new data-led system would lead to more systematic and earlier identification of those who would benefit from income maximisation—which evidence shows is one of the best ways of tackling poverty over the longer term.

South Cambridgeshire District Council have already adopted such a system, and in the last twelve months have secured nearly 1,000 additional claims for residents which are worth over £500,000 to residents in their first year alone, with a lifetime value of nearly £4 million based on average claim lengths.

Data-led systems used in other areas have shown a return on investment of over £400 for each £1 spent. This new platform will enable the council to focus on preventing residents from falling into poverty by building their financial resilience, reducing their future vulnerability and the need for subsequent more costly crisis interventions.

ASSETS & PROCUREMENT

Cambridge Biomedical Campus

The County Council’s Assets & Procurement Committee has agreed a partnership with developer Prologis to support the future expansion of Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

67 acres of land owned by the council is being put forward to allow the campus’s next

phase of growth. This will deliver space for life science research, development and innovation, co-working laboratories, learning spaces, a skills and training centre, key worker serviced apartments and offices for life science support companies.

Proposals include investment in transport infrastructure, green spaces and a community fund. The project will give the council a future commercial return, subject to planning permission, that will be used to help deliver our key services and support the council's ambitions.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Safe disposal of batteries

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership RECAP is urging residents to recycle batteries and battery-powered electricals safely, following an increase in fires caused by incorrectly disposed lithium-ion batteries. Recent incidents include a fire at Thalia's Alconbury waste transfer station at New Year, as well as thirteen bin lorry fires across Cambridgeshire in the last twelve months.

In 2023, more than 1.6 billion batteries were thrown away in the UK, with over 1.1 billion hidden inside everyday household items such as phones, tablets, e-cigarettes, toothbrushes and power tools. When these items end up in general waste or mixed recycling, batteries can ignite or explode during collection, transport or sorting.

Across the UK, over 1,200 waste-related fires were recorded in the past year- a 71% rise since 2022, posing significant risks to crews, the public and waste-handling facilities. Lithium-ion batteries are especially dangerous when crushed in lorries, and even small button or toy batteries can spark fires once compacted.

To help prevent fires, residents are urged to never to place batteries in the bin, to use designated recycling points, tape over damaged terminals and check for local collection schemes.

All types of batteries can be recycled free of charge at Household Recycling Centres, supermarkets and DIY stores. This includes loose household batteries, lithium-ion and rechargeable batteries, and batteries in small electrical items. Any shop that sells batteries must also accept used batteries for recycling.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/waste-and-recycling/battery-disposal>

COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATES

Bus franchising

An independent review of bus franchising for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has issued a draft report to Combined Authority officers. Further detailed work will now be done, with an update to the Combined Authority's Transport Committee in June.

Electric vehicles

The Combined Authority has been granted £361,780 from the Government's Electric Vehicle pavement channels grant fund and is working with the county council and Peterborough on how this funding will be used.

Transport Funding

In December 2025 the Department of Transport issued a letter to the Combined Authority confirming a four-year package of local transport funding allocations.

This settlement brings together a number of different funding streams into a single sum, and allows the Combined Authority to determine how these are allocated to the county council and Peterborough.

In return, the Combined Authority needs to submit to Government a Local Transport Delivery Plan for 2026/27, and an outline plan for the remaining years. The Government will use this to understand how local transport funding is being invested and to assess alignment with national priorities and outcomes.

County Councillors for the Sawston and Shelfords Division

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