

District and County Councillor's Annual Report 2025

County Council

Kingsway Solar Farm

This year our area has been approached by a solar developer with plans for a very large solar farm in the fields between Balsham, West Wrating and Weston Colville. If the plans are granted planning permission it would be the largest solar farm in the country – some 1500 hectares – and would be larger than Heathrow Airport, Newmarket or the built up parts of Cambridge. The process is that the applicant has engaged in an 'informal consultation' at the back end of 2024 and is due to launch a 'formal consultation' in the summer of 2025. We would encourage everyone to engage with this, regardless of proximity to the site, as it will be one of the largest developments in our area and will affect us all in some way. Due to the scale of the proposal, the final decision will be made by a government planning inspector rather than by any of the local councils.

Full plans can be seen on the Kingsway Solar website - <https://kingswaysolarfarm.co.uk/>

Civil Parking Enforcement

The introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (traffic wardens) in South Cambridgeshire was over a year ago. There are stats to show that there have been a number of tickets issued in that time, however, the problem of bad/illegal parking persists. The scheme is funded until 2029, after which it needs to be self-funding else it could cease. There is a link on the County Council's website where regular poor parking can be reported and considered for patrol by the traffic wardens - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/parking-services/south-cambridgeshire-civil-parking-enforcement>

Anaerobic Digesters

Over the past few years, we have had planning applications submitted for two separate anaerobic biodigester plants in our area. One was in Streetly End and the other just over the Suffolk border outside of Haverhill.

Mid-way through 2024 planning permission was granted for the plant in Streetly End, so construction of this can now commence, if the applicant still wants to proceed with it.

At time of writing the plant in Suffolk hasn't had a decision made on it but one is due in June 2025. There are currently official objections from the Highways department and the Environment Agency, so we would be surprised if this one is granted planning approval.

Local Government Reform

This year, the government announced that it has plans to reduce the number of local councils in the country and merge them into what are called unitary authorities – this would mean one local council that delivered all of the services that the District and County Councils currently undertake.

The government has asked local councils to put forward proposals for what they saw as sustainable geographic areas for these new unitary councils to operate in. Where we are in South Cambridgeshire the starting point for us is a joint council that covers the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire areas. This is because a lot of the services, such as waste collection, planning and legal, are currently shared already. There could be a case to extend the area to include either Huntingdonshire or East Cambridgeshire areas but the starting point for negotiations will be the Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire combination.

We appreciate that the majority of people won't care what form their local council takes, as long as the services provided continue in as an efficient manner as possible. However, a change of this magnitude represents a significant upheaval, in local government terms, so watch this space.

Local Elections

On May 1st this year there were local elections for the County Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (the Mayor).

Henry was absolutely delighted to have been re-elected to represent the Linton division on the County Council – thank you to everyone from all 13 villages in the Division for putting your trust in him again. Regardless of who you voted for, he will continue to do his best for our part of the world.

The Liberal Democrats now have control of the County Council as they won *just* over half of seats. The overall composition of the County Council, by number of seats, now looks like this:

Liberal Democrat – 31
Conservative – 10
Reform – 10
Labour – 5
Green – 3
Independent – 2

The Conservative candidate, Paul Bristow, won the Mayoral election.

District Council

Cambridge 2050

The current government is continuing to support massive development in and around Cambridge City and South Cambs. The prospect of something like 150,000 new houses in the area over time will mean significant changes. But before any of this becomes reality there are many hurdles to overcome, not least the issues with water and electricity shortages as well as transport infrastructure issues.

These are problems the new Unitary Authority will have to tackle when it comes into being.

Four Day Week

After more than two years of trials, extensive analysis of performance and delaying issues with the previous government we are, at last, about to decide on whether or not to make the four-day week permanent. The decision will be made at the July Full Council meeting considering the results of all the independently assessed performance data, including financial implications and the results of the public consultation.

All indications are that the trial has been a success.

Food Waste Collection

It is planned to introduce a separate food waste collection next year. This is Government policy and we are obliged to introduce the new scheme. It will mean having a caddy for food only, it will no longer be possible to add food waste to the green bin. This is a major operation for the District Council requiring an additional 22 vehicles and around 75 new staff. Much of the initial costs are met by Government grants, but not all. There will be an extra cost that will need to be met out of the council's resources.

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