

County Councillor's Annual Report 2023/24 – Councillor Anna Bradnam

As County Councillor for Waterbeach Division, my remit covers Milton, Landbeach, Waterbeach, Chittering, Horningsea, Fen Ditton and Milton Detached, so both banks of the River Cam, the area south of the A14 around Cambridge North station and Fen Road Chesterton. I liaise with colleagues in neighbouring Divisions, most frequently Cllr Claire Daunton whose area covers the southern part of Fen Ditton and the new community at Marleigh. In addition I work with District Council colleagues, as so often requests to a County Councillor relate to issues managed by the District Council and vice versa.

County Council

The composition of the County Council (61 members) is now

Conservatives 22

Liberal Democrats 23

Labour 9

Independent 3

St Neots Independent 1

Non-aligned 3

The Joint Administration of Lib Dem, Labour and Independent councillors continues to run the council. The next County election is due in May 2025.

The County Council responsibilities are managed across these committees:

Responsibility	Committee
Highways	Highways and Transport
Education	Children and Young People (and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee)
Social Care	Adults and Health
Libraries	Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion
Registration of births deaths and marriages	ditto
Trading Standards	ditto
Strategic Planning for Minerals and Waste (disposal)	Planning Environment and Green Investment
(Managing the County Estate, land and buildings)	Environment and Green Investment Assets and Procurement
(Ensuring we use taxpayers money wisely)	Strategy, Resources and Performance

I have served on the County Planning (Minerals and Waste), Committee, Environment and Green Investment Committee and the Member Steering Group for Waste (disposal). I sit on the Children and Young People Committee and continue to chair the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, planning for our Children in Care. I am the County's nominee to the Police and Crime Panel and on the Conservators of the River Cam, which I currently chair. I am also the Council's member on the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

During 2023/24 – and looking ahead

Strategy, Resources and Performance

The budget for 2024/25 has increased from a predicted £16m to more than £23m—largely due to increases in demand for services and inflationary pressure. Cambridgeshire is not alone. The Local Government Association currently reports that councils across the country face an 'inflationary storm' with a predicted £4Billion funding gap over the next two years.

A report from the Council's Chief Executive Stephen Moir and Executive Director of Finance and Resources Michael Hudson says:

"In 2023-24, pressures on our budget have arisen principally due to several very high-cost children's social care placements and a delay in receiving income from a newly constructed solar farm (which requires connection to the electricity grid). In addition, we are seeing that demand for bed-based care for older people is also rising, following a period of reduction in demand and then stability stretching back for some time, to the beginning of the pandemic."

The report also pointed to wider national and international issues which are having an impact on the council's pressures—such as interest rates which the Bank of England has said are likely to remain above 5% until 2026. This will affect all goods and services the council buys, the cost of borrowing, and pay award costs for council workers as well as for a large externally commissioned workforce which includes staff working in residential care for vulnerable adults and children.

The Council's 2024/5 budget was discussed in the months up to December 2023, scrutinised at the beginning of 2024 and approved in February 2024.

Adults and Health

We have separated Adult Social Care Services from the shared service with Peterborough, which is enabling a closer focus on Cambridgeshire. In the East of England, the Primary Medical Care (PMC) function was delegated to Integrated Care Boards (ICB) effective from 1 July 2022. The responsibility for Dental, Pharmacy and Optometry services was delegated to ICBs with effect from 1 April 2023. Cam&Pet Integrated Care System inherited a number of NHS Dental contracts that have underperformed, partly due to the pandemic but mainly because of the unrealistic pricing structure of this contract. We are aware of the enormous pressure on NHS and primary care budgets too. Providers of adult social care are monitored regularly, to ensure care staff are properly engaged, care is appropriate and meets the required safety standards. The need for better Mental Health provision is recognised. Our Director of Public Health Jyoti Atri is standing down and Val Thomas, her Deputy, will step up until a new DPH is appointed. Budget summary is on page 5.

Children and Young People

Children's Services, with staff previously shared with Peterborough have been teased apart and we have many new officers for Cambridgeshire, who are bringing energy and ideas to the service. Cambridgeshire County Council will put £3million into the budget for 2024/25 to continue to provide holiday food vouchers for those on free school meals.

A further **£320k will go to children's mental health**, which has worsened following the Covid pandemic. The funding will be used to employ trained specialists to work with schools to design and deliver programmes working with children and young people, teachers and parents with interventions that are known to manage anxiety.

An **additional £12.7m** will be allocated to demand and inflation pressures, including the number of complex cases and the increasing number of children in care placements in Cambridgeshire.

The County Councils Network (CCN) says that with increasing demand for care services, especially for vulnerable children, costs are outstripping resources. Nationally, £319 million of the projected £639 million overspend by county councils this year comes from children's services. One in ten 'well-managed' councils were unsure if they would be able to balance their 2023/24 budget (a legal requirement). This figure is expected to rise to four in ten for 2024/25. The national overall budget deficit is expected to reach £4 billion up to 2026, even though councils are planning over £2 billion of savings and cuts in order to avoid Section 114 notices being issued (the local government equivalent of bankruptcy).

We are fortunate to have good local primary schools. Milton Church of England Primary School, received an Ofsted rating of Good in January 2024.

Waterbeach Community Primary School was last inspected in 2020 and was rated as Good.

In April 2022 Fen Ditton Primary School continued to be rated as Good.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)

The cost of provision for children with SEND has escalated and was expected to grow to over £90 M by 2025/26. However the government has awarded Cambridgeshire £49M, under the 'safety valve' process, which will be used to create 463 new special school places, with a further £11.3M in capital funding to support new SEND provision on mainstream school sites. Cambridgeshire has historically received less funding per child for education than other areas, whilst having a high proportion of SEND.

Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee (COSMIC)

During 2023/24 this committee has overseen the Household Support Fund which supports people experiencing immediate financial hardship to pay for food, fuel bills or other essential items.

The Committee has approved an additional £150,000 to Cambridge Housing Society to deliver the Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme, which supports Cambridgeshire residents facing financial difficulties. [Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The council has also allocated £400,000 to Citizens Advice to deliver income maximisation across Cambridgeshire. The Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund provided funding for refurbishment of community buildings. The council is proceeding with a series of pilot projects to bring decision-making closer to local communities.

The committee has also refreshed its Safe Accommodation Strategy for victims of domestic abuse for the next three years.

Libraries – are increasingly being recognised and supported as information hubs and meeting places. Waterbeach Independent Lending Library continues to offer children books and incentives to read through the Summer Reading Challenge, which keeps children reading over the summer holiday.

Environment and Green Investment

The Council is seeking to reduce its carbon footprint to net zero by 2030. £1.831million of Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding has been secured by the Council to support decarbonisation of CCC buildings and maintained schools for 2024/25.

Waste Operations – The Council is responsible for disposal of waste. We are monitoring cross-border Household Recycling Centre (HRC) access arrangements with neighbouring counties to avoid having to re-introduce bookings. If cross-border use is agreed, bookings will not be needed

Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations 2013 DEFRA put out a consultation document to seek views on reforms to the regulations.

The Home Office issued a questionnaire about **Nitrous Oxide canisters**. Officers responded via the National Association of Waste Disposal Officers. (We collected six in Milton on a recent litter pick.) RECAP: Waste Collection Authorities (mainly District Councils) should have received their food waste capital funding payments by the end of March 2024. The WCAs are now starting to plan the implementation of the weekly food waste collection service and RECAP will be looking to progress this collectively and to discuss transfer and disposal actions with the County Waste Team and Thalia.

County Planning, Minerals & Waste (CPMW):

The planning application for the new primary school at the Waterbeach New Town was withdrawn from the agenda of Planning Committee on 20 March 2024, at the request of the applicant.

East West Rail (EWR): Further engagement with landowners commenced on 12 March 2024.

EWR are issuing Land Interest Questionnaires which will gather up-to-date ownership information for land that may be required for the project, such as for construction, as well as land that may be impacted by the operation of the railway, such as noise.

Fens Reservoir: Anglian Water and Cambridge Water are to consult on proposals for two new strategic reservoirs for the East of England region. One reservoir is to be located in the Fens and statutory consultation will start in May 2024, and run for eight weeks.

Cambridge Water Wastewater Treatment Plant Relocation - The Planning Inspectorate (PINs) has been taking evidence from stakeholders at a series of hearings under the Development Consent Order programme, and is close to completion. On 26 March 2024, new and updated traffic and transport documents were submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. These are available to view through this link [Updated Traffic and Transport Documents – Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Project \(cwwtpr.com\)](https://cwwtpr.com) Examination is due to finish 17 April 2024.

Trees The Council persuaded National Highways to review the success of its tree-planting scheme along the new A14 route. They felled 400,000, replanted 800,000 but some 600,000 have died. Around 125,000 were to be replanted during 2023, many more of which seem to have survived.

Highways and Transport

The condition of Cambridgeshire's roads and pavements remains a serious challenge and the lack of central government funding is a source of frustration.

The A14/A10 interchange, which had become dangerous, was resurfaced before Christmas 2024. Footways are being resurfaced – sometimes in unexpected locations.

Civil Parking Enforcement has been introduced in South Cambridgeshire, which should help villages tackle problem parking.

Greater Cambridge Partnership

Thirty new electric, zero emission **buses** are reducing pollution on Cambridgeshire roads.

GCP - Milton Road – the works to prioritise buses and active travel are progressing and aim to complete in early 2025.

GCP – Waterbeach Greenway - The public consultation on the alignment close to residents and through Milton has raised many objections. We await a revised proposal in November 2024.

GCP Horningsea Greenway – is almost complete with additional plans to introduce a 20 mph zone.

GCP – Waterbeach to Cambridge Busway [Waterbeach to Cambridge \(greatercambridge.org.uk\)](https://greatercambridge.org.uk)

In September the GCP decided the busway would follow the revised central alignment and the travel hub would be located west of the A10 and east of Green End, just south of the proposed new A10 bridge. Both elements would be progressed to preliminary design stage, including environmental impact assessments and consultation.

Mereway - the U&C upgrade has made this byway a much easier and safer route for pedestrians, cycles and equestrians in all weathers. The section through Landbeach is safer for all non-motorised users and will link to the A10 bridge to Waterbeach in due course.

East West Rail – it seems EWR have confirmed their preference for the southern route, which is good, as the northern route would have cut swathes through Landbeach and Milton.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)

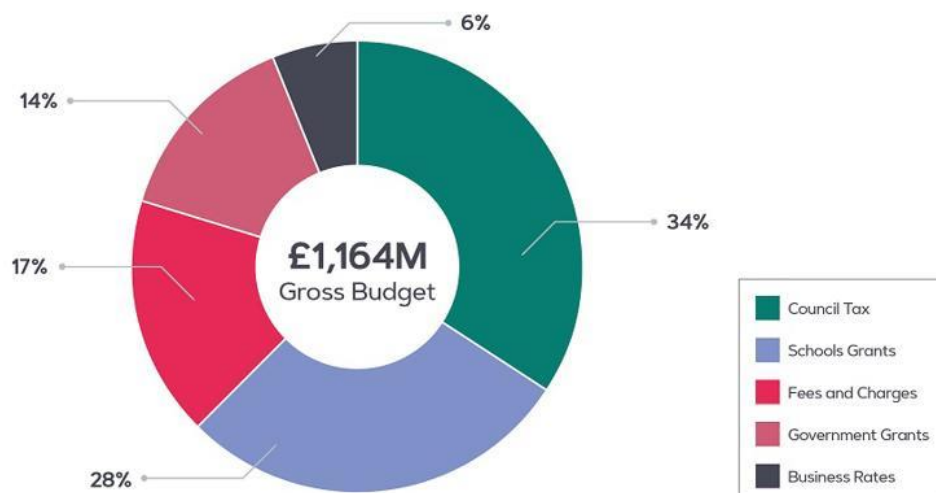
The Combined Authority Improvement programme, supported by external support and an Independent Improvement Board has encouraged a much more positive working arrangement at the CPCA.

Buses Following the reduction in service by Stagecoach in September 2023, I have lobbied the Mayor to support reinstatement of the 'through villages' route of the service 9 bus between Littleport and Cambridge. At the beginning of 2024 we were advised that the service would drop to just four journeys a day in each direction. Since then the Mayor has increased his precept and has tendered for an additional operator A2B to provide the missing services.

County Council Budget for 2024/25 – a summary

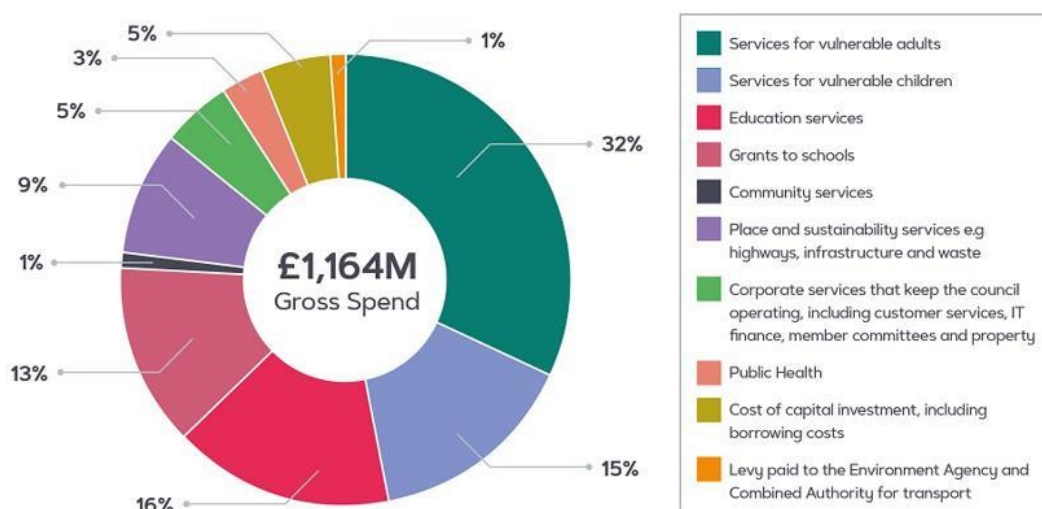
Income

(In black and white, Council Tax = 34%, the other segments follow clockwise)



This shows how the budget will be spent

(In black and white, Services for vulnerable adults = 32%, the other segments follow clockwise)



The budget includes (these amounts cross-cut the headings above):

- Invest £57 million to sustain children's and adult social care services.
- Real Living Wage, which has increased to £12ph outside London, to take account of the Government uplift of the legally enforceable Living Wage, being paid by adult care providers.
- Prioritise £3m to continue to provide holiday food vouchers for all children eligible for free school meals, despite the government support being likely to end in the next financial year.
- Invest £2.2m to deliver other anti-poverty initiatives – such as support to make sure that vulnerable people are claiming all the welfare benefits that they are entitled to.
- Put £1.3m into delivering more accessible libraries to support vulnerable communities.

- Prioritise investment of £23m into making highways, footpaths, and cycleways safer – on top of a recently announced government allocation of £2.3m. This will be to deliver improvements which both repair and prevent potholes, deliver improved drainage schemes, and reinstate cycleway maintenance and weed clearance.
- Put additional funding into schemes for people experiencing mental health issues to prevent them reaching crisis, particularly focussing on younger people.
- The proposals include an increase of council tax by 4.99%, the maximum permitted by Government before a public referendum is needed – with a total of 2% of this increase dedicated to adult social care services across the county, and £17.6m of identified additional savings – from areas such as:
 - moving to LED streetlights which are set to deliver £1m in energy savings each year.
 - £1.5m across the next three years from rationalising the council's office accommodation.
- Balanced budget for 2024/25 through a mix of savings, use of one-off reserves, and the generation of additional income including a council tax rise for the coming year to 4.99% comprising 2.99% Council Tax and 2% Adults social care.
- This would see band D properties in the county paying an additional £76 per year, although more than half (64%) of county lives in homes rated band C or below and would see rises of between £50 and £70 per year.

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