

District and County Councillor's Report – March 2026

Cambridge Growth Company

You may recall from previous reports that the government have identified Cambridge as an area they see prime for growth, due to the boom of the science and tech sector in the Greater Cambridge area. The numbers of additional houses that the government think would be sufficient to support this economic growth still uncertain, with numbers around the 100,000 mark being mooted, although still unconfirmed.

To manage this growth, and to identify areas to build these new houses, the government have set up a development corporation (DevCo) called the Cambridge Growth Company. A lot of the detail of how this will be set up is still unclear, but from correspondence with the relevant government minister, it would seem that this DevCo would ultimately take planning powers away from the local authorities for the larger 'strategic sites'. The point has been made that to disrupt one of the highest achieving planning services in the country could be hugely damaging to the local landscape. This point may have fallen on deaf ears, but we will see.

This does leave some uncertainty over where new developments could be located, as the additional housing would be on top of what the District Council is already planning, such as Grange Farm in Abington for example.

There is currently a live public consultation on the Development Corporation, and specifically the size of development that would constitute a 'strategic site'. Our opinion is the higher the better, so as much control over planning decisions remains with the local councils. You can see the consultation here, please do engage with it! – <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/establishing-a-development-corporation-in-greater-cambridge> - it closes on April 1st (April Fools Day...)

Council Budgets

Both the District and County councils held their budget meetings in February where they set their budgets for the forthcoming financial year.

Both authorities opted to increase the council tax by the maximum allowed – 4.99% at the County Council and 2.99% per year at the District Council. In real terms, this equates to the following increase per week on a band D property:

County Council - £1.63 per week

District Council – 10p per week

There are other bodies which demand council tax too, such as the Combined Authority, Police & Crime Commissioner etc, and these will also have increased and should be seen on our itemised council tax bills.

Councillors Henry Batchelor and Geoff Harvey

Local Government Reorganisation

Following the submission to central government, by local authorities in Cambridgeshire, of their preferred geographic splits of what new unitary authorities would look like, we now wait until the government have digested this information. The next question was whether we would have District Council elections this May, as scheduled, as the District Council would be subsumed into a new unitary authority the following year.

However, the election for representatives to the District Council will still go ahead in May this year, as planned.

Forest City

We have previously reported on the 'Forest City' idea that is being banded around the media by the proponents. For those that aren't aware, 2 entrepreneurs are promoting an idea of building a new eco-city between Haverhill and Newmarket which could take 1 million people. It's very much in its infancy and doesn't carry any kind of planning merit at this stage. The government aren't looking at it at all and the proposers of this scheme have no background in development or sustainability. They are currently trying to get enough high-level support from MPs and business leaders to warrant putting the scheme to central government for consideration, but currently it is simply an idea.

20mph Scheme

Each year the County Council offers parishes the opportunity to bid for areas, or all, of their villages to have their speed reduced to 20mph, which previously was very difficult to achieve. Some villages in our area have already been successful in this process.

The application window has now reopened and will be open until the end of March. Full detail can be seen at - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/applying-for-20mph-funding>

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