

Annual report

Cambridge City Council

2025/26





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Introduction

Welcome to our annual report, where you can find out more about what Cambridge City Council has been doing to deliver on its vision over the past year.

The council's vision, as agreed by our councillors, has six key themes which set out our ambitions for the city:

-  Residents enjoy a high quality of life and exemplar public services
-  Decarbonisation and sustainability are central to prosperity
-  Innovation benefits people and planet
-  Development is sustainable and inclusive
-  Arts, sports, and culture are thriving
-  Democratic accountability is genuine and accessible



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This report sets out our main achievements during 2025-26 for each of these six themes. It can be read alongside the council's quarterly performance reports and the State of the City report, which provides an overview of environmental, social and economic conditions in the city.

During 2025/26, we have continued work to make Cambridge a fairer, greener and more inclusive city, while maintaining essential services and investing in the city's future.

Over the past year we completed new council homes, helped prevent homelessness, and awarded more than £1 million to local community organisations tackling inequality. We reduced the council's carbon emissions, improved the energy efficiency of homes and invested in nature and biodiversity.

We also progressed plans for sustainable development through the Greater Cambridge Local Plan; supported young people, skills and local businesses; invested in leisure, culture and community services and facilities; and strengthened the council's governance, performance management and financial planning.

Much of this work has been delivered in partnership with residents, community groups, businesses, public bodies and academic institutions.





Residents enjoy a high quality of life and exemplar public services

We want Cambridge to be a place of high employment where everyone has a warm, safe, and affordable home and beautiful open spaces to enjoy.

Last year we:

- Responded to 2,309 applications for social housing and made 647 housing offers.
- Achieved national standards in an inspection by the Regulator for Social Housing.
- Helped bring 345 privately rented homes up to a safe standard and brought 20 empty private homes back into use.
- Completed 254 adaptations for low-income disabled residents, including ramps, walk-in showers and stairlifts, helping them stay independent at home.
- Helped prevent or ease homelessness in 397 cases and supported 26 rough sleepers into accommodation. We also helped 60 people avoid rough sleeping through a pilot project with partner organisations.
- Kept the city clean with more than 144,000 bin collections and cleaning 3,000 miles of our city streets, equivalent to travelling from Cambridge to Istanbul.
- Held 38 community clean-up days, removing bulky waste, encouraging recycling and helping people take pride in their neighbourhoods.
- Worked with more than 75 businesses on volunteering projects in parks and open spaces, including weeding, tree planting, painting and other environmental improvements.



We want communities to be thriving and empowered, supported by well-run public services and drawing on shared prosperity with greater equality in health and educational outcomes.

In 2025-26 we:

- Gave over £1m in grants to 79 local groups helping tackle inequality.
- Welcomed 150,000 visitors to council community centres – 20,000 more than the previous year.
- Developed the North Cambridge Framework for Change programme. A wide range of engagement activities enabled residents to play an active role in shaping their neighbourhoods of the future.
- Dealt with 850 reports of anti-social behaviour and responded to 480 public realm enforcement requests.

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- Helped more than 300 refugees, including 138 children, settle into life in Cambridge and the surrounding area with £133,000 awarded to organisations supporting refugees.
- Managed 1.9 million car park visits, supporting around three million visitors.
- Handled more than 185,000 customer enquiries, with 82% customer satisfaction.
- Processed 63,762 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims in an average of 1.7 days per claim.
- Put health and wellbeing at the heart of council decision-making through our 'Health in all policies' approach.
- Carried out 687 food safety inspections, helping 98% of food businesses meet standards.
- Held a community health and fitness day for older people in South Cambridge, leading to over 600 conversations and more than 100 people getting extra help.



Decarbonisation and sustainability are central to prosperity

We want Cambridge to be a net zero carbon city where people and nature enjoy a clean river, clean air, and biodiverse green spaces.

During 2025-26 we:

- Agreed our new Climate Change Strategy to move the council and city closer to net zero.
- Were named one of the world's top 120 cities for climate action, with 'A' rating for the third year running.
- Cut our own carbon emissions by 8% in a year and by more than half since 2014/15.
- Completed deep retrofits to 48 council homes, made energy efficiency improvements to 268 council homes and supported energy efficiency improvements to 82 private homes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through the Action on Energy programme, which we led.
- Approved a £600k investment to develop a city centre heat network to use a network of air and river source heat pumps to heat and cool key buildings in central Cambridge.



- Updated our Biodiversity Strategy and revised our Urban Forest Strategy to protect and restore nature and increase tree cover across Cambridge.
- Planted 201 trees and maintained 14 miles of waterways.
- Created a hectare of new wetland habitats at Logan's Meadow Nature Reserve and launched the Cambridge Butterfly Trail across 30 parks and open spaces.
- Secured [£5.3m government](#) funding for water saving devices in council-owned buildings in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.



Innovation benefits people and planet

We aim to help Cambridge champion pioneering discoveries which shape a better future for people and planet. We want there to be a lifelong citywide commitment to learning which enables every resident to develop their skills and fulfil their potential. And we want businesses to be key to the success of a thriving local economy which benefits residents and workers.

To help meet these objectives, in 2025-26 we:

- Developed a new AI tool with the University of Liverpool to help review Local Plan consultation feedback.
- Supported 44 apprenticeships across the council.
- Worked with more than 1,100 young people and 29 schools through the Creative Futures programme, delivering 99 sessions and providing 75 work experience placements
- Launched the [Included](#) programme, helping young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, access mentoring, work experience, internships and career opportunities.
- Delivered a new youth cabin in Abbey jointly with the NHS to provide a safe space for local young people's organisations to use provide digital skills, mental health support and local social groups.
- Continued to support market traders with mentoring, training and financial help.
- Launched [Match My Project](#), connecting businesses with local charities and community groups. 63 community groups and 86 suppliers have signed up, and 19 matches have been made so far.
- Contributed £1m to [Greater Cambridge Impact](#) (GCI) which enables public, civic and business partners to invest in projects tackling poverty, homelessness and inequality in Cambridge. GCI has so far secured investment worth £6.25m.





Development is sustainable and inclusive

High-quality social housing, sustainable public transport alongside key infrastructure is prioritised to ensure Cambridge is a vibrant and caring city.

Last year we:

- Completed 126 new council homes and submitted plans for almost 300 more. The Cambridge Investment Partnership (the Council's development partnership with Hill) completed its 1,000th new home and rehomed its 300th family.
- Finished the sustainable Park Street redevelopment - an underground car and cycle park with a new aparthotel above - on time and under budget.
- Opened a sustainable new Operations Hub in North Cambridge to provide a new base for our street cleaning, parks and open spaces, and housing repair teams.
- Published a draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan and invited public feedback on the proposals, which include identifying sites where 48,195 homes and one million square metres of employment space could be built between 2024 and 2045
- Exceeded all national performance targets for Planning and Land Charges whilst processing over 3,057 applications in Cambridge (including 194 pre application requests)
- Approved more than 140 self-build housing projects.
- Won several national awards for the joint Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, including RTPI Local Planning Authority of the Year 2025 and national awards for youth engagement and biodiversity.



Arts, sports, and culture are thriving

We want Cambridge to celebrate the city's diversity through a vibrant arts and cultural scene, including music, festivals, sports, and food and drink. Accessible arts, sports and culture should provide spaces for people of all ages to come together to enjoy the city, both during the day and at night.

During 2025-26 we:

- Welcomed more than 180,000 people to events at the Guildhall and the Corn Exchange, including special events to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the venue.
- Entertained over 45,500 people and showcased the talents of 280 local people at events like Fireworks Night, Music in the Parks and the Out of the Ordinary Festival.
- Prepared for the refreshed 2026 Cambridge Folk Festival, which sold out over three months in advance, and planned more than 20 'Folk Festival Presents' events across the city.



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- Saw the number of visits to council-owned swimming pools and leisure centres increase to over 600,000.
- Installed a new lighting and sound system at King's Hedges Learner Pool to provide a safe and stimulating environment for children and young people with sensory needs.
- Replaced the artificial sports pitch at Abbey leisure complex with a new 3G pitch, updated the BMX track on Coldham's Common and improved play areas at King's Hedges, Lammas Land and Nightingale Recreation Ground.
- Facilitated over 1,600 hours of free or low-cost active lifestyles activities, with a total of more than 15,000 attendances over the year.
- Gave 133 participation grants to help young people access sports and activities, awarded kickstart funding to nine community partners and supported 16 organisations to offer free summer activities.



Democratic accountability is genuine and accessible

We want to ensure residents actively participate in democratic life and transparent decisions are made by and for the people of Cambridge. Local control, devolution, and community empowerment are championed through transparent and simplified local government.

To meet these objectives we:

- Submitted the 'Option B' proposal to Government for Local Government Reorganisation, jointly with East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. This proposed future arrangements for unitary councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Trialled 'early voting' in the May 2026 Local Elections – one of only five local authorities selected for this national pilot.
- Implemented new governance arrangements, including regular collective decision making by Cabinet and revised Scrutiny Committees.
- Introduced a new Performance Management Framework, which includes quarterly reports to Cabinet on the council's performance, finance and risk.
- Identified revenue savings as part of the council's budget for 2026/27. This reduced a previously forecast overspend of £11.5 million per year by 2030-2031 to just £1.5 million, out of an annual council spend of around £80 million.
- Delivered changes to our procurement processes in line with the new Procurement Act.



Conclusion

The achievements set out in this report demonstrate the breadth of the council's work and the practical difference it makes to residents, communities and the city as a whole.

From providing homes and essential services to tackling inequality, reducing carbon emissions, supporting culture and leisure, and planning for sustainable growth, the council has continued to have an impact in 2025/26, while preparing for the future.

We would like to thank our staff, councillors, partners organisations and volunteers for their contribution during the year.

We will build on this progress in 2026/27, working with residents and partners to improve services, strengthen communities and ensure that Cambridge's growth and success benefit everyone, while managing financial pressures and the wider changes to local government.



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