

Annual Report

Councillor James Stuart

Cambridgeshire County Councillor for the Gamlingay Division

AGM report 2025–2026

Serving the residents of the Gamlingay Division over the past municipal year has been both a privilege and a responsibility that I have approached with determination, visibility and a strong commitment to ensuring that rural communities receive the representation they deserve.

The Gamlingay Division covers a large and diverse rural area. Each village and parish has its own identity, priorities and challenges, yet many of the wider issues facing the division remain shared: deteriorating road infrastructure, rural transport concerns, access to services, pressures linked to housing growth, SEND provision, community safety and ensuring that rural voices are not lost within wider county decision-making.

Throughout the year my approach has remained rooted in direct engagement and sustained follow-up. I have continued to work closely with residents, parish councils, district councillors, officers, local organisations and neighbouring authorities to ensure concerns raised locally are acted upon and represented effectively at county level.

Highways, road safety and infrastructure

Highways issues have continued to form the largest proportion of resident casework throughout the year and remain one of the most pressing concerns across the entire division.

The rural nature of the Gamlingay Division means that residents are heavily reliant on road networks for commuting, school transport, farming, business operations and access to healthcare and services. Many roads across the division are under increasing strain from heavy agricultural traffic, HGV movements, construction-related transport and population growth.

Over the course of the year I have undertaken numerous site visits across the division to inspect reported defects, meet with residents and escalate concerns directly with highways officers. In many cases, roads that have historically received temporary patch repairs have now reached the stage where full resurfacing or structural intervention is required.

A major achievement this year was the securing of resurfacing works on sections of the B1042 between Wimpole and the A603 following ongoing deterioration, repeated patch failures and increasing safety concerns. This represented a significant investment into rural infrastructure and demonstrated the importance of continued pressure and evidence-led advocacy. Coupled with my call to highways regarding the need for cats eyes and clearer road markings on the A604 and B1042 I hope to support a reduced speed limit for the village at some point this year.

Gamlingay

Within Gamlingay itself, highways concerns have remained substantial throughout the year.

I have continued to raise concerns regarding the condition of roads including Green End, Heath Road, Mill Street, Station Road and surrounding residential routes where repeated pothole repairs have continued to fail due to the underlying condition of the carriageway.

Residents within Gamlingay have raised ongoing concerns linked to road surface deterioration, drainage and traffic flow, particularly during periods of poor weather. With this support, I have continued working with officers regarding maintenance priorities such as drainage on Stocks Lane, while also supporting parish-level discussions around traffic calming and road safety improvements.

I would like to reiterate my strong support for the Gamlingay show continuing to be held in its usual location. The Gamlingay Show is a longstanding and valued community event, and the school site has historically provided an appropriate and central venue that enables broad participation from across the village.

I shared the Parish Council's concern regarding the lack of notice and consultation ahead of this decision, particularly given the significant logistical challenges this creates for organisers and the limited availability of suitable alternative locations within the village. In turn my shared support for the show has led to it being realised within Gamlingay Primary School with I hope better links with the new leadership there.

Barrington, Orwell, Arrington and Croydon

Residents have continued to raise concerns surrounding road condition, speeding and safety along key commuter and through-routes.

Ermine Way has remained a significant area of focus this year, particularly the sections between Mill Lane, Arrington and Hill Side Lane. The road surface has experienced severe weathering and pothole deterioration on both sides of the carriageway, with increasing reports of vehicles swerving to avoid defects and road edges beginning to fail.

Given the strategic importance of this route for local movement, commuter traffic and heavy vehicle access, I have continued to advocate strongly for structural repair solutions rather than reactive maintenance alone.

High Street leading to Fishers Lane in Orwell has seen significant work in the form of road filling due to clear resident feedback about the conditions of the road. This coupled with regular inspections and weekly reporting on my part have brought about improvements in a timely manner.

Barrington has seen significant development in the form of infrastructure, which is a welcome sight, however a significant point of difference focus this year has been the Lake and building workable relationships with visitors, resident and local police.

The Mordens Shingay cum Wendy & Litlington

Steeple Morden and Guilden Morden have seen development in the form of new speed restrictions and signage, both of which I have been an advocate for as well as supporting opposition to recent self build housing proposals. Repairs to the road through Litlington were reviewed with an area manager for highways on a site visit. There I raised the weakness of repairs and subsequent improvements in the form of sealed off road filling has taken place across the division. This effort has been mirrored in Shingay cum Wendy as well as a focus on drainage repairs there. Numerous discussions around subsistence in the area in particular though Shingay cum Wendy have led to penciled in improvements for 2027 which I hope can be moved forward.

Throughout the year I have also been involved in discussions and engagement surrounding the historic chalk mine and ground stability concerns affecting Steeple Morden and surrounding areas.

This has been a significant issue locally due to understandable resident concerns regarding land stability, infrastructure resilience and the potential long-term implications linked to historic underground chalk workings beneath parts of the village.

Over the course of the year I have engaged with residents, local representatives, officers and partner organisations regarding the situation, ensuring that concerns raised by the community were escalated appropriately and remained part of wider ongoing discussions.

Particular focus has been placed on:

- Understanding the extent and condition of historic chalk workings
- Monitoring potential implications for nearby infrastructure and highways
- Supporting communication between agencies and residents
- Ensuring community concerns are properly represented
- Seeking clarity around investigation work and future monitoring

Given the uncertainty that issues of this nature can create within a community, I have believed it important that residents receive clear communication and that concerns are taken seriously and handled transparently.

The situation in Steeple Morden highlights the wider importance of long-term infrastructure resilience and the lasting impact that historic industrial activity can still have on rural communities today.

I will continue to remain engaged with developments surrounding the chalk mine concerns and support residents as further assessments and discussions progress.

SEND Provision and Educational Infrastructure

One of the most significant developments affecting the division this year has been the progression of the Greensands SEND school proposal within Gamlingay.

I have strongly supported the principle of increasing specialist educational provision within the local area, recognising both the growing demand for SEND placements and the pressures placed upon families through long-distance transport arrangements.

The Department for Education approval process represented a major milestone and has the potential to deliver lasting benefits not only for Cambridgeshire families but also for neighbouring communities across Bedfordshire and the wider region.

Throughout the process I have worked to ensure that infrastructure considerations remain central to discussions, particularly regarding:

- Traffic management
- Safe road access
- Transport planning
- Pedestrian safety
- Long-term highways capacity
- Community integration

As someone working professionally within education leadership, I remain deeply committed to ensuring that children and young people receive the support, opportunities and specialist provision they deserve.

Through my work on the Children and Young People Committee I have continued advocating for improved outcomes, stronger support systems and sustainable long-term educational planning.

Rural Transport and Bus Connectivity

Rural transport continues to represent a significant challenge across the division, but in particular for Gamlingay.

Over the past year I have been involved in exploratory discussions regarding future transport connectivity opportunities, particularly around the potential to strengthen cross-border links between Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire communities.

This has included exploratory conversations regarding whether routes such as the 72 service could potentially better connect communities including Potton, Gamlingay and surrounding areas through revised routing options.

At this stage these discussions remain exploratory rather than confirmed proposals. However, they reflect the wider need for improved rural transport planning, particularly given increasing housing growth, commuting pressures and the future opening of the Greensands SEND provision.

I have continued engaging with transport groups, parish councils and neighbouring authorities regarding the long-term importance of sustainable and accessible transport links for rural communities.

Community safety and local representation

Community safety has remained an important area of focus throughout the year.

Following incidents affecting local businesses and concerns raised by residents regarding visibility and reassurance, I undertook site visits alongside local partners including MPs, police representatives and district councillors.

This included discussions regarding:

- Police visibility
- Village centre safety
- CCTV considerations
- Lighting concerns
- Safeguarding within public spaces
- Protecting rural businesses and residents

I have continued advocating for stronger engagement between policing teams and rural communities, recognising that visible reassurance and communication remain essential within village environments.

Parish council engagement and community representation

The strength of rural local government lies within effective partnership working, and throughout the year I have continued maintaining strong engagement with parish councils across the division.

This has included attendance at parish meetings, direct communication with parish clerks and councillors, support with resident concerns and collaboration on local priorities ranging from highways through to infrastructure and planning matters.

Representing such a geographically broad division requires ensuring that all communities feel heard equally, whether larger villages such as Gamlingay or smaller rural settlements including Arrington.

A core principle of my work has been ensuring that rural communities are not overlooked within wider county decision-making processes.

Local government reorganisation

This year has also brought increasing discussion surrounding Local Government Reorganisation and the potential restructuring of councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Given the scale of potential change, I have continued engaging closely with developments and consultations while consistently advocating for the protection of rural representation and locally responsive services.

It is essential that any future arrangements do not dilute the voice of rural communities or reduce accessibility to local decision-makers.

The identity and needs of villages across the Gamlingay Division must remain recognised within any future governance structures.

Communication, visibility and resident engagement

Throughout the year I have remained committed to accessible and visible representation.

This has included:

- Responding directly to resident concerns
- Conducting regular site visits
- Attending parish meetings

- Supporting local initiatives
- Escalating resident casework
- Working collaboratively with district and parish colleagues
- Maintaining communication with officers and external agencies

I firmly believe that residents deserve councillors who are visible within their communities and willing to actively engage with local concerns rather than simply observe them from a distance.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead into the coming municipal year, my priorities remain focused on continuing to secure meaningful improvements for residents across the division.

This includes:

- Continued pressure for highways resurfacing and infrastructure investment
- Supporting the successful delivery of Greensands SEND provision
- Exploring improved rural transport connectivity
- Advocating for safer roads and improved traffic management
- Supporting parish councils and local community initiatives
- Ensuring rural voices remain protected during local government reform
- Continuing direct and visible engagement with residents across the division

The Gamlingay Division continues to evolve rapidly and it is essential that infrastructure, services and representation evolve alongside it.

I remain fully committed to ensuring that our rural communities continue to receive strong, proactive and effective representation at county level.

Finally, I would like to thank residents, parish councils, fellow councillors, officers, community organisations and volunteers across the division for their continued engagement, support and commitment to our communities throughout the year.

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