

Dear Cllr Gerstner,

I wanted to share an update on several important local issues which many of you have raised with me in recent months.

Residents often ask why public sector bodies take so long to act, and it's a question I ask as well. For far too long, issues drag on without resolution, and this is a source of frustration. Progress has been made on some issues, less so on others, and I will continue to follow up with these bodies to try and get the answers residents deserve.

Police resource allocation is neglecting Fenland

A flagship Government announcement was extra funding for Neighbourhood Policing Teams, so I have been following up with Cambridgeshire Police to clarify what this means for the two neighbourhood police teams in Fenland, one based out of Wisbech Police Station and the other out of March Police Station. The Chief Constable has confirmed for the first two years he has received funding of over £2 million, paying for 25 police officers and 18 PCSOs, with a further 9 staff hired by the end of September taking the total to 52. Yet remarkably just one PCSO from this additional resource has been allocated to Fenland. Nor can the Chief Constable say what the funding is for years 3 and 4. I will continue to challenge why our area is being short changed, but it does illustrate the gap between the rhetoric nationally and what happens on the ground in Fenland. [Chief Constable letter 27.07.pdf](#)

Change of trust at Neale-Wade Academy, March

Following concerns raised at three successive Ofsted inspections, the Department for Education (DfE) has now stepped in and removed the Active Learning Trust from running Neale-Wade Academy. The process of putting in place a new Trust is underway. This is the third school within our area - following Burrowmoor Primary and Littleport and East Cambs Academy - to be removed from the Active Learning Trust. Whilst the transition will bring some challenges, overall, it offers the opportunity for positive changes to be made.

Missing community contributions from housing developers - Manea

There is a lack of transparency regarding the amount of community contributions - known as section 106 payments - housing developers are making to support the added pressure on local roads, schools, GP surgeries, and leisure facilities. A good example of this can be seen in Manea, where the village has seen a lot of new housing and yet the sports pavilion is in desperate need of modernisation. Where payments have been secured, they seem worryingly low, and it is combined by a lack of co-ordination between Fenland District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and the NHS. Having raised concerns privately for some time, six weeks ago I made these concerns public in an open letter. Perhaps proving my point that this issue is not being gripped, to date other than a holding reply there has been no response to the points raised. I have now written a second open letter which you can read here:

[Failure locally to secure community contributions from housing developers](#)

Major pollution incident - Whittlesey

As long ago as September 2024 you may recall that near Whittlesey, a category 1 pollution incident occurred. This is the most serious level of pollution incident, and local anglers first raised the alarm after reporting hundreds of dead fish, discoloured water and a strong chemical smell. Remarkably despite the seriousness of the incident, no prosecution has yet been brought. Having repeatedly raised this in Parliament, I had a meeting with the water minister after her public apology to me in Parliament over the lack of action. I will continue to press her and the Environment Agency to end the delay and ensure those responsible are held to account. It is staggering that prosecutions have still not started.

Westwood School Crossing - March

We were initially told by Cambridgeshire County Council that a crossing would not be provided until there was 'a cluster of accidents', a daft approach which suggested waiting until a child is hurt before acting. Thanks to over 500 signatures to my petition, and cross-party support from all March Town Councillors, the County Council has now agreed to begin work on the funding options for a new crossing. This is a significant and welcome shift from the Council's previous position. This decision does not guarantee construction just yet, but with the Chair of Highways seconding the motion, it marks a welcome change of approach and gives the proposal real weight.

North Cambs Hospital – Wisbech

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has now confirmed in writing that endoscopy services at North Cambs Hospital in Wisbech are being cancelled, exactly as I warned months ago when more than one in five treatments were cut last year. Despite long-standing assurances about the future of Peckover Ward as an endoscopy unit and despite £45,000 of investment from the Friends of Wisbech Hospital, the Trust now says achieving compliance while maintaining the current service "appears challenging". What is most concerning is that, even after months of warnings, the Trust is only "considering" alternatives for Wisbech, with no details on what replacement services will be delivered.

Responsibility for this situation sits with the Trust's Group Chief Executive, Professor Lesley Dwyer. I will continue to raise the community's concerns about the shambolic management of North Cambs Hospital. With management teams repeatedly changing and promises to local patients consistently unmet, there is little evidence so far that the Trust intends to deliver the local healthcare provision residents were assured of.

Doddington Hospital

Similar cuts have taken place at Doddington Hospital, where services including audiology and urology have been stopped entirely. These reductions have happened without proper public consultation or transparency. When challenged, NHS managers have cited workforce pressures and the need to centralise services in larger hospitals. I have launched a survey to gather residents' views on how these sites are being used. If you haven't already completed it, please take a moment to do so here: stevebarclay.net/news/doddingtonhospital

I hope Roy this update has been of interest, and can I take this opportunity to wish you a lovely summer.

Yours sincerely,

