

DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT – MAY 2025

Dear Residents and Parish Councillors,

Following the recent County Council elections, I want to share an update on the results and reflect on the evolving political landscape in our area.

Congratulations to the New County Councillor for Buckden and Brampton

First, I extend my congratulations to Liam Beckett, the newly elected Liberal Democrat councillor for Buckden and Brampton. I also want to thank Ken Billington for his dedication and contributions during his time in office.

This outcome reflects the broader shift in Cambridgeshire, where the Liberal Democrats have made significant gains and now hold a majority on the County Council.

Mayoral Election

In the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Conservative candidate Paul Bristow was elected mayor, with the Reform UK candidate securing a strong second-place finish - particularly in the Fenland area. This result highlights evolving political allegiances across the county.

Cambridgeshire County Council Election 2025: Summary Report

Key Results:

- The Liberal Democrats have taken control of Cambridgeshire County Council, winning 31 out of 61 seats, securing a working majority.
- Conservatives and Reform UK each won 10 seats, marking a significant shift in the political landscape.
- Labour secured 5 seats, the Green Party 3, and independent candidates 2.
- Both Reform UK and the Green Party have won seats on the council for the first time, reflecting changing voter preferences.

Your Independent Voice

As your independent district councillor, I remain committed to representing our community's interests beyond party politics. Local government functions best when decisions are driven by the needs of residents—not national agendas.

Rise of Reform UK and the Question of Consultants

The rise of the Reform Party in this election has brought renewed focus to cutting waste and reducing reliance on consultants in local government. However, one of their first stated actions is to commission external auditors- likely large consultancy and accountancy firms - to identify potential efficiencies.

This approach raises important concerns:

- Past reliance on private audit firms has often reduced transparency and accountability in local government. Since the abolition of the public Audit Commission, audits have become delayed, and issues of conflict of interest and rising costs persist.
- Major consultancy firms do not always provide better value for money or improved oversight. Instead, evidence suggests their involvement can create an accountability gap, making it harder for residents to scrutinise public spending.

Local government faces several challenges. In my view, the most pressing issues affecting value for money include poor risk management, the absence of performance-related pay for employees, and a lack of strong project management expertise. However, each council operates differently, and these issues are often more complex and difficult to resolve than they might initially seem.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Local Representation

As Cambridgeshire considers moving towards a unitary authority model, I am increasingly concerned about the future of independent voices in local government. Greater party-political control and the increased use of external consultants risk sidelining the unique perspectives and local knowledge that independents bring.

The 2025 elections have signalled a break from two-party dominance, with voters embracing a broader political spectrum - including Liberal Democrats, Greens, and Reform UK. While this pluralism is encouraging, the growing influence of party politics- especially populist movements - raises questions about the future of independent representation and truly local decision-making.

In the coming years, we must remain vigilant to ensure local democracy remains accessible, representative, and responsive to community needs. Independent voices play a crucial role in maintaining accountability, and I will continue to advocate for transparency and genuine local governance - regardless of national political shifts.

If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to discuss how these changes may affect our area, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Wishing you well,

Martin

Martin Hassall

District Councillor for Buckden, Diddington and Southoe

Phone: 07480 798 342 - Email: martin.hassall@huntingdonshire.gov.uk