

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Comprising Barton, Coton, Comberton, Grantchester, Harlton,
Harston, Haslingfield, Hauxton, and South Trumpington

District Councillors' Monthly Report – October 2022

District Councillor Contact Details

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the details below.

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(on parental leave until 31 st October)		
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EWR Drop-in Event

The Haslingfield drop-in event has been rescheduled for 2-8 pm Wednesday 12th October at Haslingfield Methodist Church, High Street, Haslingfield, CB23 1JW.

Melbourn Greenway: please support these events in October

For those interested in improved walking, cycling, scootering and equestrian connections along the A10 between Cambridge and Royston, please take part in one of these events to give your local knowledge and views on the detail of the Melbourn Greenway plans:

There will be three events during this period:

- Zoom event, Tuesday 11th October, 18:00-20:00. Please register online at: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_UP5ExIkQS2qiVb2yx9Ro5g
- Melbourn Hub, Monday 17th October, 16:00-19:00
- Hauxton Centre, Thursday 20th October, 16:00-19:00.

The plans are also available online at: <https://consultcambs.uk/engagementhq.com/gcp-melbourn-greenway>. This includes an online survey which is open until midday Fri 28th Oct.

Cost of Living

The Autumn 2022 issue of South Cambs magazine has a 2-page pull-out of information that we hope will help with the current rises in living costs. You can find the electronic copy on the council website at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/south-cambs-magazine/the-south-cambs-magazine/>.

The SCDC website is another way to find available support, such as:

- With energy bills
- Check entitlements (e.g. Universal Credit, help with childcare costs, Disability and Carers benefits etc)
- Encouragement to claim entitlements –especially Local Council Tax support and Discretionary Housing Payment.

There is also support available from our partner agency, Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency. This includes grant funding to replace a boiler for eligible homeowners whose health is impacted by a lack of warmth.

SCDC has also partnered with Cambridgeshire ACRE to help communities to set up Warm Hubs. More information, including contact details to suggest a community facility, is available here: <https://www.cambsacre.org.uk/introducing-warm-hubs/>.

Stagecoach withdrawal of the 18, 915 and many other Cambridgeshire bus services

It's impossible to overstate the distress expressed by so many people at the prospect of losing the 18 and 915 buses, which Stagecoach has announced it will be withdrawing from 30 October. This is a purely company decision. Like many public transport operators, Stagecoach has benefitted from government financial support during the pandemic. Along with the 18 and 915, Stagecoach is cutting another 16 Cambridgeshire services.

We'd like to thank everyone who has taken the trouble to tell us the impact of these cuts and why these bus services are so important. It is clear that many people rely on this bus to get to work, school or college, and the many other reasons that we all need to travel.

We have been relaying the circumstances of local people who stand to be devastated by these bus cut to the Local Transport Authority – the Mayoral Combined Authority. They are in the process of seeking alternative bus operators to continue these services and more information on this is expected in the next week.

Mayor Nik Johnson has published this statement: <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/mayor-dr-nik-johnson-statement-on-stagecoachs-withdrawal-of-bus-services-from-october-30/>.

GCP Making Connections Consultation: Have your say on plans to improve bus services, walking and cycling and then introduce a congestion charge

We ask everyone to please engage with the upcoming consultation on the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP) proposal to improve public transport, make walking and cycling safer and more attractive, reduce congestion, and improve our environment through reduced greenhouse gas emissions and reduced air pollution.

The core proposal is for the GCP to forward fund improvements to the bus network to provide a public transport system far beyond what any of us have experienced here before. This would include providing regular services to villages, extending running times to provide services from 5 am – 1 am on Mon-Sat and 5 am – midnight on Sundays, and introducing £1 and £2 bus fares. It would be rolled out over the next few years, and then ultimately be sustained by a congestion charge on vehicles driving into the city between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday. While driving would get more expensive, the scheme aims to make bus travel cheaper and more accessible. You can find out more at:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/sustainable-transport-programme/city-access-programme/making-connections#composerSection5>

In light of the recent announcement from Stagecoach, it seems like a critical time to think about how we can ensure public transport is available and affordable for everyone, but particularly for those with no other way of travelling. These proposals are likely to require new ways of running the buses, such as franchising (used in London and Manchester), that give local authorities more control and protect users from operators prioritising profit over people's right to travel.

This proposal has generated a lot of media and political attention and will be of interest to most residents. There are many points of local detail and personal concern which are essential to flush out and bring to attention. So, we strongly urge everyone to take part in the public consultation when it is launched. The Chair of the GCP has said that they want to hear people's views on these proposals and answer people's questions, and that they haven't made up their minds on whether the scheme should go ahead.

Lastly, we'd just like to highlight a few issues where there is some misinformation doing the rounds:

- The improvements in the bus services would be brought in over several years *before* the introduction of the congestion charge
- The Park & Ride sites would not be covered by the congestion charge, so they would remain an option, and they would be cheaper due to the plan to reduce bus fares
- The inclusion of the Addenbrookes site will be subject to further discussion. It is worth noting that staff are already heavily discouraged from driving and parking (unless working shifts, which would be outside the congestion charge times anyway). Patients too ill to use public transport would be exempt.

Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire Consultation: Share your views

Cambridgeshire County Council has launched a consultation on its draft Active Travel Strategy. If you're interested in how we can be enabled and encouraged to walk or cycle more of our journeys, please share your views by the 7th November at: [Active travel strategy for Cambridgeshire public consultation | Consult Cambridgeshire \(engagementhq.com\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/active-travel-strategy-consultation).

Workforce Shortages and the Four-day Working Week Trial

People now think differently about work-life priorities and nationally and locally it is harder than ever to recruit and retain staff. A three-month trial of a four-day week will begin in January for desk-based staff at SCDC. A similar pilot continues at more than 70 UK organisations.

In our own interactions with the district council, as well as with a whole range of public services including rail and bus operators, health and care providers, schools, and many others, workforce retention and shortages are the headline concern hampering successful delivery of key public services.

A four-day week is when people work one less day per week but still get paid the same salary. A four-day week, which for a full-time employee at the council would consist of 30 hours, can make an organization stand out from others and be more attractive to talent. It is also seen as a tangible incentive to encourage staff to stay.

In the trial, service levels cannot drop if a four-day week is to be considered as a viable option in the longer term. The council will keep a check on things like how long it takes to process benefits claims, council house rent collections, the speed of determining planning applications, staff turnover, call answering times and more.

For more than a year, the council has only been able to fill around eight out of every ten of its vacancies. Between January and March 2022, only around half were filled. There are currently 23 agency staff covering office-based roles, which should ideally be filled by people in permanent positions. Over a whole year, these agency staff could cost the council more than £2 million. If the council filled all these posts with permanent staff, it would cost about £1 million. Not being able to fill vacant posts is also disruptive to services for residents – for example when case officers change during the process of a planning application.

Another aspiration of the trial is to investigate whether it would help the council to attract a more diverse workforce. For example, for those families where childcare costs can be a big blocker from working, or those people with caring responsibilities, it could be a more attractive option than the traditional five-day working week model.

If you'd like to give your views or ask a question about this, please visit:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial/>.

How are we doing? SCDC Survey

SCDC has launched a short survey to help deliver service improvements for residents and businesses across our district. This is your chance to say what you think the council is getting right and where it needs to get better. The survey takes 5 minutes to complete and is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/feedback-and-complaints/feedback/>.

Business Support – Visit South Cambs

The new tourism website for South Cambridgeshire, created by the District Council, has now been running for a year. It is called “Visit South Cambs” and is at: <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/>. During the year, around 200 local venues have enjoyed free listings and more than 230 local events have been promoted, from village fetes to art exhibitions. The site now has had more than 8,000 unique visitors from around the world, reaching countries including America, Australia, and Japan.

SCDC’s Business Support and Development Team will soon be using social media (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) to ask residents and businesses to share what they love most about South Cambridgeshire using #WeLoveSouthCambs. The idea is to build up recommendations and inside secrets about the district’s hidden gems. You can nominate who you think serves the best ice cream, who gives the friendliest service, where are the most scenic country walk or most relaxing pub garden. Please feel free to share your tips on social media and re-share our Visit South Cambs posts too. You can contact Paul Jenkins-Green with your ideas: Paul.Jenkins-Green@scambs.gov.uk

SCDC Support for Ukraine

Clothes Shop for Ukrainians - donations required

Free clothes are available for Ukrainian guests at a pop-up clothes shop in Sawston. The shop urgently needs donations of good quality **winter** clothing - warm coats, raincoats, gloves, trousers, sweaters, scarves, woolly hats, etc. Donations of unopened new socks and thick tights will also be very welcome.

Donations can be dropped off at Sawston Free Church between 4-6pm every Thursday and Friday. The shop is open for Ukrainians to choose clothes only on every second and fourth Friday of the month from 4pm to 6pm. These are the only times that it is possible to see and get clothes.

Dedicated email address for all housing concerns for Hosts and Guests

As we come to the end of the initial six-month hosting period and now start to move into next phase of the scheme, many hosts and guests have queries and concerns regarding how housing and accommodation needs will be dealt with moving forward. Please remember that there is some helpful information already provided on our [‘Information for Homes for Ukraine hosts’ website page](#) under the ‘Looking ahead’ section.

We have a dedicated team in place to offer advice and assistance in this area. For all housing related questions or issues, please email HFULiaison@scambs.gov.uk as this will get your query on this topic through to the right team.

If a guest is facing imminent homelessness out of normal office hours, they can call 01253 501117. Please note that this phone number is for emergency out of hours housing support and the email address above should remain the primary contact for questions or queries during regular business hours.

Free education and employment support for Ukrainian refugees

Form the Future is part of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Region of Learning and offers help to unemployed Ukrainian refugees aged 15 to 24 years old to help them figure out what to do next in education or employment. Its qualified team can help guests get the skills and confidence they need, figure out their next steps in employment or education and offer free optional ongoing support right up until December 2023.

Examples of the activities available are:

- Personalised CV and application writing support
- Work experience
- Future career path needs assessment
- Bespoke 1-2-1 careers guidance and mentoring
- Self-employment and micro-business training
- Personal development and confidence building activities

Guests should register their interest on the following link which is fully translated into Ukrainian: <https://forms.office.com/r/c4SQVYYBy2>

If you have any other questions, please call Form the Future on 01223 609 063, or email regionoflearning@formthefuture.org.uk

Reminder: Ukraine Small Grants

We remind local organisations that the Council is offering up to £300 per project for a wide range of events which aim to help reduce social isolation amongst Ukrainian guests and encourage them and their families to feel more involved in the local community and life in Britain.

Parish councils, community groups, informal groups or individual hosts are invited to apply, and we are working to ensure a quick turnaround of applications. Criteria, guidance and an application form [can be found on our website](#). Or for more information, email ukraine.grants@scams.gov.uk

Ukrainian Employment Survey

As you are already aware, the Government has confirmed that Ukrainian refugees are able to work in the UK for up to three years. SCDC is collaborating with local partners, communities, and businesses to ensure that we understand the barriers Ukrainian guests are facing in finding suitable employment. Can hosts please help us by making their guests aware of the following [survey](#). By guests completing it, this will help us provide the most appropriate support possible.

CAUTION Advised: Facebook groups

At SCDC, we appreciate the importance of community Facebook groups. These are invaluable tools for residents and guests to receive quick information from other members of the district. However, we wanted to ask both Ukrainian guests and hosts to remain vigilant when browsing these groups, as the information they convey is not always correct.

If you have queries in relation to any processes or services relating to the Homes for Ukraine scheme, or support you can receive, the best place for accurate information is either through us, or directly with other organisations providing a service. We want to ensure that both hosts and guests are fully informed with accurate and correct information. If you have doubts or queries, please contact us on Duty.Communitites@scams.gov.uk

English language courses – places available

There are places still available on **English Classes at Sawston and Cottenham** which we are working to provide together with A Learning Place Ltd. They are available to Ukrainian guests of all ages (secondary school age young people are welcome to enrol as learners, while younger children are welcome to attend with their parents):

Cottenham Beginner Plus Class

Tuesdays 5.30pm- 6.30pm. Ideal for those who know a little English already - even if it was learnt at school in the dim and distant past!

Sawston General Conversation class

Thursdays 4.15pm- 5.15pm. Mixed ability conversation class providing an opportunity to hone and develop speaking skills in a structured, supportive environment.

Sawston Beginner/Improver Conversation Class

Thursdays 5.30pm- 6.30pm. This class focuses on helping learners to develop the spoken English skills for day-to-day life. Ideal for beginners or less confident learners.

Please contact Amy at hello@alearningplace.co.uk or on 07753 282967, or complete the registration form at <https://bit.ly/ALP-English-classes>.

Free Admission to National Trust Properties

The National Trust is offering a named 6-month free admission pass to all adult refugees, allowing access to many of the charity's sites around the country. The pass will also cover all children under the age of 18 and enable refugees to visit independently of the host family they are living with. If the recipient of the pass is here for longer than 6 months, they can apply for a new pass once their existing one expires. Passes should be received within two to three weeks of application.

Hosts can request a 6-month named pass for refugees living with a non NT member by emailing supporter.operations@nationaltrust.org.uk including the names of their guests, their address and whether they need an individual adult or family pass.

Community Groups can also request single use passes for visits to National Trust properties for refugees they are hosting, asking for two passes per person up to a max of 100 people.

Please ask your Community Group representative to email supporter.operations@nationaltrust.org.uk with their request for the single use access passes. They must state the number of passes they need (two passes per person up to a max of 100 people, so a maximum of 200 passes in total) and the name and the address of where the passes should be sent to. Single use access passes do not need to be named and the Community Group representative does not need to be an active NT member to request the passes.

You can find out more about some of the beautiful and varied National Trust sites around the country which you can visit with these amazing free pass offers at www.nationaltrust.org.uk.