

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – March 2023

Contact details

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

Michael Atkins:	Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk	07968 264637
Ariel Cahn:	Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk	07455 128924
Lisa Redrup:	Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk	07855 324580

Cost of living information

Visit <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/> for information on: where to turn for advice; benefits, money and debt advice; help with energy and water bills; help for parents and families; help with food and health costs; help with phone bills; help with making your home warmer; Age UK handy person service and; support if you are in distress.

Comberton and Grantchester Warm Hubs

Cambridgeshire ACRE and South Cambs are working with communities all across the district to open Warm Hubs to help people struggling with fuel cost or just wanting an opportunity to get together. There are two open Warm Hubs in this ward:

Comberton Baptist Church, Green End, Comberton, Cambridge, CB23 7DY.
Opening times: Monday, 3.30pm - 6:30pm, Thursday, 10.30am - 1.30pm

Grantchester Communal Hall, Tabrum Close, Grantchester, Cambridge, CB3 9NW
Opening time: Friday, 10am - 12pm

Information on other venues can be found at [Cambridgeshire ACRE](#) and libraries across Cambridgeshire are also offering a "Warm Space " for anyone who needs it during winter.

Energy Bill Support Scheme - Alternative Funding (EBSS AF)

The Government's EBSS AF is aimed at providing support to households who were not eligible for the automatic Energy Bill Support Scheme, which was the £400 payment paid by energy suppliers. The EBSS AF will offer a £400 payment per household, to assist with energy bills, to those eligible. This will include care home residents, park home residents, caravans and houseboats on fixed or registered sites, homes off the grid and more. Those who are eligible for the EBSS AF must complete a short online form via the government's GOV.UK pages by 31 May. The government will be opening the scheme for applications from Monday (27 February) via GOV.UK

Alternative Fuel Payments

In addition to the above, there is an alternative fuel payment alternative funding scheme that will soon be made available. This scheme is intended to deliver a one-off payment of £200 to UK households who are not on the mains gas grid and therefore use alternative fuels, such as heating oil, to heat their homes. The government will be opening the scheme for applications from Monday (27th February) via GOV.uk

All applications for both of the above schemes will need to be made directly to central government via GOV.UK and not via South Cambridgeshire District Council.

SCDC Full Council meeting - 21st February 2023

Council motion to support the 'Debate Not Hate' national campaign to tackle intimidation and abuse in public life

This motion was submitted jointly by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition. The motion read 'The intimidation and abuse of councillors, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy; preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for election, and undermining public life in democratic processes. This council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians must improve to ensure councillors feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.'

The text of the motion went on to say that the council should take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of councillors and council staff and listed a number of actions. The motion was carried unanimously.

Council Tax

Council voted to increase the SCDC portion of council tax by 3.1%. This represents an increase of £5 per year (or 10p per week) for a Band D property. This increase is regrettable, but inflation affects the council's budget as it does that of every other organisation and personal budget and it is currently running at around 10%, with wage inflation at 6% (the council has around 600 employees). Council Tax delivers around £11 million and Business Rates around £18 million. Government grants have been reducing for a number of years and are now around £3 million. The Council has an ongoing transformation programme to improve the productivity of the council which is projected to bring savings of £2 million over the next two years and returns on our investments are at around £7 million.

SCDC sets only a small proportion of the Council Tax bill. The other precepts are set by the County Council (including for social care), the police and fire authorities, and parish councils. SCDC is the collecting authority.

Council House rents

Another regrettable consequence of the rise in inflation is the need to increase council house rents by 7%, which was also approved by Council. Although this is below the current rate of inflation the council recognises that this, together with other price rises, will be a worry for many people and it is not a decision that the council takes lightly. The council is building new social housing at a rate not seen for many years and plan to build another 75 per year over the next two years, after which it is hoped that the target will be higher still. Improvements to the thermal efficiency of existing council housing stock is also a priority and the plan is to improve all houses so that they are at an EPC rating of 'C' or above by 2025. The costs attached to such improvements are high (and rising substantially), but it means that the modernised homes are significantly more affordable for council tenants to live in – something that the many tenants who have benefitted so far are very positive about.

Councillors' allowances

Like MPs, councillors in local authorities have to set their own allowances, which is far from ideal. In common with many local authorities, SCDC employs an Independent Review Panel (IRP) to determine what the allowances should be and, this year they recommended that allowances rise by 4.25%. To put this into context, councillors are expected to provide their own phones, calls and internet services on both council business and for casework and fuel costs are only covered (at the HMRC rate) when attending formal council meetings, courses etc. The accepted IRP recommendation will take the allowance for an 'ordinary' councillor to £5,501 per annum.

Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Precept

Council was advised that the CPCA recently voted for a £12 per annum (23p/week) precept to fund some rural bus services that would otherwise be lost following business decisions taken by Stagecoach. Both the 18 service between Cambridge and St Neots and the 26 service between Royston and Cambridge, which Stagecoach withdrew from, are to be funded by this precept. The 75 service is also a subsidised service.

Business plan

The Council's revised Business Plan was considered and approved by Council: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/the-council/performance-and-plans/council-plans-and-reports/our-business-plan/>. It restates that SCDC will be a green, modern and caring Council which helps local businesses to grow and provides housing that is affordable for everyone to live in.

Goals for helping local residents include:

- Reducing fly-tipping hotspots through cameras and prompt investigation into dumped rubbish reports.
- Civil Parking Enforcement in South Cambridgeshire, working with Cambridgeshire County Council and the Greater Cambridge Partnership.
- New Mobile Warden scheme to help older people live independently in their homes for longer.
- Bringing forward community buildings at Northstowe.
- Supporting the health and wellbeing of residents with grants for local projects.
- Continued support for the Homes for Ukraine scheme to help guests who have arrived in the past year to move into more independent living arrangements, wherever possible.

Goals for helping business include:

- Supporting start-ups and small businesses growth e.g. providing space at the Council's Cambourne office.
- Advising businesses on how to become greener.
- Promoting local businesses, offering tailored support and resources, as well as identifying funding opportunities.
- Continuing to support and help establish South Cambridgeshire local markets.

In-line with the Council's green to the core goals, there are plans to:

- Address water scarcity in Greater Cambridge by working with Cambridge City Council, the water industry, and others.
- Distribute up to £125,000 as part of the Council's annual Zero Carbon Communities grant.
- Provide grants to villages for more tree-planting.
- Award up to £50,000 in grants to help with the installation of electric vehicle charging points at village halls and community buildings.
- Continue with plans for a solar farm to power electric bin lorries at the Waterbeach depot of the Council's Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service with Cambridge City Council.
- Replace diesel bin lorries as they come to the end of their working lives with low-emission vehicles, or those powered by alternative fuels such as biofuel.

Oxford to Cambridge Partnership

The Government has confirmed support for the establishment of an Oxford to Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership, which unlocks access to up to £2.5million government funding for the Partnership to support its priorities in delivering sustainable growth and environmental enhancements for the region.

The Partnership's initial programme is to:

- develop a set of propositions to attract international investment and profile the region on a global stage; and
- continue the work underway to embed shared Environment Principles.

Following the official commitment from government, the Partnership will begin active recruitment of an independent Chair. In the interim, a Shadow Board has been set up to oversee the Partnership's programme and agree governance and funding. Information on the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership, including meeting agendas and notes, is available at <https://www.oxford-cambridge-partnership.info/>.

The Council supported the Cabinet's intention to confirm its membership of the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership. Benefits from access to additional funding, increased influence on government as a partnership, and from working together with other stakeholders were discussed. It was also discussed that the Council could leave the partnership if the goals were unsatisfactory and the Council papers noted that: the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership does not have delegated authority or any formal or legal decision-making powers from any of its partner members.

Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District (SCDC) and the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) have resolved to bring Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) to the District of South Cambridgeshire.

CPE, is a system of parking governance that allows the Highway Authority, CCC, the power to carry out parking enforcement using its own agents rather than relying on the Constabulary to provide that function.

In order to be able to carry out this service, surveys have been undertaken of the condition of the regulatory signs and lines on the highway within the District. The signs and lines need to be in an enforceable condition. CCC Highways Service operators will be working in the area, either maintaining or installing regulatory equipment.

In Haslingfield, work on the High St is scheduled for 9-10 and 15-17 March.

Should you have any queries related to the implementation of CPE please contact: parkingpolicy@cambridgeshire.gov.uk. If you have identified a fault on the highway please use the Highways Fault Reporting Tool: <https://highwaysreporting.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

SCDC Support for Ukraine

Ukraine – New hosts for guests needed

Hosts are still needed across South Cambridgeshire to [support families who have already arrived from Ukraine](#), with hosts eligible to receive up to £500 a month as a thank you payment. Around 770 people from Ukraine have already arrived in South Cambridgeshire and with the war continuing - and it not being safe for many families to return - there is an ongoing demand to provide them with a safe place to stay. Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, hosts sign up to provide a home to guests for a minimum of six months. However, around 20% of current hosts are not able to continue past that initial six-month point. It means that guests who have been staying with them would benefit from alternative accommodation locally, so they can continue to build on the relationships and community connections they have already been able to make.

Hosts receive [comprehensive support](#) from the District Council, along with a £350 monthly Government 'Thank you' payment. The District Council also offers an additional opt-in monthly payment to hosts of £150. This takes the total host payment to £500 per month. Anyone who can offer a spare room and warm welcome is being asked to text ROOM to 88802 so the Council can support them through the process and match hosts to guests who have already started to settle in the local area.

Find out more, and watch video stories from current hosts and guests, at www.scams.gov.uk/support-for-ukraine-it-all-starts-with-a-spare-room.

Free bikes available for guests

Guests who would like a free bike can apply for one via one of the Council's three partner charities [Owl Bikes](#), [Camtrust](#) and [Tag Bikes](#). To learn more about the Free Bikes for Ukrainians scheme, see Local Travel Support on our [Ukrainian Guest Information Hub](#).

Donations of bicycles, helmets, spare tyres and parts will be gratefully received by all three charities.