

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – May 2023

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns relating to SCDC services please contact us using the details below. These are housing need, housing repairs for council tenants, planning, benefits, council tax, bin collection, environmental health issues etc.

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Cost of living information

Visit <https://www.scams.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. 25 Warm Hubs have been running across South Cambridgeshire this winter, with over 3,000 visits up to the start of March.

There are two Warm Hubs in this ward:

Comberton Baptist Church, Green End, Comberton, Cambridge, CB23 7DY.
Opening times: Monday, 3pm – 5 pm

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

Information on other venues can be found at [Cambridgeshire ACRE](#).

SCDC grants for community groups

11 voluntary sector groups have received funding for the coming financial year as part of the Council's Grants to the Voluntary Sector scheme. This year's grant process awarded more than £117,000 and has prioritised projects that support those people most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Information on the groups receiving grants is available here: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/funding-boost-for-voluntary-groups-in-south-cambridgeshire/>.

Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme

Applications open until Friday 2nd June 2023 for the fifth round of this popular scheme. Grant awards from £1,000 to £15,000 are available to reduce carbon emissions or engage the community with the issue. Previous projects include a village e-bike rental scheme, cooking classes that reduce food waste, tree planting, village hall solar panels and a men's mental health and wellbeing project that runs a mobile library for gardening equipment and tool hire.

Please visit the website for more details and how to apply:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/encouraging-communities-to-go-green-with-a-grant-fund-project-celebrating-its-fifth-year/>

Right to buy

The Council has delivered 88 new council houses for the municipal year 2022 to 2023, and is looking likely to be able to deliver more in the next year.

Those who live in Council houses have long had the right to buy their home at a discount. However, Government takes most of the money from these discounted sales making it difficult for councils to replace those sold homes. The good news is that Government has announced that councils can keep their right to buy receipts, but only for 2 years. In South Cambs, we sell about 30 properties a year, so this means that we will borrow less for building new houses and so it will be easier to replace those homes sold.

Housing Trajectory and Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS)

These are figures we have to report to Government every year, and the new figures are good. The calculations show that for Greater Cambridge, the two Councils (Cambridge City and South Cambs) jointly have **6.2 years of housing land supply** for the 2023-2028 five-year period. This is robust and shows we have been able to keep this number above the 5 years government minimum threshold consistently.

In terms of house delivery, it is worth remembering that the Cambridge 2018 local plan sets 14,000 homes to be delivered between 2011 and 2031. The South Cambs Local Plan 2018 sets its target as 19,500 for the same period. The calculations show that 14,199 are expected to be delivered in Cambridge City and 23,516 in South Cambridgeshire giving a total of 37,715 in Greater Cambridge. The South Cambs figures include the additional homes granted permission during the period 2014-2018 when the Council did not have a 5YHLS. So, overall in Greater Cambridge, we are delivering more than the requirements in both plans.

Four-day week trial

All local authorities across the country are facing huge problems in recruiting and retaining staff, which affects services provided to communities. Councils are unable to compete with the salaries offered in the private sector, especially for planning and environmental officers, and so councils have to offer something other than money. These problems increase costs, as it is more expensive to use agency staff to fill unfilled posts. For this reason SCDC has been running a trial for the past months of the Four-Day Week. This means that staff have to work very differently and more intensely in order to do 100% of the work in 80% of the time to receive 100% of the pay. The report of this trial has now been published and is very encouraging showing that performance has been maintained or improved, and staff who were thinking of leaving are now likely to stay.

What this means for our communities is improvement in services and savings for the functions that your council tax is used for. The recommendation to councillors is to extend the trial for a further year.

Councillors are also to be asked to include the refuse collection services in the Four-Day Week trial as of this summer. The routes are being optimized to take into account new homes built and collections will be Tuesdays to Fridays to avoid disruptions caused by Bank Holidays. Many councils are already operating Tuesday to Friday and we will learn from them.

GCP Making Connections consultation

The consultation on a sustainable travel zone and an improved bus service is now closed and we expect the results to be published in the next few weeks. 23,000 people took part and there were over 100,000 open text responses to be analysed so it has taken time to do this. Questions were asked about whether people wanted greatly improved bus services (cost circa £50 million per year) and what they should look like. Also if there was demand for

much improved walking and cycling infrastructure. The most controversial question was whether people supported a 'congestion charge' as the means to pay for improved bus services and walking and cycling infrastructure in the long term, several years after upfront investment to improve bus services. These results will now be used to adapt the proposals to address people's concerns. This may include a charge being levied for fewer hours, more categories of drivers being exempt etc. The final decision rests with the County Councillors.

It is important to remember why it is considered necessary to do something to address congestion in Cambridge and South Cambs (Greater Cambridge):

- Greater Cambridge has 35,000 more residents in 2021 than 2011
- There are projected to be 44,000 more jobs by 2031 and 33,500 more houses
- Traffic levels need to decrease by 15% of 2011 levels to be able to run better public transport
- 35% of carbon emissions are from transport

Also, what could a better bus service look like:

- Cheap fares
- Increased routes
- Increased frequency
- Faster and more direct
- Simple through ticketing
- Increased infrastructure e.g. bus stops, real time displays etc.
- Increased rural services

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.scambs.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 [Taq 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.