

# South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

## District Councillors' Monthly Report – August 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 Community Hubs

Visit a safe and friendly environment to enjoy free refreshments and social activities, obtain information and advice, and share the company of others. Local Community Hubs include:

- 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

<https://www.cambsacre.org.uk/projects/cambridgeshire-community-hubs-network/>

### Can you help support asylum seekers at Bar Hill Hotel?

SCDC is looking for volunteers to help support families living at the hotel in Bar Hill. So far, SCDC has been working primarily with volunteers in Bar Hill and is now asking nearby communities to consider supporting too. Two schemes (see below) are ready to begin once volunteers are available. To get involved, please email [duty.communities@scams.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scams.gov.uk).

### Pool Bike Scheme

SCDC will be providing a pool of 20 bikes (10 adult bikes, 10 children bikes) along with locks, helmets and optional child seat if needed for guests at the hotel to use. We are looking for 2 volunteers per session that can come to the hotel 1 hour in the morning to check out the bikes and 1 hour in the afternoon to check the bikes back in (volunteers can support one session or more, we are very flexible depending on their availability). The volunteers will need to keep a logbook of the who signs out which bike, and when bikes are returned the volunteer for that session will be responsible for doing a visual check of the bike and signing it back in (no knowledge of bikes is required).

### Pop-up clothes shop/donation room

SCDC has been allocated a space to store donations and set up a clothes shop. We are looking for volunteers who can spare 2 to 3 hours to come to the hotel and help organise the clothes donations as well as run some shop days where hotel guests can get items they require. Timings and dates would depend on volunteer availability.

## **Government announcement to ‘turbocharge’ plans for growth in and around Cambridge**

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, recently outlined plans to deliver 1 million new homes nationally, focussing on towns and cities and starting with Cambridge. The Government’s announcement did not include the specific number of houses they expect to be delivered in and around Cambridge. However, this follows a story in The Sunday Times recently – which the Council had no prior knowledge of – reporting on Government plans to turn Cambridge into Britain’s Silicon Valley by boosting building and adding as many as 250,000 new homes.

The Council has said it is vital there is clarity over how many homes the Government is planning for and where they believe they should go. Council leaders are pressing the Government urgently to make sure local people have this information.

When the emerging Local Plan for Greater Cambridge was published earlier this year – a process that considers how growth is managed into the future – the Council said that those plans could only be delivered if serious concerns over water supply could be addressed. The Leader of the Council also recently wrote to Ministers Gove and Hunt to call for urgent action to ensure the environment was not adversely impacted and the chalk streams were able to recover. The Council’s own evidence already suggests the need to provide for 50,000 new homes to support 66,000 new jobs anticipated in the area over the next 18 years. However, there remain key questions over whether there is enough water; it cannot be growth at all costs and the environment – particularly the water supply – must be a central consideration.

Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, said: “The Greater Cambridge area already has identified a need for 50,000 new homes. Our plans for how that need could be met have been prepared following local consultation and we have a robust evidence base to back up what is being suggested. When we published those plans earlier this year, we said very clearly that that level of growth could only be delivered if the challenge over water supply could be solved, and the environment, including our vital chalk streams, is enhanced and improved. On the face of it this announcement seems to centre on what we are already planning to deliver in Greater Cambridge hence why we need more information. Until we have that, we, along with our local communities, will remain concerned. We have tens of thousands of homes already agreed to be built in new towns and villages in this area and we’d much rather the Government worked with big developers, including the Government’s own agency Homes England, to incentivise them to build these sites out faster and with a wider range of homes for all to help with the affordability of housing in the area. If this announcement does that then it will be welcomed. We will of course be engaging with the Government to understand this more and ensure that local people are represented in these discussions.”

## **Funding for new council homes**

The Council has been awarded significant funding to provide 13 additional homes for refugees in phase 2 of the Local Authority Housing Fund. Together with the funding for 40 homes that was awarded in phase 1, the council has been granted just over £2.4m. The latest award, combined with Council borrowing, will provide 10 homes for refugee families from Afghanistan, plus 3 additional properties for temporary accommodation to reduce the use of bed and breakfasts. When the properties are no longer needed for either refugee or temporary housing they will be treated as normal council housing, so the longer-term legacy for this project will be an increase in social housing within the District.

## **Half a million pounds in Zero Carbon Communities grants given to South Cambridgeshire community groups**

The District Council is awarding green grants to 10 South Cambridgeshire community groups marking a £500,000 total across 71 projects since the scheme began four years ago. This year's round of projects, aimed at reducing carbon emissions and engaging communities on climate change, will receive grant funding totalling more than £125,000.

Projects to be funded in the carbon reduction category are:

- Wysing Arts Centre, Duxford Community Centre and Landbeach Village Hall will receive £15,000 each to install solar panels.
- The charity Hope Against Poverty will receive £15,000 to buy an electric van for their mobile food hub, replacing the current diesel van.
- Milton Community Centre will receive £8,321.67 to upgrade to energy efficient lighting throughout the community centre and recreation ground.
- Swavesey Squash Club will receive £1,484 to install cavity wall insulation.

Projects to be funded in the community engagement category are:

- Cambridge Carbon Footprint will receive £15,000 to continue expanding and developing their repair café network. Staffed with skilled volunteer repairers, the cafes fix items (from clothing and small electricals to bikes) free of charge and educate people around circular economy and consumption habits.
- Cambridge Carbon Footprint's thermal imaging scheme will receive £11,095 to continue their thermal camera loans to households across the District. They will also continue their Open Eco Homes scheme and employ a Home Energy Officer to support households making energy efficiency upgrades to their homes.
- Cambridge Sustainable Food will receive £15,000 to develop and extend their network of sustainable food and local growing projects and continue outreach to educate people around food and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Let's Cook Project will receive £15,000 to continue sustainable food education. Thirty representatives from 10 community-facing settings will be trained to deliver practical cookery sessions with their own beneficiaries with a focus on reducing avoidable food waste.

## **Grant for EV chargers at community buildings - Would your village benefit from a public electric vehicle charger?**

If so, then SCDC's Electric Vehicle Charge Point Grant may be of interest. Up to £5,000 per project is available towards the capital costs of purchasing and installing public EV chargers at community buildings and village halls. Applications will be appraised for their deliverability and positive impact with funding allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. To be eligible, EV chargers must be publicly accessible, and projects should demonstrate that there is likely demand for an EV charger at the chosen location.

Find out more here: [Electric Vehicle Charge Point Grant – SCDC](#)

## **Pledge to fight food waste with a chance to win**

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service is asking residents to [pledge to reduce their food waste for 4 weeks](#). They will receive weekly emails with easy tips to embed new habits to help them save food and money, and enter a prize draw to win £60 of food-shopping vouchers. £60 is the amount an average household wastes in a month on food which goes to waste. We will be continuing this campaign through to the end of December, with a new focus and tailored tips each month, and a new prize draw – so people who enter this month can sign up again to continue their progress and get more chances to win.

## **SCDC's charity of the year is Cambourne Youth Partnership**

Cambourne Youth Partnership (CYP) was chosen as charity of the year by Cllr Peter Fane after he was elected as the new South Cambridgeshire District Council Chair. CYP enables young people to participate in activities they help to develop, including sport, cookery, and community action projects. They run open access and targeted youth clubs out of its base, called Cambourne Soul, including activities such as boxing, gaming, playing pool, pizza making, movie nights, litter picking and wellbeing support. Its youth workers also engage young people in detached sessions in the community and deliver one-to-one sessions for those needing further support. The charity's key aims are to inspire and raise the aspirations of young people in the local community, particularly those who are experiencing disadvantage in various forms including social and economic isolation, and challenging life situations.

Cllr Anna Bradnam, the previous Chair, raised more than £1,000 for her chosen charity, Trussell Trust's Cambridge Foodbank.

## **Webchat at [www.scams.gov.uk](http://www.scams.gov.uk)**

Webchat has now been launched on the SCDC website. Residents and businesses can now ask questions and get information from advisors via webchat about all of the services aside from planning. Planning is currently excluded owing to the complexities of the service and the detailed/individual nature of each query.

At this stage, the webchat service will be available every weekday between 10am and 3pm as a complementary addition to our main website content and contact with through the Customer Contact Centre. You can access webchat by clicking or tapping a 'chat online' icon. Feedback on the initial basic webchat will be monitored before the Council looks to develop it further to help customers.

You can learn more in this video which runs through the webchat process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UtNxHQOKL8>.

## **99.2% of Council Tax funds collected helping to fund essential services**

South Cambridgeshire councillors have thanked residents for their support of vital frontline services – after the District Council was named the joint top District Council nationally for collecting Council Tax.

Government figures show South Cambridgeshire District Council collected 99.2% of the Council Tax funds it was due to in the 2022/23 financial year – helping fund social care, bin collections, police and fire services, schools, support to prevent homelessness and much more. Across England, the total collection rate when considering all councils was 96.8%.

SCDC collects Council Tax on behalf of the Police, Fire Service, County Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Parish and Town Councils. Only around 9% of residents' annual Council Tax bill goes towards services which the District Council provides – like emptying bins, determining planning applications and homelessness support. The rest is passed to the organisations mentioned above.

Support is available if residents are struggling to meet Council Tax payments. [Visit the South Cambridgeshire District Council website](#) for details.

South Cambridgeshire residents can also [sign-up to receive their Council Tax bill online](#). This year the Council sent out over 63,000 Council Tax letters by post at a cost of nearly £33,500. Registering for an online account would help the Council spend more on vital services rather than paying for postage.

## **E-bike batteries – Tips for using them safely**

E-bikes are great for getting around easily, but safety is important as the lithium-ion batteries can cause dangerous fires.

Electrical Safety First has produced a video with guidance on their safe use:

<https://www.electricalsafetyfirst.org.uk/battery-breakdown/safer-use/>.

## **Anniversary of #FreetoFeedCP campaign**

The South Cambs #FreeToFeedCP breastfeeding campaign, designed to empower parents to breastfeed or pump in public, is celebrating its first year. Since launching, more than 70 venues across the district have pledged their support and now, Peterborough City and East Cambs District Councils are following the lead by rolling out the scheme in their areas.

You can read more at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/mums-welcome-freetofeedcp-anniversary-which-empowers-parents-to-breastfeed-and-pump-in-public/>.