

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – September 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.

Michael Atkins:	Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk	07968 264637
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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 handyman service and; support if you are in distress.

Help for residents

SCDC's latest initiative to help certain residents through the cost-of-living crisis is the offer of a free electric blanket/electric throw, which are cheaper to run than central heating. Analysis has shown that running an electric blanket costs just 5p per hour, compared to an average central heating cost of £2.03 per hour ([Ideal Home, 2023](#)). The accumulation of these savings over the winter months has the potential to provide financial relief to those residents.

Qualifying residents are those who (as of 1 July 2023) claim Council Tax Support and at least one of the following:

- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility element enhance rate
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) mobility component at the higher rate.

These groups of people are being targeted because it is known that people with mobility issues are more susceptible to cold weather pressures. Data from Citizens Advice shows that in 2023 they made 637 referrals to foodbanks for people with disabilities or long-term health conditions compared to 359 referrals for those without these problems.

Qualifying residents will receive a letter in the coming weeks from the Council telling them they are eligible and how to claim their free blanket. Only people who receive a letter will be able to claim a free blanket.

Community Chest fund

There is still Community Chest funding available for cost-of-living mitigation. Information about how to apply can be accessed here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/grants/community-chest-grants/>.

New Village Agent posts

Cambridgeshire ACRE is currently recruiting [Village Agents](#) to support the health and wellbeing of others in their community. Applications close at 8am 23 October 2023.

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/>

New bin collection schedule

The move to the new 4-day week bin collection schedule has gone very well so far. Almost everyone presented their bins on the right day with only a few roads missed across the district (which were collected first thing the following day). The number of calls into the call centre was below expectations, as was the number of reports of missed bins. The advantage of not collecting bins on Mondays is that we all avoid the confusion caused by Bank Holidays. The waste teams will continue their other duties on a Monday including commercial waste collections and litter bins and street cleaning.

Homes for Ukraine Landlords' incentive scheme

South Cambridgeshire has seen one of the highest number of Homes for Ukraine arrivals for a lower tier authority with over 850 Ukrainian guests since the scheme began in April 2022.

The first phase of the project has been a tremendous success and is now considered 'business as usual' for officers working on it. In the last few months, the focus has been helping guests to move on to independent accommodation. Getting into the private rental sector is expensive and has proved challenging for guests. In mitigation, SCDC is launching a Landlords' Incentive scheme to provide more affordable and sustainable housing options for our Ukrainian guests.

The scheme will offer up-front payments to landlords, depending on circumstances such as property size and whether they offer a tenancy at the local housing allowance rate or at market rent. Larger incentive payments will be available to landlords who offer a tenancy at the local housing rate. Payments come from the government's Homes for Ukraine fund.

Making Connections update

To the satisfaction of some and the sadness of others the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has decided not to proceed to the next stage of its Making Connections project. The aim was to make travelling in and around Cambridge quicker, simpler and faster by easing congestion and offering better, fairer, and greener travel choices. Despite not offering alternative proposals to the problems of city congestion, the anti-congestion charge lobby has been very effective and a widespread antipathy to congestion-charging has grown, leading to a lack of political consensus. The focus will now fall on other areas of the City Access programme such as resident parking, road hierarchy and freight consolidation plus other infrastructure projects.

A major implication for our villages is that improved bus services will not be delivered as quickly as hoped, since the congestion charge was to provide the long-term funding to underpin these improvements following the use of government City Deal money to make initial short-term improvements. Work is currently ongoing to assess other possible implications of this decision including whether there are impacts on large-scale developments such as at Bourn Airfield, which require high quality public transport, and consequently the targets of the emerging Local Plan and the ability of the council to demonstrate an adequate 5-year housing land supply.

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Four-day week trial at Council

The 4-day week trial is an attempt by SCDC to reduce its agency bill and take control of serious recruitment problems (especially in the Planning Service) linked to the high cost of living in the district. This trial does not affect opening hours and residents can continue to contact the council as before (<https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/contact-us/>).

Up-to-date information on the trial can be accessed at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial/>.

SCDC's Carbon Literacy Certification

SCDC has been accredited as a Carbon Literate Organisation by the national charity, The Carbon Literacy Trust, achieving a bronze certificate as part of its continuing efforts to tackle the climate emergency in South Cambridgeshire.

It has been achieved by a cohort of staff at a variety of levels taking part in bespoke Carbon Literacy training, including the most senior, decision-making members of staff. So far, 35 staff have been trained with 17 formally certified as Carbon Literate by the Trust. The 18 staff yet to be formally certified continue to progress towards their qualification. This training helps staff to act on climate change within their day-to-day roles and to consider potential projects which could reduce emissions both within the Council and in the wider district.

The Council adopted South Cambridgeshire's first [Zero Carbon Strategy](#) in May 2020. This sets out the need to halve net carbon emissions in the district by at least 2030 if not before, and the Council's plans to support this. In February 2021 the Council created a [Doubling Nature](#) strategy, a sister document to the Zero Carbon Strategy, setting out an approach to increasing wildlife-rich habitats, tree canopy, and access to green spaces in South Cambridgeshire. Actions taken in the past five years include:

- Reducing the carbon emissions associated with SCDC's main office through the [greening South Cambs Hall project](#).
- Providing over £500,000 in Zero Carbon Communities grants to community groups who work to tackle climate change in their village or town.
- Working with Cambridge City Council to decarbonise the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste bin lorry fleet including the purchase of three electric bin lorries.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning consulting on Statement of Community Involvement

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire residents will be asked to have their say on an important document that outlines how they are involved in the planning process. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning will be consulting on a new 'Statement of Community Involvement' from 18 October to 29 November 2023.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the councils will involve communities on a wide range of planning matters throughout the planning process. Planning affects the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Greater Cambridge. Councillors therefore say it is essential that people have an opportunity to engage in the decisions the councils make on new housing, workplaces, open spaces, and the measures being taken locally to tackle climate and biodiversity issues.

The Statement of Community Involvement will cover areas such as planning for the future of Greater Cambridge, neighbourhood planning, planning new development and dealing with development that is not authorised. Besides inviting online comments, GCSP is attending two events where members of the public are welcome find out more and to give their views. These are at:

- Northstowe Market: 9.30am to 12.30pm on Sunday 22 October 2023 at Northstowe Hub, The Community Centre, 1 The Green, Pathfinder Way, Northstowe CB24 1FD
- Café Drop in: 11am to 2pm on Friday 27 October at The Meadows Community Centre, 299 Arbury Rd, Cambridge CB4 2JL

You can find out more information about the Statement of Community Involvement on [the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website](#) which, when the consultation opens on 18 October, is also where you can add your comments.

Update from South Cambridgeshire Business Support Team on the Markets Programme

The Economic Development Team is delivering the South Cambridgeshire Markets programme as part of the Council's wider business plan objective to '*support businesses*'. This work includes working with small businesses to identify meanwhile pop-up market and trading opportunities across the district, as well as working with market and event organisers to ensure that these events are successful.

Over the last year the team has;

- Created a South Cambridgeshire Markets brand which includes a [Market Toolkit](#), [Market Directory](#) and [Stallholder Directory](#).
- Promoted local Markets and events through our visitor economy website [Visit South Cambs](#) and campaigns on the SCDC main social media platforms.
- Delivered hands-on market support to 22 different markets and events over the last year. 7 of these are new markets in the district namely *Cottenham Community Market, Hauxton Food & Craft Market, Marleigh Market, The Gransdens Farmers Market, Great Shelford Village Market, Histon Farmers Fayre and Northstowe Market*.
- Hosted the South Cambridgeshire Christmas Market (Dec 2022), which had 70 stallholders and 1,500 – 1,700 visitors in attendance.

Plans are underway for the 2023 Christmas Market, as well working with market organisers to start-up, reinstate or help expand additional markets in South Cambridgeshire. We also have an exciting project as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund in the pipeline to establish a Youth Enterprise programme for disadvantaged groups to develop future market traders.

For any further information please contact Katherine Southwood at businesskeyprojects@scambs.gov.uk.

Community forums autumn 2023 dates

Dates for the upcoming autumn 2023 community forums on new neighbourhoods are:

- Wednesday 11 October - Cambridge East
- Wednesday 18 October - Bourn Airfield and Cambourne Community Forum
- Wednesday 1 November - Waterbeach
- Thursday 2 November - North West and West Cambridge
- Wednesday 15 November- North East Cambridge

Links and updated details are available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/community-forums/>.

Home energy efficiency upgrade schemes

On 14 September the government launched the Great British Insulation scheme to help families in lower council tax bands with less energy-efficient homes to insulate their homes. Information on eligibility and an online eligibility checker are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-great-british-insulation-scheme>.

For those who live in homes without a gas connection, there is also the Home Upgrade Grant which provides energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating. An online eligibility checker is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-home-upgrade-grant>.

Electrical safety campaign – a message from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service are urging residents to keep in mind some simple steps when using electrical devices, especially those with Lithium-Ion batteries. The idea is that by following a few simple safety measures, like adding fire safety to your bedtime routine and being awake when using and charging some devices or appliances, people can keep themselves and their families safe in their homes.

Information is available at their [Take Charge and Be Safe!](#) Page.