

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – November 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.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.

Useful links

Benefit entitlements - Research suggests that around 25% of some benefits go unclaimed. You can check your entitlements at: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

Local food banks - <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/foodbanks>

Energy saving advice and information on home improvement grants - <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/fuel-energy-and-utilities/>

Community Hubs

Community Hubs offer residents somewhere to socialise, take part in new activities and to receive information on cost-of-living support such as how to reduce bills and access financial support, as well as how to stay healthy and well.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has appointed Cambridgeshire ACRE to support Community Hubs across the district for a further two years, thanks to nearly £200,000 of funding from NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, part of our local Integrated Care System. The funding will be used to support the development of existing hubs and to allow new Community Hubs to open their doors. Additionally, three new Village Agent roles are being introduced. These will be local people, embedded in their community, who will support the health and wellbeing 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

A full list of Community Hubs can be found at:

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

Environmental updates

Climate Action Conference on 28th November 2023

Creating a greener, cleaner district for South Cambridgeshire residents is on the agenda at a climate conference in Cottenham celebrating net zero action locally.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is holding its first Climate Action Conference in November to tie in with [COP28](#) – 12 days of worldwide talks which determine ambition and responsibilities in addressing climate issues globally. The local event is being held at Cottenham Village Hall, a flagship building for becoming environmentally friendly, supported with a District Council Zero Carbon Communities grant of £15,000 for solar panels.

The event is open to everyone and is at:

- Cottenham Village Hall, Lambs Lane, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8TA. Parking onsite or stop 'Lambs Lane' on number 8 bus route from Cambridge city centre.
- Tuesday 28 November 9:30am to 1pm. Doors open 9.15am. Tea, coffee and light refreshments provided.
- Speakers include Chris Parkin of Cambridgeshire County Council talking about making sure communities benefit from the energy transition; Malcolm Bird of Steeple Morden Parish Council talking about [Community Electric Vehicle Charging](#) and Helen Dye of Natural Cambridgeshire talking about developing a local nature recovery strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Also, Alison Giles of Girton Local Nature Recovery and local ecologist Ashley Arbon.
- There will also be time for networking and refreshments, as well as a 'human library' of officers answering questions on the council's decarbonisation journey.
- Book free tickets via [Eventbrite](#).

Six-free trees

The Six Free Trees campaign is into its fourth year and has seen more than 500 trees planted across South Cambridgeshire since it was launched in 2019. The campaign encourages tree planting by promoting its many benefits and is one of a range of initiatives by South Cambridgeshire District Council to support its ambitions to double nature and get the district to net zero carbon by 2050.

Parish Councils have until 29 December 2023 to apply for [six free trees](#) or one large potted tree, which will be delivered to them from 30 January 2024.

Trees can be chosen from a list of native varieties including field maple, alder, silver birch, hornbeam, hawthorn, beech, wild cherry, oak, rowan and crab apple. Bio-based and compostable guards, stakes and ties will also be supplied.

SCDC and partners launch an 18-month project to help local businesses go green

The partnership project aims to support local businesses reduce their carbon footprint, adopt more sustainable practices, and reduce energy costs. The programme has been created by South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Growth Hub and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and is funded by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund. Business charity Allia is managing the new programme and the Peterborough-based sustainability charity PECT is responsible for providing expertise and guidance on sustainability practices to help businesses develop their own net zero roadmap.

The programme aims to support 223 small to medium businesses based in Cambridge, Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire and will also deliver grant funding of up to £5,000 to 75 of these businesses to help them implement energy efficiency-related improvements.

More information is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/green-grants-for-cambridgeshire-businesses/>.

Pink bins for recycling small electrical appliances

Bright pink bins for electrical waste have resulted in nine times more e-waste being collected for recycling. They were introduced last year to reduce the hundreds of tonnes of electrical items that end up in black bins. The pink banks are suitable for collecting most small items which have a plug or a battery, including phones, toys, kettles and many more.

The small appliances are sorted for re-use and recycling by Wiser Recycling in Thetford. Items that are undamaged, uncontaminated, and repairable may be suitable for re-use within the UK. Items that are unsuitable for re-use are dismantled into component parts. Many of those components are also suitable for re-use (e.g., monitor screens or laptop power units). Items unsuitable for re-use are sent to local and national specialist operators for recycling.

You can find all locations for recycling electrical items, including the pink bins, at www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk. You can find upcoming pop-up Repair Café events at www.cambridgecarbonfootprint.org/repair-cafes/.

Consultations

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning consulting on Statement of Community Involvement

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire residents can have their say on how they are involved in the planning process as Greater Cambridge Shared Planning will be consulting on a new 'Statement of Community Involvement' from 18 October to 29 November 2023 at <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/about-us/statement-of-community-involvement/>.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the councils will involve communities on a wide range of planning matters such as planning for the future of Greater Cambridge, neighbourhood planning, planning new development and dealing with unauthorised development. Since planning affects the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Greater Cambridge, 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.

There will be an online public webinar where you can ask questions on Thursday 16th November from 6-7pm. Please use this [link](#) to register.

Have your say in the South Cambridgeshire Polling District Review

The district council is inviting comments, views and suggestions on how polling arrangements can be improved in South Cambridgeshire. The focus is on ensuring polling districts and polling places are fit for purpose to enable effective local democracy. This includes feedback on the accessibility and suitability of polling stations for voters with disabilities. Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places and polling stations every five years. The last review took place in 2019.

Further information, including a list of polling stations used and maps of the current and proposed polling districts, can be found on the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/elections/polling-district-review.

Residents can respond to the consultation by writing to the Elections Team marked 'Polling District Review' either by email to elections@scambs.gov.uk or by letter to: Electoral Services, South Cambs District Council, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA.

All responses must be received by 27 November 2023. Any representations made during the review may be published alongside reports to the Civic Affairs Committee and Council and will help inform decisions made by those bodies.

Please note, you can only vote in elections if your name appears on the register of electors. Since May 2023, voters are now also required to show photo ID in polling stations. Find out more and how to register at www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/elections.

Council's Homeless Strategy Consultation

SCDC is consulting on updates to its Homeless Strategy. This is a document that all councils must have – and regularly review. The Council has a responsibility to prevent homelessness – and receives on average 453 homeless applications each year.

You can have your say at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/homeless-strategy>. The consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 5 January 2024. Please call 01954 713 000 for a paper copy.

In recent years, more people have approached the Council for support once they are already homeless - rather than when they are threatened with homelessness. Getting in touch with the Council for support early – before becoming homeless – increases the options and support available. During the 12 months up until the end of June 2023, the Council prevented 210 households from becoming homeless, by providing support through its Housing Advice and Options service.

Locally and nationally, the main cause of homelessness is family friends no longer being able to house someone, followed by end of a tenancy agreement, and then domestic abuse. People who approach the Council for support with homelessness tend to be of working age, with very few applications from those under 18 or over 65. Also, more applicants are employed than solely in receipt of benefits.

Anyone who feels they are in danger of becoming homeless should [contact the Council](#) as soon as possible.

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/>.

75 bus service review

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Transport & Infrastructure Committee will consider proposed changes to the 75 service on the 15th November (Agenda item 7 at <https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2173/Committee/67/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx>.)

The information given about changes to the service is as follows:

The 31 and 75 are proposed to be recast, with revised frequency, better integration with the service 26, and a more efficient use of resources across the contracts. The peak journeys will be retained to provide access to work and education, with the changes focussed on the off-peak. The changes will also extend the destinations to provide connections to Royston, timed to complement the service 26. The changes to these services will provide an overall improvement in the network and retain services to the communities currently served.

I believe this to mean that, if approved, the 31 and 75 services would be combined from April 2024.

Reliability of 18-bus service

Cllr Atkins and I discussed the reliability of the 18-bus service with Ed Cameron, who is the new Commercial Manager at Whippet and is working to improve the service. He explained that last year Whippet took over the service with just a week's notice and so there was not time to buy buses and recruit/train drivers in advance. He highlighted that Whippet have since upgraded their bus fleet to reduce mechanical issues and there has been an improvement in the number of journeys run from 85% of scheduled journeys in Nov/Dec 2022 to 90% of scheduled journeys in Sep/Oct 2023. There is clearly still more improvement needed and Whippet are working on driver recruitment and reducing signal blackspots to improve tracking.

Whippet has recently launched a new website which includes a [live bus tracker map](#) and a [Services Update page](#) that shows cancellations via Twitter. They have also just launched a new app which is available at: [App, Tap, Go. \(whippetbus.co.uk\)](#). The key functions of the app are a live bus tracker, the ability to buy tickets in advance, and to see the service updates. These are both new so there may be a few teething issues initially.

We have been passing reports of missed services to the Passenger Transport team at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and we're aware that they have been working to support Whippet to improve. Please continue to let us know about any problems and we will continue to liaise with them. If you would like to contact them directly the email address is: passenger.transport@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk.