

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – February 2024

District Councillor 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
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 handyman service and; support if you are in distress.

Are you claiming the right benefits?

SCDC is making a big push to raise awareness of benefits entitlements. It's estimated that around 25% of some benefits go unclaimed. There is an easy-to-use on-line benefits calculator at: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

Energy saving schemes

Action on Energy is a partnership of councils across Cambridgeshire – including South Cambridgeshire District Council - helping to support people to create more energy efficient homes, which, in turn, makes them cheaper to heat and more comfortable to live in. The partnership coordinates, and offers advice on grants including:

- The [Home Upgrade Grant 2 \(HUG2\)](#), offers funding from government, delivered by Action on Energy and can provide home energy efficiency improvements for people on low incomes with properties not heated by gas. The funding aims to make the poorest performing homes more efficient by installing improvements like insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps.
- [Boiler upgrade](#) scheme to replace gas boilers with cleaner heating systems.
- The [ECO4](#) and [Great British Insulation](#) schemes.

Find out more about the funding schemes and advice available on the [Action on Energy website](#). Simply visit the 'Get in Touch' page and complete the short [grant funding application form](#).

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.

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/>

South Cambs District Council budget

SCDC has now published proposals for next year's budget which is intended to continue to grow services and includes significant investment in the council's recycling and waste collection service, funding for new staff to tackle fly-tipping, and the expansion of the Zero Carbon Communities scheme, which has supported projects across the district.

The recent independent peer review, carried out by the Local Government Association, said that the council has 'enviable' finances. This comes as dozens of other councils are issuing warnings of impending financial cliff edges and section 114 (bankruptcy) notices. Despite the damage that has been inflicted by reduced government funding for local authorities over the past 10 years, we are in a position to put forward a budget to progress against our priorities, including tackling climate change.

The proposed budget also continues to include the council's transformation programme, which is a long-term process to drive improvements in customer service and to save money. For example, within Revenue and Benefits there's been £1/4 million worth of savings already, with an expected further £1/4 million to come.

However, huge financial pressures and high inflation still mean that we, along with most councils in the UK, are proposing to increase council tax by the maximum. With price inflation remaining at around double the Bank of England target of 2%, a £5 per year, or 3.1% increase, in council tax for the average band D home is being proposed to ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. The proposed rise would see the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council become £170.31 per year. This is an increase of around 10p per week. This rise would maintain the council's position in the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country.

Rent increases are also proposed to allow continued upgrading of our housing stock to make it more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to live in. The plan is to deliver 75 new council homes for rent and shared ownership, as well as continue to improve the insulation and heating for existing council housing.

You can find out more and access the reports via: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cabinet-backs-draft-budget-and-business-plan/>.

Planning monitoring report

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (between Cambridge City and SCDC councils) has set out the progress made during the past years on building sustainable and affordable new homes. The latest monitoring report (April 2022 to March 2023) shows that:

- The councils remain on track to deliver the need for homes identified in their adopted Local Plans. This includes 794 new affordable homes which were completed in 2022/23 – with 322 in Cambridge and 472 in South Cambridgeshire.
- Three new Neighbourhood Plans—West Wickham, Gamlingay, and Fulbourn—were agreed.
- Employment floorspace increased by 21,338 sqm, which included new office and technology research facilities at Melbourn Science Park.
- Planning policies in both council areas positively impacted climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, with planning permissions including water efficiency and carbon reduction conditions

You can read more of the findings and access the full report via: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/report-shows-increase-in-building-sustainable-and-affordable-homes/>.

Housing

More new, modern council homes for South Cambridgeshire

The District Council has signed a deal for 23 newly-built, modern council homes at the Redrow Homes developments in Barrington and Cottenham.

The homes benefit from modern double-glazed windows and high-quality insulation as well as a high specification on the build. Some homes also have Electric Vehicle chargers.

In Barrington, 13 homes will be available at All Saints Gardens:

- 2 x 2 bed shared ownership houses
- 4 x 1 bed masionettes for affordable rent
- 7 x 2 bed terraced houses for affordable rent.

In Cottenham, 10 homes will be available at Cottenham Grove:

- 2 x 3 bed shared ownership houses
- 2 x 2 bed shared ownership houses
- 2 x 1 bed masionette affordable rent
- 4 x 2 bed terraced houses affordable rent.

For enquiries about the shared ownership properties, please contact William H Brown by email at SCDC@williambrown.co.uk. For interest in the affordable rent homes, you will need to be registered with Home-Link at <https://www.home-link.org.uk/choice/>.

Have your say on the future of local housing by 4th March

Residents, businesses, and local organisations are being asked to help shape the future of housing across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The Housing Strategy for Greater Cambridge has recently been reviewed and sets out a vision for the next five years which promotes healthy, safe, affordable, and sustainable homes where people of all walks of life want to live.

The consultation runs for six weeks from Monday 22 January until 4 March 2024, and gives an opportunity to shape and influence the final strategy before it is finalised in the summer.

Jointly published by Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils, the document reflects the linked economy and housing market across the areas, and shows how the two authorities will work collaboratively to meet housing challenges for the next five years. It runs alongside the councils' Local Plans (adopted in 2018), existing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategies, and a number of other local strategies and plans.

The proposed housing strategy will help guide housing affordability, the planning of new homes, improvements to the quality, safety, and condition of existing homes, and helping people who need additional support to remain at home. It focusses on four key themes:

- Building the right homes in the right places that people need and can afford to live in
- Providing high quality, low carbon, and energy and water efficient homes
- Enabling people to live settled lives
- Building strong partnerships

Within the proposed strategy, SCDC pledges to:

- Deliver at least 375 new council homes during the next five years
- Conduct a stock condition survey of all existing council homes to produce a 15-year plan for their improved energy efficiency
- Continue to deliver a cost-of-living support programme, including increased money advice support.

To comment on the draft Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy, visit:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/Housing/The-Greater-Cambridge-Housing-Strategy-2024-2029>.

Have your say on the new air quality strategy by 15th February

Greater Cambridge residents are being invited to help shape the new Air Quality Strategy which will seek to improve air quality in the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire area, to protect the health and wellbeing of residents.

The consultation is being carried out by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as both councils are working together to develop a joint Air Quality Strategy to maximise impact.

The strategy will allow both councils to develop an action plan to meet stricter air quality targets that were set out by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2021. It is recognised that there is no safe level of air pollution, which is why both councils are seeking to reduce levels of air pollution as much as possible.

Greater Cambridge residents can complete the consultation on the Cambridge City Council resident engagement platform at: <https://engage.cambridge.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/air-quality-strategy>. The consultation will close on Thursday 15 February.

Over £500,000 in community grants awarded in 2023

South Cambridgeshire communities benefited from grants totalling over £500,000 from the District Council last year (2023). This funding was awarded through nine grant schemes with various focus areas such as promoting community well-being, environmental sustainability, and inclusive participation.

You can find out more about all the different grant schemes that the District Council offers at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/grants>.

The grants were made up of the following:

- £80,321 in Community Chest grants was awarded to 54 voluntary and community sector groups, charities, and public sector bodies to help further improve quality of life of residents in the district. For example, Cambourne Town Football Club received £1,143.96 to start a Community Football Kit Exchange where people can donate and collect good quality items of football kit for reuse. Swavesey Parish Council received £330 for five large, raised planting beds in which to plant drought tolerant species, to create a community garden and to encourage insects and pollinators back into the area.
- Six grants amounting to £71,708 were given out through the Council's Mobile Warden Schemes which have been set up to support older people to live independently in their homes and stay in their community.
- 11 Service Support Grants worth £173,900 were granted to help the Voluntary and Community Sector provide services and support to local residents. This includes Care Network Cambridgeshire who received £8,000 for the development and support of Community Car Schemes to assist the elderly and vulnerable within South Cambridgeshire. Citizens Advice Cambridge & District also received £100,000 to provide free, independent and impartial advice to residents of South Cambridgeshire on their rights and responsibilities.
- The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme which helps communities to take action on climate change at a very local level awarded £125,901 to nine applicants. Cambridge Carbon Footprint were awarded £15,000 to develop their network of repair cafes in the district. The grant will support the set-up of new cafes in South Cambridgeshire, train volunteers in how to run cafes, and provide them with support and resources to thrive – including a new toolkit supported by local businesses. CCF received a further £11,095 to continue their work supporting individuals and communities to upgrade homes and reduce energy use – providing thermal camera loans, free tours of low carbon homes and a Home Energy Officer to guide people in reducing energy consumption and retrofitting their homes.
- 49 parish councils received trees worth £4,973 through the six free trees scheme.

- The District Council's Long Term Health grant is aimed at supporting residents with chronic health problems and will be available to groups and organisations who provide physical activity programmes for people with specific health conditions. £13,312 was awarded to 9 organisations with Active with Parkinson's Sawston and the Body Toning class at Shelford Cancer centre both receiving £2,000 of this.
- Five leisure centres received £4,698 to restart fitness classes that stopped during Covid. Anglian Leisure Linton, Cambourne Leisure Centre and Melbourn Sports Centre all received £1,000.
- An Electric vehicle Charge point grant gave £15,000 to 3 applicants. Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust received £5,000 towards four EV chargers at Milton Country Park.
- Tenant community grants help fund a project, by up to £1000, that benefits the local community. £5948 was given to 8 applicants including St Vincents Close in Girton which received £1000 to start a communal garden as well as Coolidge Gardens in Cottenham also receiving £1000 for a communal outdoor seating area for residents and visitors to socialise.
- The Ukraine Small Grant which promotes the integration of Ukrainian guests into the South Cambs community gave out £5,512 to 19 applicants. One of these was the Ukrainian HAM Centre to run a Children's Drawing Competition. The project supported Ukrainian children aged five to 10 years. The drawings were sent to soldiers on the front line.

New Changing Places toilet opens at Imperial War Museum Duxford

A Changing Places toilet has opened at Imperial War Museum (IWM) Duxford providing extra space and specialist equipment for visitors with profound or multiple disabilities. It is only the third Changing Places toilet in South Cambridgeshire, providing additional disabled-friendly features like an adult size changing bed and a hoist for safe lifting.

IWM Duxford was inspired to set up the specialist toilet space following a visit by Peterborough-based charity, [Little Miracles](#), who support families with children with additional needs and life limiting health conditions.

The museum approached South Cambridgeshire District Council who secured £120,000 of funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as part of £30 million earmarked by the government to increase the number of Changing Places toilets across the country.

Established in 2005, the [Changing Places campaign](#) wants Changing Places toilets to be installed in all big public spaces so that people can access their community and use a toilet facility with dignity and hygienically. Changing Places toilets are provided in addition to, and not in place of, standard disabled toilets.

An estimated 240,000 people are unable to use standard toilets, according to the campaign consortium, with the number increasing rapidly. People who require a Changing Places toilet include those with profound and multiple disabilities whether physical or learning, such as muscle-wasting conditions, cerebral palsy, or those who have suffered major physical trauma, or a stroke.

Muscular Dystrophy UK is co-chair of the Changing Places Consortium which includes Pamis, and Centre for Accessible Environments. They want Changing Places toilets to become a mandatory requirement under Building regulations for all large public places, like shopping centres, major leisure venues, hospitals, transport hubs, motorway services and airports.

The other Changing Places toilets in South Cambridgeshire are at Bar Hill Tesco and the Extra Cambridge Services on the A14/M11. Opening soon will be a Changing Places facility at the Western Park Pavilion in Northstowe.

The new Duxford facility adds to more than 1,937 Changing Places toilets across the UK.

Civil Parking Enforcement – tickets with fines are now being issued

Civil Parking Enforcement has been live in South Cambridgeshire since late December. Since the 1st February, tickets with fines have begun to be issued by Cambridgeshire County Council's Civil Parking Enforcement Officers.

The officers can only enforce restrictions that are in place, such as parking on single or double yellow lines, or the footpath where restrictions are adjacent. Other parking matters, such as causing an obstruction by parking on the pavement will remain police matters.

There will be two enforcement officers dedicated to South Cambridgeshire as part of a wider team that enforce the scheme in Cambridge City. It is not possible for the officers to be everywhere all the time and work has been done by Cambridgeshire County Council, utilising available data and insights, to maximise the time they spend enforcing and minimising travel time across the large rural area they will cover. These plans will be reviewed as the team learn more from their patrols.

For further information you can visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CPE.

4 day working week trial

The 4-day working week trial has now been in place for 12 months for desk-based staff. Savings made by not overspending on the budget on agency staff have been large – money which is now in reserves to be spent on services for communities across the District.

In response to a couple of requests we have put all of the data we are currently submitting weekly to DLUHC on the website for the public to look at – if you have lots of free time and energy to do so. We had originally intended to publish this at the end of March when the trial completes along with a lot of information to help it make sense. The BBC reported a lot of positive things about the trial but did point out that money had been spent on agency staff in the Finance team and the Waste teams recently. The Finance team is automating a lot of its operations and will need fewer staff so when vacancies occur we are using temps rather than having to make permanent people redundant. When we changed the bin collection rounds (as every council does every few years) we used some additional lorries and crews so that no one went too long without a collection.

Information on the trial is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial>. The data submitted to DLUHC is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/best-value-notice-data-requests/>.

Green Business Impact Programme

The [Green Business Impact Programme](#) can help local SMEs create a practical plan to deliver on Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) targets, through free tailored advice from environmental experts from [PECT](#) and [Allia](#).

If you have any questions about the scheme, please contact the Business Support Team at OpenForBusiness@scambs.gov.uk.

Police online community meetings

Our local police team hold an on-line community meeting every quarter – anyone who'd like to attend is very welcome. You can hear about recent activity, share any concerns, and help shape future activity.

The next event is 7-8 pm Wednesday 28th February.

You can book and find out more at: <https://www.cambs.police.uk/police-forces/cambridgeshire-constabulary/areas/campaigns/nhp/neighbourhood-policing/South-Cambridgeshire/>.

Measles

Cases of measles are rising in some areas of the country. Make sure you and your family are protected by having both doses of the free MMR vaccine. Measles is more than just a rash – it is an infection which spreads very easily and can cause serious complications in some people. Find out more about measles, including symptoms and how you can get vaccinated at: <https://www.cpics.org.uk/measles>.

EWR preparing for the Development Consent Order (DCO)

EWR Co. has published an [article](#) about this year's consultation programme. They state:

During the first stage of the consultation, we will share our updated proposals, as well as updated information on design areas. We will also provide an overview of potential environmental impacts and mitigations. Building upon the work we've completed to date, our proposals will be presented in more detail than in previous rounds of non-statutory consultations and will again seek feedback from the public.

We will then analyse and consider all consultation responses to finalise a single proposal for the entire route, which will be presented in the second stage of the statutory consultation, before the submission of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

Before we launch the first stage of the statutory consultation, we'll develop a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). This document sets out how local communities will be consulted on the process and will provide an overview of the two-stage approach to the statutory consultation. As part of the requirements of the SoCC, we'll consult local authorities across the route on the draft SoCC to ensure that our plans meet the needs of the communities along the route by enabling as many people as possible to share their views with us during both stages of the statutory consultation.

In advance of the consultation this year, we will share another update which confirms the consultation dates, information about what we're asking for feedback on, as well as how you can get involved.