

## South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

### District Councillors' Monthly Report – December 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:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Atkins@scams.gov.uk">Cllr.Atkins@scams.gov.uk</a>	07968 264637
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Lisa Redrup:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Redrup@scams.gov.uk">Cllr.Redrup@scams.gov.uk</a>	07855 324580

#### 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 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.scams.gov.uk/foodbanks>

Energy saving advice and information on home improvement grants -  
<https://www.scams.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.

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/>

#### Video update on South Cambs Zero Carbon Communities programme

This [short film](#) highlights some of the projects to have benefited from our Zero Carbon Communities grants in recent years, including the Harston Community Food Hub. These grants have provided over £500,000 in funding locally since launching. The Council has so far funded 71 projects in this way. Designed to equip community groups to take climate action at a local level, grants have helped upgrade community buildings, educate people around their carbon footprint, and help nature recover in the district.

## **Christmas Market on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December in Cambourne**

SCDC will be hosting an indoor Christmas Market with 70 local independent market stallholders to bring festive cheer to South Cambridgeshire. There will also be mobile caterers outside offering street food and both hot and cold festive refreshments. The key details are:

- Time: 11am and 3pm on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December
- Place: Cambourne Village College, Sheepfold Lane, CB23 6FR
- Free entry

This is a follow-up to last year's Christmas market, which attracted around 1700 visitors.

If you are able to, please walk or cycle to the event rather than drive. A bicycle lock-up will be available at the college. If you do need to drive, please park in the Cambourne Village College car park or designated overflow parking. Parking will not be permitted along Sheepfold Lane or the approach to Cambourne Village College to prevent congestion.

## **Healthy You Virtual Festival**

Building on the success of 2021, 2022 and 2023 Healthy You Virtual Festival events, Healthy You are excited to announce plans for 2024, and we'd love to invite you to be a part of it!

The aim is to go bigger and better with a month-long programme from 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. The Virtual Festival will provide a myriad of FREE virtual opportunities to support Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents to get active and explore different ways to improve their health and wellbeing throughout January 2024.

The January programme will act as a 'kickstart' for healthier habits that will last into the new year. The month-long programme of classes, workshops, talks and events will focus on the three areas of physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellbeing.

To pre-register, use the weblink [Healthy You Virtual Festival 2024 - Living Sport](#).

## **HUG 2 (Home Upgrade Grant 2)**

Action on Energy, a local partnership including SCDC, has bid for and received HUG 2 funding to provide energy efficiency measures and low-carbon heating for low-income households. It's open to owner-occupiers and private renters living in homes with low energy efficiency and not connected to the gas grid. You can find out more and see the full eligibility criteria at <https://www.actiononenergycambs.org/funding/home-upgrade-grant-2/>.

## **Christmas Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

Cambridgeshire County Council are once again running a [Christmas Holiday Activities and Food Programme \(HAF\)](#) programme, funded by the Department for Education. Children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals can access a holiday scheme for up to 16 hours over the Christmas period. Participating schemes are offering enriching experiences, a daily meal and physical activity eligible children and young people. Recently arrived refugee families are also eligible to book as well as families struggling financially. Full details are on the County Council website.

## **Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service wins awards for its youth engagement service**

YES, the planning service's youth engagement service, won the prestigious 'Best Local Authority Award' at the 2023 TET Inspiring Future Generations Award. Team member Tom Davies also won this year's 'Individual Youth Engagement Practitioner of the Year Award'.

You can see more at:

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7137840225329795072/>

## **Corporate Peer Review of SCDC**

This took place in the first week of November and the review results stated that the council is in a strong financial position and is a well-managed organisation.

## **Best Value Notice and 4-day week trial at Council**

Councillors have agreed that the council will answer up to 80 questions totalling 186 individual requests from Government every week, as the 4-day week trial continues. This is the result of the minister at the time, Lee Rowley, issuing the council with a Best Value Notice.

Notices of this type have been issued to three other local government bodies this year – but for concerns such as unrealistic budget, significant governance weaknesses and major cultural problems. None of these apply to South Cambs which is in a strong financial position and is acknowledged to be well run and high performing.

A 3-month trial of a 4-day week for desk-based staff began in January this year as the council tried to address critical recruitment and retention issues facing local government. These issues are particularly acute in South Cambs due to the strength of the local economy and high cost of living. Following independent analysis which showed performance was generally maintained, with nine areas showing substantial improvement on the previous year, that trial was extended until the end of March 2024 to assess recruitment and retention benefits over a longer term.

The council has maintained its full opening hours, so they are at least the same as before the trial, and now stays open to the public longer on Wednesdays.

The Best Value Notice requests the council provides the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) with extensive data on a weekly basis for the next 6 months. This covers staffing, costs, service delivery, performance, and resident feedback.

At an Extraordinary Council meeting last month councillors heard that staff turnover and staff sickness was down, and recruitment had seen clear benefits with almost 100 new staff joining the council this year. The performance of services across the board during the trial was encouraging – including in the waste service, which has recently joined the trial and is seeing more than 99% of bins collected on time every week. Thanks to the improvement in recruitment, the amount expected to be spent on agency staff cover this year is hundreds of thousands of pounds lower than it would have otherwise been.

## **Cambridge 2040**

Cambridge 2040 is Michael Gove's vision for significant employment and housing growth in Greater Cambridge. There was not much in the Autumn statement about it other than some money for retrofitting water efficiency into existing houses and for enhanced planning services. It seems that there may be £3 million to set up a Cambridge office to work up the scheme. There was mention of a possible Development Corporation, but this has not been confirmed as the delivery model that will be used.

## South Cambs Hall

Like most local authorities South Cambs now encourages hybrid/home working which means that large offices are no longer needed in the way they were. Therefore, staff have been moved onto the first floor of the Cambourne offices and the ground floor is being converted into space for businesses and community groups. It is hoped that this will encourage new start-up businesses as well as help existing businesses through a programme of support and networking events. The new space will be open on 24<sup>th</sup> April.

## CPCA consulting on proposed financial plan and Mayoral Precept

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) are encouraging members of the public, business leaders and stakeholders to have their say on its planned activities and spending plans. This includes a proposed increase to the Mayoral Precept from £12 per year for a Band D property in 2023/24 to £36 per year in 2024/25.

If implemented, the additional money will be invested in improving bus services across the area, including introducing new routes and improving existing routes.

Find out more about the plans and access the consultation (closes 13.00 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024) at: <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/have-your-say-on-the-cambridgeshire-peterborough-combined-authoritys-planned-activities-and-spending-plans/>.

## 75 bus service review

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) Board have approved changes to the 75 service at their meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> November (Agenda item 18 at <https://cambridgeshirepeterboroughcagov.cmis.uk.com/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2200/Committee/63/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.*

My understanding is that changes are expected to be put in place 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. \(whippetbus.co.uk\)](https://www.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.

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, please visit: <https://transport.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/contact-us/>.

### **Parking enforcement changes across South Cambridgeshire**

New Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers in South Cambridgeshire will be given to Cambridgeshire County Council following a decision by Parliament. Benefits are expected to include increased compliance with parking restrictions which in turn would improve traffic flow, road safety and lead to a reduction in obstructive and dangerous parking. It will also support economic growth in the district.

Earlier this year an application was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) to enable Council Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to issue Penalty Charge Notices for the majority of on-street offences such as parking on double or single yellow lines. Previously only the Police could do this. Highways officers have worked closely with South Cambridgeshire District Council on the development of the scheme.

Following the decision by Government, the CPE scheme in South Cambridgeshire will officially come into effect on the 19th December. To give people notice and a chance to find a more suitable parking place, information has now begun to be placed on vehicles that are parked in some areas where parking is in the greatest demand, such as commuting and shopping areas.

A Warning Notice will be issued to people who continue to park where there are restrictions throughout January – this looks like a parking ticket but there is no fine attached. Penalty Charge Notices will be issued from 1 February which will mean a fine of between £50 and £70, depending on the severity of the offence.

Under CPE powers, CEOs cannot enforce all restrictions. Restrictions such as dangerous parking, obstruction of the footway and moving traffic offences will continue to be enforced by the Police.

The initial set-up costs to get CPE underway in South Cambridgeshire will be covered by the Greater Cambridge Partnership.

Visit [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cpe](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cpe) for more information.