

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Annual Report – April 2025

District Councillors

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

Committee positions

Over the past year Cllr Atkins has served as Chair of the Audit and Corporate Governance committee, Cllr Cahn has served on Planning committee and Climate and Environment Advisory committee, and I have served on Audit and Corporate Governance committee, Climate and Environment Advisory committee, Licensing committee, and Planning committee.

Administration

The Liberal Democrats remain the largest group on the District Council with a majority of seats, and therefore form the administration.

Budget

The District Council remains on a sound financial footing due to investment income and strong business rate collections. It remains in the lowest 25% of District Councils for council tax and continues to offer up to 100% relief from council tax for those residents in the most need.

Council priorities

Growing local businesses and economies

The Business Support & Development Team continues to support local businesses through the Visit South Cambs website, which promoted 903 local events from Apr–Dec 2024, and through their local market work. There are now 14 markets running regularly throughout the year as well as the council's annual Christmas market. In the last year, the team has also started to provide office space for start-ups and small businesses at South Cambridgeshire Hall in Cambourne and has allocated significant government grants to support local businesses and communities including £876,000 from the Rural England Prosperity Fund and £200,000 to help rejuvenate some of the district's high streets.

Truly affordable housing

The Council owns and maintains around 5,800 council homes and has been working to increase the number by building or acquiring more than are sold through right to buy. During 2024/2025 the number of council homes was increased by 110, which included 85 new build homes. The Council is also working with The Hill Group to deliver 256 new low-carbon homes in Cambourne, including 72 for affordable rent (built to Passivhaus principles) and 30 for shared ownership.

The council successfully bid for £8.2 million of government funds to insulate, improve energy efficiency, and upgrade heating systems in its council housing. This will help to retrofit council homes and tackle fuel poverty for residents, as well as delivering carbon savings and growing the retrofit sector. As part of Action on Energy Cambridgeshire, government funding was provided to upgrade just over 80 privately-owned off-gas properties in South Cambridgeshire in the last year, and £8.5 million further funding has just been awarded to the group to fund energy upgrades to lower income private households with an EPC between D and G.

Together with Cambridge City Council, the District Council has been working on the Joint Local Development Plan for the Greater Cambridge area which will set out the number and location of new homes across the district. There are still uncertainties (including water supply, transport strategy, government plans for growth of Cambridge via the Cambridge Delivery Group, and East West Rail), but a public consultation on the draft plan is expected in autumn/winter 2025.

Green to our core

The council has been collaborating with partners on a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and also a Local Area Energy Plan for Cambridgeshire to identify the infrastructure needed to support the transition to low carbon energy.

Efforts have continued to reduce the Council's emissions from waste collection – of 43 refuse collection vehicles, 4 are electric and 23 run on hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO). To allow the use of more electric vehicles, construction of a solar panel array at Waterbeach depot is anticipated to start later this year.

The Six Free Trees scheme was continued, with 149 trees ordered by 49 Parish Councils. In addition, the council has continued to identify council-owned land suitable for biodiversity enhancements (this year 11 trees were planted across two sites and three sites were identified as suitable for wildflower areas). In terms of new development, the council has implemented the government's Biodiversity Net Gain scheme where, for certain developments, the developer must ensure that habitat loss is made up to provide a 10% gain overall. This involved developing processes, hiring ecologists, and support for the setup of off-site habitat sites.

The Council ran several events including its second Local Climate Action Conference, its first Sustainable Food Summit, and a workshop at Comberton Village College where students considered solutions for local climate and environment action. It also awarded £125,000 of Zero Carbon Communities funding to 11 projects to improve energy efficiency of community buildings or engage people about climate change and allocated £360,000 of Net Zero Villages funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for climate-friendly projects.

A modern and caring council

In 2024/25 the Council invested in software that allowed it to target cost-of-living support to reach the most vulnerable and contact residents eligible for pension credit, supported 17 community hubs (including one at Grantchester), sent out over 50 electric blankets, and supported a Mobile Food hub that visits 6 villages and received around 2,500 visits between June 23 and Dec 24. It has also provided funding to Mobile Warden Schemes along with support for these schemes to become self-sufficient.

The Council is undergoing significant transformation work to improve services for residents and use resources efficiently and effectively. This includes a new website, launched in March 2025, which allows residents to enter their postcode to see bin collection dates, nearby planning applications and local events.

The council ran a public consultation on the quality of its services during the four-day-week trial and the responses have been sent for independent analysis. Once completed, full Council will decide whether to continue this way of working. As a brief reminder, the four-day week trial was introduced to see if services could be improved by making the council a more attractive place to work, particularly in hard-to-fill roles in planning and waste collection.

Local Government Review

Cambridgeshire will be subject to a reorganisation of local government over the coming years to replace the current District/County council(s) with some number of Unitary councils. There are grounds to think this could bring both benefits to residents (such as a more joined up and efficient service) and significant risks (larger councils may lose connection to local places, restructuring is likely to be costly and distracting, statutory duties could crowd out existing good work at district level). The leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council signed a joint letter to the government minister promising to collaborate and progress proposals 'at pace' after the May elections.