

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – July 2025

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
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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: 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 handyperson service and; support if you are in distress.

Community Hubs

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

Local Community Hubs include:

- Grantchester Communal Hall, Tabrum Close, Grantchester, Cambridge, CB3 9NW
Opens: Friday, 10am – 12pm
- Toft Community Hub – Toft Methodist Chapel, High Street, Toft, Cambridge, CB23 2RL
Opens: Monday, 10am – 12pm.

Find out more at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/community-hubs>

Expiry of postal votes

Following a change to the law as part of the Elections Act, postal votes no longer apply indefinitely. They now expire after a period of three years. Due to the timing of the reapplication legislation, around 15,000 South Cambridgeshire postal votes are due to expire at the end of January 2026.

The South Cambs Elections Team has started the process of contacting those residents whose postal vote will be expiring. They will explain to those voters that to keep their postal vote in place they will need to make a fresh application. They may contact affected electors via email, post or text message (or via a combination of means) to raise awareness of the changes and to ensure they have sufficient time to make a new application if they want to before next year's elections.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A public consultation on the draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy is expected to start on the 18th July and close on the 11th September 2025. This is a new statutory plan required under the Environment Act 2021. It agrees priorities for nature recovery and proposes actions in the locations where it would make a particular contribution to achieving those priorities. The aim is to create a bigger, better, and more joined up network for wildlife by improving existing protected areas, increasing the size of wildlife sites, enhancing connections by creating wildlife corridors or stepping stones, creating new sites, and creating buffers around wildlife sites.

Ahead of the consultation, draft documents are available as Agenda item 7 at:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ielistdocuments.aspx?CId=1095&MId=10319&Ver=4>

The map showing existing important habitats and areas that could potentially become important habitats is at:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/a1963a7dc51c4c259a8d19832b63f461>.

An online story map that explains how the map works is available at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b0cf95685dc14069920aa9f9e145e9a5>.

Around Haslingfield, the map highlights the County Wildlife site at the quarry and also identifies many areas that could potentially become areas of particular importance for biodiversity. You can use the layers of the map to see which actions are suggested for the different areas (includes woodland, grassland, rivers and urban landscapes (areas within the village)).

The inclusion of an area of land in the strategy only identifies its potential, it is not saying that it must be managed for nature. If landowners are interested in improving their land for nature and it is included in the plan, then it would likely help with eligibility for government schemes for farmers such as Sustainable Farming Incentives, Countryside Stewardship options and Landscape Recovery projects, or for using the land as a habitat bank to provide biodiversity net gain credits for developers to offset harm when they are unable to do that on the development site.

District Council launches new grant to get South Cambridgeshire active

New funding will support adults across South Cambridgeshire to lead more active and healthier lifestyles. The Let's Get South Cambridgeshire Active Grant aims to help kickstart new initiatives and increase opportunities for sports and physical activity, particularly within rural communities.

Up to £500 can be applied for to support the creation or expansion of physical activity sessions, sports clubs, or fitness classes. The funding can be used towards venue hire, staff training or qualifications, marketing, and equipment purchases.

Eligible applicants for this grant include small fitness businesses or entrepreneurs that can deliver physical activity sessions, or health and wellbeing sessions. Primary Care Networks, community and voluntary groups can also apply.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and the fund will remain open until all monies are allocated, but it is encouraged to get applications in promptly.

For more information on funding criteria and how to apply, visit:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/lets-get-south-cambridgeshire-active-grant>

or contact Ben Truett, Physical Activity Locality Co-ordinator Ben.Truett@scambs.gov.uk

Mental Health support for South Cambridgeshire Council tenants

Mental health help is on offer for South Cambridgeshire Council tenants thanks to a new partnership between the District Council and the Cambridge-based charity [Cogwheel Counselling](#). The Living Stronger, Coping Better initiative offers up to 10 free counselling sessions per individual, either in person or online, aiming to provide timely and professional support where it's most needed.

Support is available for Council house tenants experiencing mental health challenges who are ready to engage with services, many of whom will be identified by the Council's mental health support officer. The project aims to offer a first appointment within four to six weeks of contact, subject to availability. Residents interested in accessing the service should speak with their Housing Officer, who can initiate a referral with the individual's consent.

The project has been given almost £12,000 of funding overall through the [Assura Community Fund](#) and is designed to address the growing need for accessible mental health services in the region.

£90,000 grant funding for business and community projects to revitalise South Cambridgeshire high streets

This grant is aimed at projects that revitalise local shopping areas, increase footfall, encourage residents to shop locally and stimulate economic growth. There is a total of £90,000 in the funding pot. Grants of between £5,000 and £20,000 per project will be available to local businesses, charities, community groups and Parish Councils.

High street improvements implemented thanks to last year's grant include a war memorial garden in Cambourne, disabled access to a Café in Over, upgrading to doubled glazed windows at a hairdressing shop in Histon, improvements to the village entrance and communal areas in Longstanton and improving the front of a community pub in Great Chishill.

The grant money comes from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) acting as lead authority delivering the fund. South Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for grant scheme delivery and allocation. For full grant criteria and application for the grants please visit the South Cambridgeshire District Council [webpage](#).

Local Government Reorganisation

Three options for new unitary councils announced

Council leaders have announced three preferred options for creating new unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in response to a national government requirement to replace the current district, county and city councils with unitary councils.

From April 2028, rather than dealing with separate county, city, and district authorities, residents will access all services—from road maintenance and bin collections to education, planning, social housing, social care, and support with benefits—through a unitary council.

Parish and town councils will not be affected and will continue to operate as they do now, serving your local communities.

In a joint statement, the leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. have said: "As Council leaders we are working collaboratively in the best interest of residents and businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Government's reorganisation agenda has raised some challenging issues for us all which we have been working through collectively over the last few months. We still have outstanding questions and issues which have yet to be resolved.

"However, we agree that there are currently three options that appear to be the most financially viable based on the Government's criteria. These options are based on existing authority boundaries and are being further developed to be submitted to Government by late November. The three options each contain two new unitary councils that would in future cover the entire Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area and replace all existing local authorities:

- **Proposal A - A North-West/South-East Option**

Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils - along with County Council functions.

Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils - along with County Council functions.

- **Proposal B - A North/South Option**

Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils - along with County Council functions.

Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District - along with County Council functions.

- **Proposal C - An East/West Option**

Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils - along with County Council functions.

Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils - along with County Council functions.

"We recognise each option has different strengths and different implications for services, our local communities, and businesses. We are taking an evidence-based approach, inevitably the different needs and local identities of our areas will have a significant impact on the preference of our own councils, and we must respect that. We encourage residents, our partner agencies and businesses to feed into this process by sharing what matters most to them through an engagement exercise being launched next week.

"We also want to take this opportunity to reassure residents that services will not be affected, and to praise the collective local government workforce across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for their continued efforts on behalf of our communities during this period of change. We appreciate that reorganisation may create some uncertainty for them which we will work with Government to do our best to mitigate."

Have your say on plans for the future of local councils

Communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are being given an opportunity to have their say on a once in a generation opportunity to shape the future of local government.

An [engagement survey](#) was launched on Thursday 19th June and focus groups are being run in June and July so people can help inform the biggest shake-up of local government since the 1970s.

Council leaders want to hear the views of residents, businesses and local stakeholders like Town and Parish councils and community groups, to inform the business cases being developed for each of these proposals. Those business cases will then be submitted to the government in November. The final decisions on which new local government structures are put into place in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will ultimately be made by national government.

The engagement focuses on the connections that people feel they have to different areas; where they work, socialise or get healthcare, for example. It also covers what priorities they think new unitary authorities should have and what is important to them when it comes to dealing with local government.

The survey closes at the end of Sunday 20th July. Hard copies will be available at council offices and in all libraries.

Planning

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning celebrates win for biodiversity innovation

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) has been awarded the 'Planning for the Natural Environment Award' at the national Planning Awards 2025. The award celebrates its approach to reversing biodiversity loss caused through development.

In 2022, GCSP's Natural Environment Team recognised the imminent need to provide reliable solutions for developers to offset environmental damage through development. They updated the guidance in their Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in June 2022, which included the emerging Environment Act legislation changes requiring any new developments to improve nature in the area by at least 10%. The changes ensured new projects actively benefitted local wildlife and green spaces through the planning system. In 2023/24, GCSP took this further by enabling the creation of a network of new Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) habitat banks across the Greater Cambridge area. They worked in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, The Wildlife Trust, Cambridge Past, Present and Future, and others, to identify sites where habitats could be created or enhanced. This leap of faith placed Greater Cambridge ahead of the curve nationally and positioned them as early adopters of BNG offsite initiatives.

Designated areas of land allow developers to offset the environmental impact of their projects in a way that benefits nature long-term. Instead of replacing lost biodiversity directly on the development site, which is often not possible, developers instead pay for the creation and maintenance of habitat elsewhere in the area. Each habitat bank must legally be monitored and managed over the next 30 years.

Greater Cambridge Planning Service honoured for Excellence in Regional Planning

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) Service has been crowned Planning Authority of the Year – East of England at the prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence. This recognition celebrates GCSP's outstanding commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in planning.

Formed in 2018 as a partnership between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, the team serve as the Local Planning Authority for the Greater Cambridge area. The service has 160 colleagues, of which 32 are Chartered RTPI members, and 21 are working towards Chartered membership. The service processes over 7,000 planning applications annually and has achieved an accreditation for its commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

Among the highlights of GCSP's award-winning work:

- Youth Engagement Service (YES): A nationally recognised programme giving young people a voice in planning and design, recently winning the Thornton Education Trust's Social Value Award.
- Biodiversity Net Gain Leadership: GCSP proactively secured over 200 hectares of habitat for biodiversity offsetting, ahead of national policy requirements. This project recently won the 'Planning for the Natural Environment Award' at the Planning Awards 2025.
- Inclusive Planning: Through initiatives like the Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code, GCSP is tackling inequality and improving access to green spaces in some of the region's most deprived areas.
- Apprenticeship and Talent Development: A structured programme supporting future planners through hands-on experience and academic study, ensuring a strong pipeline of planning professionals.

For more information about the awards, visit: [RTPI | East of England Awards for Planning Excellence](#).

Future Homes Standard announced

On 6th June the government announced the [publication of the Future Homes Standard this autumn and have confirmed that solar panels will be included](#), leading to installation on the vast majority of new build homes. Under proposed changes, new homes will also have low-carbon heating, such as heat pumps. To deliver these aims, the proposed Future Homes Standard would see building regulations amended to explicitly promote solar, subject to practical limits with flexibility in place for new homes surrounded by trees or with lots of shade overhead.