

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – August 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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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>

Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF)

£350,376 is available for businesses and community projects in South Cambridgeshire. Applicants can apply for between £10,000 and £50,000 aimed at supporting rural areas by boosting the local economy. Funds can also support a range of community initiatives such as rural travel, improvements to local rural green spaces, rural circular economy projects, volunteering opportunities, digital projects or schemes that create a sense of local pride. The funds are provided by government and administered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Some examples of the types of projects funded last year:

- Develop Over skatepark
- New kitchen at Harston village hall
- Impington sports centre tennis and netball courts refurbishment
- Website for Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum

Applications can be submitted until Sunday 24 August. For more information visit the [REPF webpage](#) or email sharedprosperityfund@scambs.gov.uk

Other grants currently offered by SCDC include the [Allotment Improvement Grant](#), the [Community Growing Grant](#) and the [Community Chest Biodiversity Grant](#).

Free trees scheme survey

SCDC is seeking feedback on the free trees scheme, in particular around any challenges experienced and any further support that might be helpful.

Please provide any feedback using this [link](#) by Sunday 31st August.

The Local Wildlife Trust is the new council charity of the year

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has been chosen as charity of the year by the new Chair of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

From protecting precious pollinators to restoring wildflower meadows and safeguarding endangered species, the partnership will shine a spotlight on the vital work being done to protect local wildlife and wild spaces.

As the newly appointed Chair, Cllr Peter Sandford selected the [Wildlife Trust BCN](#) in recognition of its vital work protecting local wildlife and restoring natural habitats across the region. Cllr Sandford said: "Nature is at the heart of our communities, and the work of Wildlife Trust BCN is more important than ever. From preserving ancient woodlands to inspiring young people through education, their efforts make a real difference to both people and the planet. I'm honoured to support them."

Wildlife Trust BCN manages over 100 nature reserves and leads numerous conservation and community engagement projects. The Chair's support aims to help raise awareness and funds for the Trust's ongoing mission to create a wilder future for everyone.

Planning

Using technology to summarise public consultation responses

A groundbreaking new AI tool, PlanAI, developed by researchers at the University of Liverpool, has summarised thousands of pages of public consultation responses in just minutes, showing the potential to support planning officers in future public consultations.

Funded by the Government's PropTech Innovation Fund, PlanAI was developed in collaboration with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning – the shared planning service for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils.

The tool was tested on three live planning consultations, guidance documents that the Councils were consulting on relating to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Planning Obligations, and Health Impact Assessments.

The trial results were striking: PlanAI generated detailed summaries of every individual submission and a compendium report for all three consultations in just 16 minutes. By contrast, human planners took over 60 hours to log and summarise the 320 public submissions, including over 18 hours creating summaries – longer would have been required if human planners had been tasked with producing an overview analysis of the consultation exercise as Plan AI does. In terms of the quality of the summaries, the project team found that there were no noticeable differences between the AI summaries when compared to the human generated ones. The AI-generated reports included descriptive statistics and analytical insights, offering a clear, data-driven overview of the submissions' content and themes.

The AI tool was developed by Professors Alex Lord, Alex Singleton and Dr Mark Green from the University of Liverpool's Department of Geography & Planning working in partnership with the Planning Policy and Strategy team at Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. This close collaboration was an important part of the development of the AI tool in making sure that the reports that it generates were consistent with how the Councils currently report back to local communities and elected members.

Professor Alexander Lord, Lever Chair at the University of Liverpool, explained: “The PlanAI tool harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to do what it does best – to read large volumes of text, summarise them, and identify patterns across submissions. While the GCSP planners will still read each submission when responding to them and making decisions, the tool can free up planners’ time to focus on the technical aspects of plan making.”

Public consultation is a legal requirement in planning, and public participation is critical—especially as planning issues often provoke strong local interest. However, local authorities often face an overwhelming volume of feedback, sometimes ranging from short notes to submissions of over 100 pages long.

Professor Lord added: “By streamlining the analysis process, PlanAI could allow planning departments to engage the public more frequently and thoroughly on a wider range of issues. This opens the door to more inclusive and democratic planning processes, without compromising the quality or depth of engagement.”

Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning for South Cambridgeshire District Council, said: “Our Shared Planning service is one of the first local authorities in the UK to commission its own bespoke AI tool, as we work to provide more reliable and meaningful insights into what our local communities think about proposed developments and planning policies. The new tool is already saving planners a substantial amount of time, freeing them up from administrative tasks to focus their time where their expertise is in high demand.”

Healthy living boosted for hundreds of people of all ages

Hundreds of residents of all ages have been supported to live healthier lives thanks to community programmes and initiatives delivered and managed by South Cambridgeshire District Council. From cookery classes to athletics camps, wellbeing walks and cardiac rehab, the Council is committed to inspiring healthier lifestyles for all.

Cllr Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities for the District Council, said: “It’s important to help make South Cambridgeshire a healthier, happier place for everyone. We’re proud of the partnerships, volunteers, and residents who made this possible through a wide range of health and wellbeing programmes. These initiatives support physical and mental health, but also strengthen community connections, reduce isolation, and empower individuals to lead more active, fulfilling lives.”

Some of the successful health and wellbeing activities from 2024 – 2025 include:

- Cooking up confidence in the kitchen with three family cooking programmes which brought together 35 residents to learn healthy eating habits and practical cooking skills. Children tried new foods, families cooked together, and confidence soared. One resident said: “Many children tried different types of food for the first time, and because they cooked it, they ate it and enjoyed it!”
- Strength and balance for seniors thanks to funding from Care Together. Chair-based exercise sessions were introduced in six sheltered housing schemes, benefiting 59 older adults. One participant said: “I have arthritis pain, but after six weeks, the pain eased, and I feel better for it.”
- Health and activity advice talks reached over 175 people across 19 venues, including schools, sheltered housing and libraries. The activity talks included helping young people understand the importance of activity in changing focus, having a positive mindset and controlling stress and emotions during two court experience days on the dangers of knife crime.
- Over 2,100 students took part in Healthy You Schools Week, with fun challenges and discussions on food and fitness.
- Fit ‘n’ Healthy sessions helped 151 Year 5 and 6 pupils understand the link between nutrition and activity.

- The Council's physical activity coordinator supported the annual colour run day and spoke to children about healthy eating, activity. A teacher said: "The colour run, and activity village were a hit – children learned, laughed, and got moving!"
- Athletics and netball holiday sport camps welcomed over 775 children aged 7-14, supported by 58 volunteers.
- Inclusive events ensured children with disabilities could compete and thrive in outdoor and indoor athletics. These events saw a total of 194 young people get involved.
- Two new walking cricket sessions were launched in Melbourn and Cambourne, adding to eight regular walking sports sessions across the district, including football, rugby, and netball.
- Nine regular wellbeing walks now take place across the district, with three new routes added this year and 37 new walkers joined, enjoying safe, social, and supportive strolls.
- Grants of £8,300 supported activities for people with conditions like Parkinson's, cancer, and anxiety. One participant with Parkinson's said: "My balance is improved as is my tremor and arm strength. The classes lift my mood and make me feel positive. My consultant said my condition is stable – I believe the classes made the difference."
- Exercise4Fun sessions at local leisure centres across the district saw 91 people join, with 14 achieving significant weight loss. One participant shared: "After a near-fatal accident, I gained weight and lost confidence. Now, I've lost over 5 stone and feel healthier and happier than ever."
- A total of 257 patients were referred to the Active & Healthy 4 Life exercise scheme with 102 completing the four-month programme and making exercise part of their daily lifestyle.
- A new cardiac rehab class in Cambourne supported 18 patients on their recovery journey.

Find out more about the [Exercise Referral](#) scheme, the [Cardiac Phase 4 rehabilitation](#) referral scheme, holiday [sports camps](#) for young people or email AandH4L@scams.gov.uk

Tiger bus route events and information

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is holding a series of local drop-in events across the region to help residents learn more about the new Tiger Bus routes launched earlier this year. The sessions are an opportunity for people to speak with the team about the new routes, ask questions and share feedback, and pick up a leaflet or find help planning a journey.

The seven new Tiger bus routes are:

- Tiger 1 – run by Whippet: [Huntingdon to Cambridge](#)
- Tiger 2 – run by Stagecoach: [Newmarket Road P&R to Madingley Road P&R](#)
- Tiger 3 – run by Stagecoach: [Fulbourn to Grantchester](#)
- Tiger 4 – run by Stagecoach: [Newmarket to Addenbrookes](#)
- Tiger 5 – run by A2B: [Soham to Cambridge](#)
- Tiger 7 – run by Stagecoach East Midlands: [Wisbech to Chatteris](#)
- Tiger 12 – run by A2B: [Longstanton to Sutton](#)

Upcoming Events:

- Addenbrooke's Hospital Outpatients – Tuesday 12th August, 11:00–14:00
- Drummer Street Bus Station, Cambridge – Friday 15th August, 12:00-15:00
- Newmarket Road Park and Ride – Monday 18th August, 11:30–14:30
- Huntingdon Bus Station – Wednesday 20th August, 13:00–16:00

For more information, including new events when added, please visit: <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/tiger-bus-routes/>.

Mental Health – Closing the Gaps Summit – 8th October 2025

I've been asked to share an invitation to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Mental Health summit.

This important event aims to bring together people with lived experience, community voices, and service providers to explore ways to improve mental health services across our region.

The summit will feature keynote speeches from:

- Louis Smith MBE, Retired Olympic Gymnast
- Sarah Hughes, CEO of Mind
- Steve Grange, CEO of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT).

Morning breakout workshops will focus on:

- Supporting children and young people with Neurodivergence
- Looking after your own mental health
- Information and advice to support people with access to benefits and access into employment
- Support for carers.

In the afternoon, there will be a Question Time-style panel featuring:

- Dr Helen Gilbert, The King's Fund
- Matt Gladstone, CEO, Peterborough City Council
- Jan Thomas, CEO, NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB
- Jonathan Wells, Carer and Advocate

The event is on Wednesday 8th October 2025, at the Delta Marriott Hotel, Kingfisher Way, Huntingdon, PE29 6FL. Please use this link to sign up:

<https://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/form/sign-up-to-join-our-annualsummi>