

# South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

## District Councillors' Monthly Report – December 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:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk</a>	07968 264637
Ariel Cahn:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk</a>	07455 128924
Lisa Redrup:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk</a>	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.

### *Tackling period poverty with environmentally friendly menstrual products*

South Cambridgeshire District Council is once again providing free environmentally friendly menstrual products for hundreds more residents to help tackle period poverty. Councillors agreed to champion the cause, to ensure dignity for all. A funding pot of almost £10,000 has been agreed for the project, which will offer South Cambridgeshire residents a choice of one of three period product packs - either washable pads, period pants or reusable period cups.

Hey Girls, a UK-wide social enterprise, will be distributing the packs, and [residents can now apply online](#). The scheme will run on a 'first come, first served' basis.

### **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>

### **Christmas market – Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December at Cambourne Village College**

Save the date for the annual SCDC indoor Christmas market in Cambourne. They'll be around 100 local businesses stalls offering a fantastic variety of gifts, crafts, festive treats, and hot food - there's something for everyone!

### **'How are we doing?' survey launched**

SCDC has launched a new survey at [www.scambs.gov.uk/leave-feedback](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/leave-feedback) to give residents, businesses and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the Council's services – both positive and negative – to ensure that we are delivering the best services possible. Feedback will be reported to the Leadership Team and the appropriate teams. Official complaints or service requests should still go through the usual channels.

## Planning

### **Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultation – 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 2026**

SCDC and Cambridge City Council have been working together on a combined Greater Cambridge Local Plan. This sets out where new homes and workplaces could be built to meet the area's growing economic and housing needs, alongside the utilities, services, green spaces and community facilities to support them. Once adopted, it will become the official development plan for the area – guiding decisions on planning applications.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2025 you can find out about the proposals and have your say at: <http://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan>.

A good place to start is with the [story map](#) which sets the context for the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan, shows the proposed areas for development, and explains the key themes of the plan (climate change, biodiversity and green spaces, great places, wellbeing and social inclusion, homes, jobs, and infrastructure). For example, the proposals aim to limit carbon emissions associated with new development by siting the majority of development in Cambridge or surrounding new towns where there are more facilities and public transport to reduce car dependence, and by requiring the highest achievable standards for energy and water use.

Another useful link is to the [draft policies map](#) which shows areas affected by the proposed policies.

The councils are holding in-person and online events where residents can find out more and speak to planners. You can see a full list [here](#), which includes

- 11 am-3 pm Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December – attending South Cambridgeshire Christmas market (Cambourne Village College)
- 6 pm to 7:30 pm, Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December – online webinar on the development strategy and site allocations. Please register [here](#).
- 6 pm to 7:30 pm, Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December – online webinar on the key themes of the draft plan. Please register [here](#).
- 11 am to 2 pm Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December – drop-in session at Clay Farm Community Centre (Trumpington)
- 10 am to 12:30 pm, Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December – attending Hauxton Market (Hauxton Centre)
- 10 am to 12:30 pm, Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December – attending Haslingfield Village Market (Haslingfield Village Hall)
- 6 pm to 7 pm, Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> January – online webinar talking about the plan. Please register [here](#).

Paper copies of the draft plan are available to view at the council offices and Cambridge Central Library.

If you have difficulty commenting online, please either call 01954 713694 or email [localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org](mailto:localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org) for help commenting in other ways.

### **New Planning website**

The new Planning website is designed to give users a cleaner, more streamlined user journey, as content that was split across three sites is moved into one. You can enter your postcode to instantly view planning information relevant to your area, including conservation areas, live planning applications, tree preservation orders, listed buildings and flood zones.

You can view the website at: <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/>. It officially launches on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December, but before then you can choose to explore the new site and provide any feedback you may have.

### **Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service named national Planning Authority of the Year**

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) awarded Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Planning Authority of the Year at their recent Awards for Planning Excellence.

[This nationwide recognition](#) celebrates the service's outstanding commitment to delivering high-quality planning for local communities, supporting sustainable growth, and shaping places where people can thrive.

The award follows a year of significant achievements for Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) – which is a partnership between Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils. It comes after GCSP was awarded Planning Authority of the Year - East of England at the local RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence earlier this year.

The national RTPI award follows a compelling nomination that showcased the service's transformative work across Greater Cambridge, including its approaches to biodiversity, youth engagement, and digital innovation. Among other councils nominated were the City of Edinburgh Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

### **Weekly food waste collections – phased roll out in 2026**

Councils are required under national legislation to begin separate food waste collections, with the aim of boosting recycling rates and reducing the amount of food sent to landfill and consequent methane emissions. The service will be rolled out in five stages throughout 2026.

Information will be available at [www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste](http://www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste) from Monday 8th December and the bin calendar page will allow you to see your start date for food waste collections. Everyone will also be contacted directly with an introductory pack 6 weeks before their start date and will receive a small indoor caddy with bin liners and an outside bin.

### **Council campaign secures free school meals for 81 extra children in South Cambridgeshire**

More than 80 extra children in South Cambridgeshire are now receiving free school meals, thanks to a pioneering initiative between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County council. The campaign combined an innovative IT system called the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT), designed to identify residents who may be eligible for benefits, and a data sharing agreement between the two councils to identify and contact families eligible for support but not currently claiming it.

The additional free school meals are expected to be worth more than £314,000 to the 66 families over the lifetime of their claims – if they claim from now until their children reach the end of year 11. For each of the 81 extra children now claiming free school meals, South Cambridgeshire schools will also receive extra funding called the pupil premium, aimed at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding schools will receive is worth £116,555 in its first year alone and is expected to be worth more than £1 million (£1,020,560) should families claim from now until each child reaches year 11.

One young parent in Cambourne, now receiving free school meals after being contacted as part of the joint campaign, said: "It really will make all the difference. I've been going without things to try and pay for their meals. I've gone without things like clothing and haircuts - basic things most people don't think twice about - because there just wasn't enough money that month. It's not just the school meals, although these are absolutely massive - it helps with everything. I had to tell my son that he couldn't do Geography because I couldn't afford the school trip that went with it. My kids have always come first, and I'm so grateful that they'll be able to eat well without me having to make those sacrifices."

Since adopting the LIFT system 12 months ago, South Cambridgeshire District Council has helped secure nearly 1,000 additional claims for residents for a range of benefits they were previously unaware of. These claims are worth over £500,000 to residents in their first year alone, with a lifetime value of nearly £4 million based on average claim lengths. In addition to the families now claiming free school meals, this includes:

- 113 households now receiving [Pension Credit](#)
- 65 households now receiving [Healthy Start](#)
- 480 households receiving a payment from the Household Support Fund
- 69 households now on a reduced water tariff.

## **Laptops and digital skills training support young people and older residents in South Cambridgeshire**

A new project is bridging the digital divide by providing laptops to disadvantaged young people and digital skills workshops for older residents in South Cambridgeshire.

Cambridge Online, a local charity dedicated to reducing digital inequality, will deliver laptops to young people and run training sessions throughout the remainder of the school year, helping them make the best use of the devices. The project aims to reach up to 25 students across different schools, with Cottenham Village College already signed up to the scheme, and Swavesey Village College and Northstowe Secondary College expressing interest.

For the older residents' part of the project, the charity will visit sheltered housing schemes across the district to deliver training sessions helping residents to use their devices to access and navigate the internet safely.

The project is being delivered thanks to the District Council partnering with Cambridge Online and agreeing funding in a meeting of the District Council's Cabinet in November 2024 as part of Cost-of-Living support. Additional funding came from an underspend in the previous years' budget. £21,000 was allocated to ensure young people have access to the technology they need to thrive in education and beyond and a further £5,000 was dedicated to supporting older residents in sheltered housing, helping them to get online and build essential digital skills. The initiative is part of a commitment to ensure no one is left behind in the digital revolution, giving everyone the opportunity to stay connected.

## **Local Government Reorganisation**

Four business cases for different potential unitary councils (to replace the current two-tier system of for us, South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridgeshire County Council) have been submitted to the government for their consideration. Councillors at SCDC voted to submit option B, which proposed 2 unitaries, one made up of the areas covered by SCDC and Cambridge City Council, and another made up of the areas covered by East Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, Fenland District Council and the Peterborough unitary. You can read a summary of the reasons why this option was supported at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/news/three-councils-back-case-for-two-new-unitaries-greater-cambridge-with-north-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough> or you can look at the report and business cases at <https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=410&MId=10374&Ver=4>.

The other three proposals put forward to government were:

- Option A – Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Fenland; Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire
- Option D – Greater Peterborough and West Huntingdonshire; Fenland, East Huntingdonshire and East Cambridgeshire; Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire
- Option E – Huntingdonshire; Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire; Peterborough, Fenland, East Cambridgeshire

## **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority – budget consultation**

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is currently consulting on its draft budget for 2026 and 2027 at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/budget-and-mtfc-consultation/>. The consultation closes on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026. The proposal is to keep the mayoral precept (part of council tax bills that is used to support bus services) the same as the previous year.

The report on the budget is available at <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Draft-2026-27-Business-Plan-and-budget-and-Medium-Term-Financial-Plan-2026-2030.pdf>.

The CPCA is the transport authority, so responsible for bus services and had under the previous mayor consulted on and agreed to proceed with bus franchising. There are additional costs associated with setting up bus franchising, but this comes with the benefits of allowing the CPCA to set the routes, the frequency, fares and overall standards. In the [bus franchising consultation document](#), the financing section showed an increase in the mayoral precept to help fund the improvements to the bus services. However, the proposed budget does not include an increase in the mayoral precept (it is recommended to remain at £36 for a Band D property; 2.78) and the report also states that the mayor has set up an independent review of bus franchising and proposed delaying the implementation of bus franchising by a year (2.36).

The current budget does not cover the full cost of maintaining the Tiger Pass, which reduces the cost for young people to travel by bus, and work is being undertaken to look at options to enable continuing support for the pass (2.44).

Budget has been proposed to deliver free car parking in parts of the region to support high-street economies and town centres (2.21, 2.78).

## **Bus service 15 (between Haslingfield and Royston)**

The board of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has agreed to stop subsidising two bus services, which includes the 15 service which currently runs on Wednesdays between Haslingfield and Royston. This is because the passenger numbers are low and so for 2024-2025 it has cost £180.32 per passenger. It is planned for the loss of the 15-bus service to be mitigated through the expansion of the Tiger on Demand service. The other affected bus service is the 8A between March and Milton Park and Ride.

## **Government proposals to increase the number of planning permissions granted**

The government has announced that housebuilding near well-connected train stations will receive a default “yes” in future if they meet certain rules. Housebuilders will be encouraged to build more homes near these transport links and there will be minimum housing density standards for these sites.

Councils in England will also be required to inform the government when they intend to reject new housing developments of 150 homes or more. The Housing Secretary would then be able to have the final say on whether they should go ahead.

These changes will be introduced with proposals to streamline the statutory consultee process.

## **Report warns of widespread drought in 2026 without a wet winter**

The Environment Agency has published its [Drought Prospects Report](#) examining the weather needed through the winter to ensure the country’s current low water levels recover by spring 2026. Despite recent rainfall, the drought situation across the country is still precarious following a record dry spring and a continued run of heatwaves and dry weather

throughout the summer. The new report analyses three different rainfall scenarios over winter and what each one would mean for water security across England's regions ahead of next year's traditionally drier months. Without average rainfall, most of England will experience a drought with widespread impacts felt by consumers, farmers, businesses, and nature. The Environment Agency is urging the public to continue to play their part and use water wisely through winter, in anticipation of another drought year.

Press release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/report-warns-of-widespread-drought-in-2026-without-a-wet-winter>