

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – September 2026

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.

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Cost-of-living information

Visit <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support/> for: advice and support with money; help with food costs; money and debt advice; help with energy and water bills; help with phone bill costs; employment support through Work Well; and information on foodbanks.

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.

Find out more at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-and-people/community-hubs>

Help for people facing a financial crisis

The Crisis & Resilience Fund supports people facing unexpected financial difficulties, such as loss of job or benefit or if an appliance (cooker, fridge freezer) has broken down and they have no means to pay for another one. It is being temporarily managed by Citizens Advice Cambridge & District until a new scheme is introduced in October 2026.

More information and an online form are available at:
<https://www.cambridgecab.org.uk/about-us/our-projects/>.

Community and health

Free to Feed breastfeeding campaign celebrates four years and more than 170 venues

South Cambridgeshire District Council, working alongside NHS Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Infant Feeding Team and local partners, is celebrating the ongoing success of the #FreeToFeed campaign, which helps create welcoming spaces for families. Since launching in 2022, the campaign has encouraged 174 businesses, community venues and public organisations to sign the [FreeToFeed](#) pledge demonstrating their support for families who breastfeed and / or express milk while out and about.

The initiative aims to help families feel confident feeding their babies whenever and wherever they need to, while increasing understanding among businesses, staff and the wider public. Every venue signed up to the campaign agrees to adopt a breastfeeding welcome policy and ensure staff understand how to support families in a positive and inclusive way. Local businesses that have signed the pledge often report positive experiences, helping them demonstrate their commitment to being family-friendly while welcoming a broader customer base.

SCDC is encouraging any businesses, cafés, community venues, leisure facilities or organisations that have not yet joined the campaign to sign the pledge and become officially FreeToFeed friendly. Find out more on our [website](#).

Grant to help people with long-term health conditions stay active

Community groups, voluntary organisations, specialist providers and small fitness businesses across South Cambridgeshire are being encouraged to apply for a grant aimed at helping adults with long-term health conditions remain physically active.

The [Long-Term Health Condition Grant](#), from the District Council, offers funding of up to £2,000 per applicant to support the development and delivery of activities and programmes designed specifically for people living with long-term health conditions. Applications are now open and will close at 5pm on Friday 25 September 2026. Successful applicants will be notified on 9 November 2026.

The funding can be used for a range of purposes, including venue hire, equipment purchase, training courses and accessibility requirements. Projects can be delivered within a single village or across multiple communities within the district.

The grant has two key objectives:

- Supporting people with a wide range of long-term health conditions to access activities that help them stay active.
- Promoting a broader range of inclusive physical activity opportunities across South Cambridgeshire.

Anyone interested in applying can find further information and application details on the South Cambridgeshire District Council grant [webpage](#).

Environment

Weekly food waste collections update

The roll out of weekly food waste collections is continuing across the district. Collections in Comberton, Coton and South Trumpington began in the week commencing 24th August, and collections for Barton, Harlton, and Haslingfield are due to begin in the week commencing 12th October. All homes will receive information on food waste collections and a small indoor food waste caddy, a starter roll of caddy liners and a larger outdoor food waste caddy for kerbside collections ahead of the start of the service.

The Government's Simpler Recycling legislation makes weekly collection of household food waste mandatory for all local authorities. Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service began rolling out the service in January 2026 and by the end of August were collecting food waste from more than 60,500 homes. Since its launch, the service has collected more than 2,800 tonnes of food waste which is being used to generate power and create biofertilizer.

You can find out more about food waste collections at:

<http://www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste> and if you already have food waste collections, please use the link to give your feedback on the service.

6 Free Trees – Apply by 31st October 2026

The popular Six Free Trees initiative is returning for its sixth year, offering parish and town councils the opportunity to claim either six small trees (whips) or one larger pot-grown tree from a selection of native species.

The trees are supplied with stakes, ties and biodegradable tree spirals to help them establish successfully. Additionally, this year a mulch mat will be added to every order, and an optional watering system for bigger trees to help them stay hydrated in dry and hot conditions.

Parish and town councils interested in applying can find further information and application details on the Council's [Six Free Trees webpage](#).

Council hits milestone in reducing greenhouse gas emissions

A report going before the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee (CEAC) reveals the Council almost halved net emissions from its own estate since 2018/19 – hitting a milestone in reductions set in its 2020 Zero Carbon Strategy. The Council's carbon emissions equalled 1,183 tonnes in 2025/26, compared with 1,929 in 2018/19 – a 39% gross reduction. Once renewable electricity purchased by the Council and electricity exported are factored into the equation, emissions fall to 1,049 tonnes - representing a 45.3% net reduction compared with 2018/19 and meeting the target of a 45% reduction.

In 2018, the District Council had no electric or low carbon vehicles in its fleet. In 2026 it has four electric bin lorries with five more expected to be delivered by autumn. There are three electric vans, one electric road sweeper and 38 vehicles within the fleet (which services both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) running on HVO fuel - a renewable diesel-alternative, often made from waste vegetable and cooking oils offering up to 90% lower net CO₂ emissions compared to conventional diesel.

Examples of work carried out to reduce emissions across the district include:

- Planning policies that support lower-carbon development and protect nature.
- Reducing waste and encouraging recycling.
- Transitioning Council vehicles to lower-carbon fuels and electric alternatives.
- Improving the energy efficiency of council buildings and homes.
- Helping local businesses reduce their environmental impact.
- Encouraging more sustainable approaches to food and agriculture.
- Providing training and information to help communities take climate action.
- Supporting biodiversity, tree planting and wider nature recovery projects.

The two original strategies - Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature – which aimed to enhance biodiversity and natural habitats in the district – have since been succeeded by the [Climate and Nature Strategy 2026-2030](#). The Climate and Nature Strategy sets out the next phase of work for reducing emissions, increasing resilience to climate impacts, and protecting and recovering nature. This builds on the strong foundation of work under the previous strategies. Progress against the actions under the Zero Carbon and Doubling Nature strategies, alongside the Council's latest greenhouse gas emissions data are laid out on the Council's tackling climate change webpage.

The Council's CEAC will consider the report at its meeting on [1 September](#).

New Home Energy Guide for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents

A new *Your Home Energy Upgrade Guide* for residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is now available at: www.actiononenergycambs.org/guidance-and-installation. Whether residents are homeowners, landlords or tenants, the guide is intended to help them understand their options and take steps towards warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient homes.

Designed specifically for homes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the guide provides trusted, practical information to help residents improve the comfort, energy efficiency of their homes. It includes advice tailored to different house types, information on insulation, heating systems and renewable technologies, guidance on when to seek professional support, and details of available grants and services.

The guide was developed by a partnership of local authorities across the region and funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

Community energy funding and Great British Energy

Great British Energy (GBE) are currently seeking expressions of interest from local and community energy groups across the UK. This first step is to help identify projects across the UK, helping build a clearer picture of projects and proposals to help inform the future design of GBE products and approaches to support local and community energy.

By responding to the expression of interest this will also allow organisations to opt-in to receive updates on GBE local funding opportunities and initiatives. For more information see <https://www.gbe.gov.uk/express-your-interest>.

Public consultation on the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan until 25th September 2026

Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are producing a Joint Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area. The Greater Cambridge Local Plan will help determine how Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire grow over the next 20 years, influencing where new homes, jobs and community facilities are located, how development supports climate goals, and how infrastructure keeps pace with growth.

Current forecasts indicate that around 50,000 new homes will be needed between 2024 and 2045. Around 37,000 of these homes are already planned through existing permissions and allocations, but future growth must be carefully managed to ensure communities have the transport links, services, green spaces and utilities they need.

The Plan has been shaped by years of public engagement. Over 8,400 comments submitted during the most recent consultation prompted further work by officers and helped refine the policies and proposals across the Plan. As a result, a number of changes from the previous plan published late last year have been made in the version now being consulted upon. The updated Plan also reflects the ongoing work to address some of Greater Cambridge's most significant challenges, including housing demand, water supply constraints, transport infrastructure and future employment needs.

Unlike earlier consultations, this final stage is more narrowly focused on whether the Plan is "sound" and meets national planning requirements. Responses will therefore need to focus on whether the Plan is justified by the evidence, effective in achieving its objectives, deliverable and consistent with national planning policy. The consultation is the last opportunity for communities to comment on the Plan – which at this stage is called the Proposed Submission version - and its evidence base. After this stage, the Plan will be submitted to Government and examined by an independent Planning Inspector.

Both online and in person events are planned to allow you to find out more about the proposals. To view the Plan, submit comments and find details of the events, visit www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan. Paper copies of the Local Plan are available at the councils' offices in Cambridge and Cambourne and at Cambridge Central and Cambourne libraries. The consultation closes on Friday 25 September 2026.

Cambourne to Cambridge busway/active travel route approved by the Secretary of State

On the 8th September the Government approved the Cambourne to Cambridge busway and active travel route, intended to connect Cambourne, Bourn Airfield (recently renamed High Bourn), Hardwick, Coton and Cambridge. The scheme will also include a 2,000-space travel hub at Scotland Farm. The Secretary of State's decision letter, the habitats regulations assessment, the busway order and the inspectors' report are available at: [Cambourne to Cambridge guided busway: Transport and Works Act order - GOV.UK](#)

Following the Secretary of State's decision, Cambridgeshire County Council will begin the procurement process, with contractors expected to be appointed next year to complete the detailed design. During this time further engagement with parish councils, landowners and other key stakeholders will take place to help shape the final design of the scheme. Main construction will follow the detailed design phase although some preparatory works may begin earlier. The Greater Cambridge Partnership's news release is available at: <https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/news/cambourne-to-cambridge-route-approved>.

Government updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

A new version of the [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) was published by the government on 17th August 2026. It replaces the December 2024 NPPF with immediate effect for making decisions on planning applications.

The new NPPF is a comprehensive rewrite of the previous version of the Framework. Although the Local plan remains the statutory starting point when considering planning applications, any policy that is materially inconsistent with a policy in the new NPPF should be given very limited weight, so has, in effect, been superseded by the new NPPF.

Key changes include:

- 1. A More Rules-Based, Nationally Consistent System**
 - The NPPF is now structured to distinguish clearly between plan-making and decision-making policies.
 - The Government aim is to make development management policies more consistent nationwide – replacing “local” planning requirements with national policies.
 - The reforms are also intended to avoid/prevent duplication in national and local policy and reduce departures from national policy in local level plans.
- 2. Stronger Presumption in Favour of Development**
 - The new NPPF introduces a revised and strengthened approach to the “presumption in favour of sustainable development.”
 - Development within settlements “should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects.”
 - Outside of settlements, a more limited range of development forms still applies but there is now more active support for those development forms (including agricultural and farm diversification, sport and recreation developments) being approved.
 - Where the Councils are not meeting identified housing need, appropriate new housing development outside of but adjoining settlement boundaries is supported.
 - Presumption on Councils making a decision on planning applications promptly – and refusal not normally justified on the basis that a statutory consultee has not responded in time.
- 3. Development Around Stations**
 - The Government has expanded its ‘default yes’ approach for appropriate forms of development within reasonable walking distance of “well-connected” railway and tram stations

including where that development lies in the green belt.

- The policy applies to the top 80 Travel to Work Areas by GVA.
- Greater Cambridge and all of the railway stations in Greater Cambridge fall into this definition.

4. Increased Density Expectations

- Greater support for intensification in existing urban areas, including associated adjustments to design policies to allow this to happen.
- More scope for development within residential gardens.
- Support focused on increasing floorspace for existing homes – including by extending upwards
- An expectation of higher density around transport hubs.

5. Strategic and Medium sized sites recognised with different and proportionate information requirements for applications

- The framework introduces a new distinct category of strategic sites (generally comprising developments of around 1500 homes or more).
- Objective is to reduce the burdens of providing supporting information to smaller scale planning applicants
- A new category of Medium development (up to 49 homes or 2.5 hectares) with less onerous application and infrastructure expectations has been created.

6. Telecommunications and Infrastructure Support

- Even stronger support given to delivery and upgrade of telecommunications infrastructure.
- Particular emphasis placed on improving connectivity, including along rail corridors.

7. Regeneration and Brownfield Redevelopment

- Continued strong support for Brownfield Development
- Greater flexibility proposed in the application of parking standards, particularly for large retail and similar redevelopment schemes, to facilitate regeneration and redevelopment opportunities.

8. Community Facilities Protection

- National policies protecting community facilities have been strengthened replacing many local plan policies.
- Particular protection to avoid unnecessary loss of facilities such as public houses.

9. Local Standards

- Limits the use of locally specific quantitative standards unless local justification can be demonstrated.
- Retains the ability of the LPA to set local water consumption requirements where justified and site specific BNG requirements above 10% national standard but not as a blanket policy.

10. Meeting the challenge of climate change

- Focus on spatial development patterns to reduce demand and enhance resilience including identifying opportunities for green infrastructure provision and nature-based solutions which can safeguard and improve carbon storage, support nature recovery and resilience. Supports sustainable patterns of movement including public transport infrastructure, walking, cycling, wheeling.
- Further support for roll out of car charging infrastructure

- Support for decentralised energy networks
- Substantial weight given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings (solar panels, heat pumps etc) where not already permitted development
- Considering how access to good facilities can reduce the need to travel and how density can improve catchment populations to create more sustainable service delivery models.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) delayed following legal advice

Over the summer there were two LGR announcements:

- On the 16th July, the Government announced decisions on local government reorganisation proposals in 14 areas across the country. However, while the four options submitted by councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough were considered, ministers said more time was needed before a final decision could be reached.
- On the 7th September, Angela Raynor, the Secretary of State, announced that there would be a review of LGR, that some decisions were being withdrawn, and that work was to be paused in many places including Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The government press release is available at: [Review of local government reorganisation launched - GOV.UK](#)

What does this mean?

Our understanding is that LGR will be delayed by at least 1 year, meaning that the current two-tier structure of separate district and county councils will remain in place for at least 1 year longer than was planned (were planned to cease to exist in 2028). It would also mean that there would not be local elections to set up the shadow unitary authority in May 2027. Local elections will go ahead where district or county elections are due (none are due in the area covered by South Cambridgeshire District Council).

We do not yet know if government will change the criteria for LGR, but if they do, local authorities will need to resubmit proposals for the new unitary authorities based on the new criteria.

Rewiring the State

Over the summer, the government published a statement setting out how they intend to re-shape how the public sector functions and empower local leaders to drive growth in their areas.

There is a summary of the document, by way of the CPCA report to their Audit and Governance committee: [Rewiring the State and opportunities for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.pdf](#). It describes plans to devolve significant powers to mayors and mayoral authorities.

Consultation on planning powers for mayors in England

On 24th August, the government launched a consultation seeking views on the implementation of provisions in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act 2026 for:

- mayoral powers in relation to planning applications of potential strategic importance, principally for mayors outside London but includes further changes to the approach in London
- Mayoral Development Orders
- Mayoral Community Infrastructure Levy for mayors outside London

Separately, it also seeks views on changes to the secondary legislation for Local Development Orders. The consultation closes on 5 October.

<https://url.uk.m.mimecastprotect.com/s/MleNC57JfjvW3liNCqgik307B?domain=gov.uk>