

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – March 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>

Discounted menstrual cups available via Recap

Residents from South Cambridgeshire are eligible to buy a Mooncup for £5 rather than the usual £23.50. You can find out more and access the form to claim the discount at: [Get a Mooncup for £5 with Recap](#).

This discount is provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (Recap). Recap partners work together to improve waste services, increase recycling, and reduce waste. You can find out more at: <https://www.recap.co.uk/>.

Help for people working with health problems

The District Council has worked in partnership with neighbouring councils to launch a new programme called WorkWell, offering help to anyone struggling to find or keep a job due to a health problem.

To find out more, visit <https://www.growthworkswithskills.com/employer-hub/workwell/>

Council's four-day week public consultation open until 23rd March 2025

You can now share your views on the quality of South Cambridgeshire District Council's services during its trial of a four-day week at: www.scambs.gov.uk/4DW. Please email communications@scambs.gov.uk or call 01954 713 000 if you would prefer a paper copy. The consultation closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 23rd March.

The consultation is designed to allow residents to comment on the services they received during the four-day week trial and the information gathered during the consultation will help South Cambridgeshire District Councillors decide on the next steps for the four-day week at the Council.

As a reminder, during the four-day week trial, staff were asked to deliver 100% of their work, in 80% of their hours, for 100% of their pay. The idea was to help the council attract and retain talented colleagues, in what is an incredibly competitive local employment market, as well as help to improve services by filling vacant posts permanently, rather than relying on expensive agency staff which is both costly and disruptive.

Last summer an independent report on the Council's performance during the trial was published. Of 24 key performance indicators, analysis by the Universities of Cambridge and Salford found that 22 had improved or remained the same. A financial assessment of the trial was positive, outlining a full year cost saving of £371,500. The Council's opening hours were maintained, and it was open for business just as before the trial, except that opening hours were increased on Wednesdays.

This consultation is framed to meet the requirements of the council's constitution and to give residents the opportunity to comment on their experience of being service consumers during the trial period. Please take this opportunity to comment, and a comment of 'no discernible change is as valuable as positive or negative comments.

Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2023-2024

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Cabinet recently reviewed the Authority Monitoring Report for 2023-2024. This report describes how the level of development in Greater Cambridge (Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire) compares with the Local Plan Timetable and looks at the impacts of planning policies.

It shows that 1,582 dwellings were completed across Greater Cambridge in 2023-2024. This is slightly below the average annual delivery rate of 1,675 dwellings required over the plan period 2011 to 2031, but overall, the average annual delivery rate between 2011 and 2024 is 1,683. It also shows that 523 affordable dwellings were completed in 2023-2024, which is 33% of all completions. 503 of these were in South Cambridgeshire.

You can access the full report via agenda item 8 at: [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 4 February 2025, 10.00 a.m.](#)

Update on planning targets for housebuilding in Greater Cambridge and the impact on how planning applications are considered

Local councils with planning responsibilities are required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to have a sufficient supply of sites – with planning permission and likely to be built within five years – to achieve their local planning targets for housebuilding. This is known as having a 5-year housing land supply, and when this requirement is met, planning applications are assessed against the area's Local Plan.

In December 2024, the government made changes to national planning policy and set new planning targets for housebuilding for every council. Following requests for clarification, it has now been confirmed that these new housebuilding targets came into effect immediately. Under the new targets, Greater Cambridge needs to have a supply of just over 12,100 homes over five years.

It was reported in April 2024 that the housing trajectory for the next 5 years was 11,190 homes, which at that time was a housing supply of 6.5 years. Due to the government's change in targets, the housing supply has fallen to just under 5 years despite there being around 36,000 homes with planning permission. National planning rules mean this housing land supply position of under 5 years becomes a factor when making decisions on planning applications, with the balance "tilted" to favour giving planning permission where the development is of high quality and in sustainable locations.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, has said: "The new Government guidance has been implemented too fast. That is frustrating for us and our communities as we called for a transition period. The immediate change means that there are many other councils across the country now in in this position too. The gap we need to fill is relatively small bearing in mind the significant number of planning permissions already granted by the two Councils for new homes in Greater Cambridge.

"We're already acutely aware of the need to help bring forward more high-quality housing for our children and grandchildren as shown in our emerging joint Local Plan. This is very important in light of the Government's focus on the Greater Cambridge economy as the engine to national growth, a situation that would otherwise see housing affordability continue to reduce. We are working with strategic partners to overcome the significant infrastructure challenges the area currently faces to enable the delivery of the housing already granted planning permission under the current adopted policies."

The year ahead...

South Cambridgeshire District Council has approved its new Corporate Plan for the next few years with the main aspiration being to 'create a better district to the benefit of everyone in our communities'. It has also agreed a new Corporate Action Plan that outlines the specific actions the council will take to achieve its aspirations. This includes new websites for the Council and the shared planning and waste services to make it easier for residents to access services, find information and complete tasks online. The new sites will signpost localised information for residents in one central place – including bin collection dates, important local information, and community events.

Preparations are also ongoing for the roll out of a new weekly food waste collection service to residents in 2026 – a mandatory change required by government. This will help Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service capture even more food waste and remove the need for disposal in black bins. The food waste will be transformed into renewable energy or a valuable compost product for agricultural use.

Balancing the budget

South Cambridgeshire District Council has agreed to increase the SCDC portion of Council Tax by £5.09 per year for the average band D home to help ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. This means that the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council will be £175.40 per year. This is still expected to maintain the Council's position among the lowest 25% of District Councils in the country when it comes to its Council Tax charge.

Less than half of the District Council's annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. Other funding sources include some outside of the Council's control, such as Business Rates and grants, whilst funding is also generated from investments.

Most of the Council Tax that South Cambridgeshire District Council collects is passed to Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and parish or town councils. Some is also passed to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, to support local buses.

Change in recycling contract

The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service is responsible for collecting waste for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council. For the materials collected for recycling, Greater Cambridge Shared Waste is part of a group of councils (Recycle for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (Recap)) that jointly procure contracts for processing, in a process supported by Cambridgeshire County Council.

In the current arrangements, the materials collected for recycling are sorted at a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) at Thalia Waste Management near Waterbeach. The sorted materials are then baled for transport and sold to processors who use them to make new products. The contract with Thalia specifies that UK markets should be given preference where possible, and between April 2023 and 2024, 82% of recyclable material was reprocessed in the UK and 100% of plastics were recycled in the UK.

For the new contract, Cambridgeshire County Council has carried out a procurement exercise following the required regulations as well as including environmental criteria. This exercise did include Thalia, but their submission was non-compliant and so was eliminated. The new contract with Re-Gen, which begins on the 3rd March, covers haulage, sorting, onward processing, and sale of recyclable materials. Recyclable materials from South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge will be packaged for transport to a new Materials Recycling Facility. Initially this will be in Northern Ireland, where the facility is able to recycle 99% of materials compared with 80% at the Thalia facility, and 100% of electricity on site is provided by renewables. A newer development is that Re-Gen are taking over another Materials Recycling Facility on the mainland, which will then be used to process recyclables from Greater Cambridge. This is expected to take place in the first half of 2025. There will also be a contract monitoring and evaluation process between March 2025 and September 2025.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority

Mayoral Precept

The Mayor's precept has been frozen at £36 per band D household. This followed a consultation where over 80% of respondents opposed an increase. The precept is expected to raise around £11 million in 2025/2026 and is used to fund/or will be used to fund 53 bus routes across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough including the No. 18 service between Cambridge and St Neots, the No. 75 service between Cambridge and Wrestlingworth, and the No. 26 service between Cambridge and Royston.

<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/news/budget-setting-meeting-sees-freeze-to-mayoral-precept-and-continuing-investment-to-boost-transport-skills-and-economic-growth/>

Bus Franchising

In a meeting on the 6th February, the Board agreed for the Mayor to make decisions to move to bus franchising. The meeting agenda and background information is available at: [Agenda for Combined Authority Board on Thursday, 6th February, 2025, 10.00 am.](#)

Local Government Reorganisation

Angela Rayner, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), made a statement in the House of Commons on the 5th February about Local Government Reorganisation.

The Government reiterated that its guiding principle is for new single-tier councils to aim for a population of 500,000 or more to "achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks". It has confirmed it will consider exceptions to this principle where this "does not make sense for an area". But the statement does not go into further detail about how these exceptions might work.

The statement also emphasised that “this process will involve extensive engagement with local communities” although I am unsure that there are any provisions for this and so think it may mean engagement with councils rather than communities.

On the same day, the council received the statutory invitation that sets out the detail of what the government expects. Interim plans must be submitted by 21st March 2025, so there will be an extraordinary council meeting on the 19th March to discuss this submission, which is likely to include the options under early consideration and potential criteria to assess those options. Full proposals must then be submitted by 28th November 2025. If a proposal is agreed by government, then there would be elections for new ‘shadow’ unitary councils.