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# Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton)

Cllr Michael Atkins

June 2022

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## Highlights

- Flooding hotspots on the highways – get them added to a list to be tackled
- Household support grant extended, now also targeting pensioners
- C2C consultation is live – make sure you submit your responses
- Zero carbon communities grants are available
- Support for Ukrainian refugees provided by District Council
- Contact details

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## *News from the County*

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### Flooding hotspots [response encouraged!]

The County Council recently allocated £400k to tackle parts of the highways which frequently flood, so as to reduce the risks associated with surface water on our roads. They are therefore looking for suggestions as to where frequent ‘hotspots’ might be. If this is something applicable to your village, please let me know as soon as possible so I can get it added to the list.

### Household support grant extended to help those most in need

Support for people who are struggling to pay for essential items, food and utility bills will continue in Cambridgeshire thanks to an extension of the Household Support Fund. In March the Government announced the extension of the scheme, which initially ran between November and March, awarding Cambridgeshire an additional £3.58million to support children, families and pensioners.

Government guidance for this round is slightly different, so as a result, the County Council will be offering the following schemes using the funding:

- £1.96m for the provision of food vouchers with a value of £15 per child per week, for the 2022 May half term and summer holidays. Schools and childcare settings, including childminders, will be contacted directly and eligible parents will be notified.
- £1.2m to support households that include a person who has reached state pension age (66) by 30 September 2022 and are experiencing financial hardship in line with the requirements of the scheme.
- A boost for other services supporting those most in need

The County Council is partnering with Age UK to provide financial support for those of state pension age who are in financial need. People will also be offered wider support, such as access to benefits, support with securing the right energy tariff etc., to support them to manage their finances independently longer term.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund>

## Summer Holidays Activities and Food programme

Holiday scheme places will again be offered free-of-charge for families in receipt of free school meals, or where schools make a direct referral to the County Council indicating that the family is struggling financially. This will provide up to 64 hours with an approved scheme, including lunch, snacks and a variety of fun activities. Voucher codes have already been issued to families 'on our books' but if anyone has not received this, or has recently become eligible please let me know or visit <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/haf>

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## *News from GCP & Combined Authority*

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### Cambourne to Cambridge Busway (C2C) – EIA Consultation

The next stage of the C2C design process is the Environmental Impact Assessment, and as part of that the GCP has launched a consultation showing the latest routes, plans for stops, and asking for your feedback on some of the decisions they are making. Although it doesn't explicitly ask for opinions on route selection/alignment, there are free-text boxes that would allow you to comment on this if you wish. You can find the consultation at:

<https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/c2c-eia-2022>

### Greenways

The Technical Preliminary Design Stage has begun for the Comberton and Haslingfield routes and planned to continue to December 2022. This involves: site walk throughs by the technical teams; topographical surveys; utilities searches; technical assessment of proposed structures; planning and environment strategy; environmental assessments (ecology, biodiversity, landscape, heritage, flooding, noise, carbon); highways and drainage design; lighting approach; cost estimation; stakeholder engagement; and identification of quick wins for delivery.

Public engagement (after engagement with Parish Councils) will be held in the summer for Comberton and Haslingfield, and the autumn for Barton to share the latest designs. Current dates, although subject to change, are:

- Comberton Village Hall: Friday 8 July, 2-7 pm
- Haslingfield Village Hall: Tuesday 12 July, 2-7 pm

### Combined Authority Leadership update

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Combined Authority Board took place on Friday 20 May, having been requisitioned by some council leaders and the then Chair of the Business Board. The aim of the requisition was to force the resignation or suspension of the Mayor of Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, following various allegations which are still under investigation. However, between the requisition and the meeting, council elections had resulted in a change of leader in Huntingdonshire, and the Chair of the Business Board had also resigned. The attempt to depose the Mayor before the ongoing investigation had been concluded was therefore unsuccessful. I hope very much these issues will be resolved soon and the authority can return to delivering on core activities of better public transport, improving skills and tackling the climate emergency.

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## *News from the District*

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### Zero Carbon Communities Grant

The Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme is open for its fourth year of applications. The deadline has been extended to 17 June. A pot of £120,000 is available for projects that help reduce carbon emissions or locking up carbon, or that promote community engagement on climate change. We have funded a wide range of projects in the area. Proposals can come from any community group, not just Parish Councils or formal charities. If you have an idea for a project, do get in touch with one of us or directly with the Communities team at South Cambs (details on the website), who are keen to talk about projects in advance of applications.

### Energy Rebates

There has been some confusion about the Government's £150 energy rebate scheme. The scheme is aimed at providing a £150 energy rebate to those in properties banded A to D. It is not a Council Tax Rebate but is using Council Tax data to determine eligibility.

There are roughly 43,000 council tax payers that are eligible and just under 32,000 payment transactions have been made. The initial payments have been made to those that pay by direct debit as the Council already holds their bank details and in the vast majority of cases these match the details of the eligible person. This makes up over 70% of those eligible. There are a handful of situations where a direct debit is not paid by the person liable for Council Tax and those will need to fall into the second tranche of payments.

Those falling into the remaining 26% are now being invited to apply, providing evidence of their bank account but there will be an option for the £150 to be set off against their Council Tax liability if they so wish. All these applications will need to go through a verification process which helps verify that the information provided matches up with the person who is eligible. It is likely that some of these will require some further investigation so we are advising residents that the payment may take up to 14 days to process from receipt of an application but in many cases the payment should be made sooner.

If any residents are having difficulty receiving their energy rebate, please let me know.

### SCDC support for Ukraine Refugees

The most recent data shows that 323 Ukrainian guests have now been welcomed to South Cambridgeshire involving 54 parishes. Supporting the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme, SCDC Officers have already made over 80 welfare visits and more than 400 DBS checks.

The Government scheme provides £200 per guest as a one-off payment to help with essential costs but gives flexibility to local authorities to decide if additional support is needed. In practice, hosts and guests in South Cambridgeshire have found that this money is insufficient to meet the guests needs between their arrival and when longer-term financial arrangements are in place. SCDC has therefore decided to increase the initial payment from £200 to £350 per guest. This is payable to all guests, including those who have already received the first payment. More information can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/5323xj5j> or by emailing [ukrainepayments@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:ukrainepayments@scambs.gov.uk)

Free, good quality second-hand bicycles are being made available to guests as part of a collaboration between SCDC and two local charities OWL Bikes and Camtrust. Helmets and locks are also being supplied free of charge and the Council will also be providing guests with details of a free Bikeability

cycle training course, which will include translation. Once a guest applies for a bike and the Council confirms that they are eligible, they will be put in touch with the supplier nearest to them so that they can arrange to collect their bicycle. Further information can be obtained here; [duty.communities@scamb.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scamb.gov.uk)

A county-wide scheme has been agreed that will see guests provided with 10 free bus tickets. Each ticket will allow unlimited journeys within Cambridgeshire for one day and are not time limited. Arrangements with Stagecoach are yet to be finalised but once the scheme is ready, SCDC will contact hosts with details. All guests will qualify and those who arrived before the scheme launched will still be provided with this support. The tickets are being provided to Cambridgeshire councils at a discounted rate by Stagecoach who are keen to support guests and we are grateful for their support.

English language tuition is available for guests from Cambridge Regional College, Workers' Educational Association and Cambridgeshire Skills. CamRuSS is offering further support for Ukrainian guests and hosts <https://tinyurl.com/yuu6tn3y>. Cambridge Regional College are offering a range of post-16 and adult education programmes from September onwards which includes English language tuition: <https://tinyurl.com/2p82bktf>

## Markets

SCDC is keen to support and expand the market network in South Cambridgeshire as part of our commitment to grow the local economy, support businesses and ensure a wide choice of products is available for residents. SCDC has launched an online Markets toolkit to encourage and support South Cambridgeshire communities in setting up their own local markets that includes:

- Market Toolkit with information on starting a market
- Market Directory
- Stallholder Directory.

The council plans to work with parishes, community organisations, and local businesses interested in starting a new market. The new resources are available at <https://www.scamb.gov.uk/business/south-cambridgeshire-markets> and enquiries should be sent to [businesssupportkeyprojects@scamb.gov.uk](mailto:businesssupportkeyprojects@scamb.gov.uk).

## Fitness and wellbeing grants

South Cambridgeshire District Council is urging instructors to apply for up to £300 to lead fitness and wellbeing activities in their communities. Anyone who leads an existing group or who wants to set up a new initiative in the District, such as leading a walking group in their local park or running a weekly yoga class in a village hall, could be eligible for the small grant. Providers running multiple groups can also apply to fund multiple programmes.

Activities could range from walking/football/rugby/netball to chair-based exercise classes, diabetes walking groups, yoga for the over 60s, baby yoga classes or more.

## Business Support Webinars

SCDC are running a free webinar on 15 June from 1-2pm in partnership with Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce where Sharon Livermore from award winning agency, Kameo Recruitment will talk you through how, and where, to market your business as an attractive place to work.

You can register for this webinar at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-attract-and-retain-the-best-people-for-your-jobs-tickets-310325962307>

SCDC are running a free webinar on 27 July from 2-3 pm when our Procurement Officer explains how to write winning tenders for local government contracts. You can register for this webinar at: [How to tender for Council contracts Tickets, Wed 27 Jul 2022 at 14:00 | Eventbrite](#)

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## *Other items of interest*

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### Boiler Upgrade Scheme opens

The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has announced that the government's new £450 million Boiler Upgrade Scheme is now open for grant applications and payments. Homeowners can now benefit from £5,000 grants to fit clean heating systems when they come to replace their oil and gas boilers. This includes clean heating systems installed from 1 April this year. Heat pumps are now much cheaper and more competitively priced against gas and oil boilers, and closer to the cost of installing a traditional gas boiler. The scheme will improve the energy efficiency of homes, reduce energy bills and cut emissions in the long-term. The scheme has a committed budget of £450 million over three years from 2022-2025, and property owners will be able to get:

- £5,000 off the cost and installation of an air source heat pump ·
- £5,000 off the cost and installation of a biomass boiler ·
- £6,000 off the cost and installation of a ground source heat pump

To check if you are eligible: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-may-be-eligible-for-the-boiler-upgrade-scheme-from-april-2022>

### East West Rail Face-to-Face Engagement

East West Rail are organising face-to-face engagement sessions in June and July. They state: "While we won't have any new information to share at these events – as we are still reviewing the responses received during the 2021 consultation and considering how the feedback is used to inform plans for the railway – they will provide an opportunity for us to engage with communities outside the formal consultation process."

Local dates are:

- Cambridge: Wednesday 29 June, 2-8pm, The Clayton Hotel, 27-29 Station Rd Cambridge, CB1 2FB
- Haslingfield: Tuesday 19 July, 2-8pm, Haslingfield Village Hall, Cambridge CB23 1JP
- Cambourne: Wednesday 20 July, 2-8pm, The Cambridge Belfry, Back Lane Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6BW

### Contact Details

Councillors and residents are welcome to contact me on any issue which is concerning them:

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