

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – November 2023

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 information on: where to turn for advice; 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 handyman service and; support if you are in distress.

Help for residents

SCDC's latest initiative to help certain residents through the cost-of-living crisis is the offer of a free electric blanket/electric throw, which are cheaper to run than central heating. Analysis has shown that running an electric blanket costs just 5p per hour, compared to an average central heating cost of £2.03 per hour ([Ideal Home, 2023](#)). The accumulation of these savings over the winter months has the potential to provide financial relief to those residents.

Qualifying residents are those who (as of 1 July 2023) claim Council Tax Support and at least one of the following: Attendance Allowance; Personal Independence Payment (PIP) mobility element enhance rate; and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) mobility component at the higher rate.

These groups of people are being targeted because it is known that people with mobility issues are more susceptible to cold weather pressures. Data from Citizens Advice shows that in 2023 they made 637 referrals to foodbanks for people with disabilities or long-term health conditions compared to 359 referrals for those without these problems.

Qualifying residents will receive a letter in the coming weeks from the Council telling them they are eligible and how to claim their free blanket. Only people who receive a letter will be able to claim a free blanket.

Other initiatives are ongoing, including providing free food parcels with a week's worth of food to residents who either cannot travel to their nearest foodbank or need food in an emergency. 107 food parcels have been delivered since the scheme began in January 2023.

Community Chest fund

There is still Community Chest funding available for cost-of-living mitigation. Information about how to apply can be accessed here: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/grants/community-chest-grants/>.

Community Hubs

Community Hubs offer residents somewhere to socialise, take part in new activities and to receive information on cost-of-living support such as how to reduce bills and access financial support, as well as how to stay healthy and well.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has appointed Cambridgeshire ACRE to support Community Hubs across the district for a further two years, thanks to nearly £200,000 of funding from NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, part of our local Integrated Care System. The funding will be used to support the development of existing hubs and to allow new Community Hubs to open their doors. Additionally, three new Village Agent roles are being introduced. These will be local people, embedded in their community, who will support the health and wellbeing of others.

Local Community Hubs include:

- Comberton Baptist Church, Green End, Comberton, Cambridge, CB23 7DY.
Opening times: Monday, 3pm – 5 pm
- Grantchester Communal Hall, Tabrum Close, Grantchester, Cambridge, CB3 9NW
Opening time: Friday, 10am – 12pm

A full list of Community Hubs can be found at:

<https://www.cambsacre.org.uk/projects/cambridgeshire-community-hubs-network/>

Environmental updates

Climate Action Conference on 28th November 2023

Creating a greener, cleaner district for South Cambridgeshire residents is on the agenda at a climate conference in Cottenham celebrating net zero action locally.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is holding its first Climate Action Conference in November to tie in with [COP28](#) – 12 days of worldwide talks which determine ambition and responsibilities in addressing climate issues globally. The local event is being held at Cottenham Village Hall, a flagship building for becoming environmentally friendly, supported with a District Council Zero Carbon Communities grant of £15,000 for solar panels.

The event is open to everyone and is at:

- Cottenham Village Hall, Lambs Lane, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8TA. Parking onsite or stop 'Lambs Lane' on number 8 bus route from Cambridge city centre.
- Tuesday 28 November 9:30am to 1pm. Doors open 9.15am. Tea, coffee and light refreshments provided.
- Speakers include Chris Parkin of Cambridgeshire County Council talking about making sure communities benefit from the energy transition; Malcolm Bird of Steeple Morden Parish Council talking about [Community Electric Vehicle Charging](#) and Helen Dye of Natural Cambridgeshire talking about developing a local nature recovery strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Also, Alison Giles of Girton Local Nature Recovery and local ecologist Ashley Arbon.
- Book free tickets via [Eventbrite](#).

SCDC and partners launch an 18-month project to help local businesses go green

The partnership project aims to support local businesses reduce their carbon footprint, adopt more sustainable practices, and reduce energy costs. The programme has been created by South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Growth Hub and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and is funded by the UK Government through the Shared Prosperity Fund. Business charity Allia is managing the new programme and the Peterborough-based sustainability charity PECT is responsible for providing expertise and guidance on sustainability practices to help businesses develop their own net zero roadmap.

The programme aims to support 223 small to medium businesses based in Cambridge, Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire and will also deliver grant funding of up to £5,000 to 75 of these businesses to help them implement energy efficiency-related improvements.

More information is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/green-grants-for-cambridgeshire-businesses/>.

SCDC receives Carbon Literacy Certification

SCDC has been accredited as a Carbon Literate Organisation by the national charity, The Carbon Literacy Trust, achieving a bronze certificate as part of its continuing efforts to tackle the climate emergency in South Cambridgeshire.

It has been achieved by a cohort of staff at a variety of levels taking part in bespoke Carbon Literacy training, including the most senior, decision-making members of staff. So far, 35 staff have been trained with 17 formally certified as Carbon Literate by the Trust. The 18 staff yet to be formally certified continue to progress towards their qualification. This training helps staff to act on climate change within their day-to-day roles and to consider potential projects which could reduce emissions both within the Council and in the wider district.

The Council adopted South Cambridgeshire's first [Zero Carbon Strategy](#) in May 2020. This sets out the need to halve net carbon emissions in the district by at least 2030 if not before, and the Council's plans to support this. In February 2021 the Council created a [Doubling Nature](#) strategy, a sister document to the Zero Carbon Strategy, setting out an approach to increasing wildlife-rich habitats, tree canopy, and access to green spaces in South Cambridgeshire. Actions taken in the past five years include:

- Reducing the carbon emissions associated with SCDC's main office through the [greening South Cambs Hall project](#).
- Providing over £500,000 in Zero Carbon Communities grants to community groups who work to tackle climate change in their village or town.
- Working with Cambridge City Council to decarbonise the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste bin lorry fleet including the purchase of three electric bin lorries.

Pink bins for recycling small electrical appliances

Bright pink bins for electrical waste have resulted in nine times more e-waste being collected for recycling. They were introduced last year to reduce the hundreds of tonnes of electrical items that end up in black bins. The pink banks are suitable for collecting most small items which have a plug or a battery, including phones, toys, kettles and many more.

The small appliances are sorted for re-use and recycling by Wiser Recycling in Thetford. Items that are undamaged, uncontaminated, and repairable may be suitable for re-use within the UK. Items that are unsuitable for re-use are dismantled into component parts. Many of those components are also suitable for re-use (e.g., monitor screens or laptop power units). Items unsuitable for re-use are sent to local and national specialist operators for recycling.

You can find all locations for recycling electrical items, including the pink bins, at www.recycleyourelectricals.org.uk. You can find upcoming pop-up Repair Café events at www.cambridgecarbonfootprint.org/repair-cafes/.

Consultations

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning consulting on Statement of Community Involvement

Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire residents can have their say on how they are involved in the planning process as Greater Cambridge Shared Planning will be consulting on a new 'Statement of Community Involvement' from 18 October to 29 November 2023 at <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/about-us/statement-of-community-involvement/>.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the councils will involve communities on a wide range of planning matters such as planning for the future of Greater Cambridge, neighbourhood planning, planning new development and dealing with unauthorised development. Since planning affects the lives of everyone who lives, works, and visits Greater Cambridge, it is essential that people have an opportunity to engage in the decisions the councils make on new housing, workplaces, open spaces, and the measures being taken locally to tackle climate and biodiversity issues.

Council's Homeless Strategy Consultation

SCDC is consulting on updates to its Homeless Strategy. This is a document that all councils must have – and regularly review. The Council has a responsibility to prevent homelessness – and receives on average 453 homeless applications each year.

You can have your say at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/homeless-strategy>. The consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 5 January 2024. Please call 01954 713 000 for a paper copy.

In recent years, more people have approached the Council for support once they are already homeless - rather than when they are threatened with homelessness. Getting in touch with the Council for support early – before becoming homeless – increases the options and support available. During the 12 months up until the end of June 2023, the Council prevented 210 households from becoming homeless, by providing support through its Housing Advice and Options service.

Locally and nationally, the main cause of homelessness is family friends no longer being able to house someone, followed by end of a tenancy agreement, and then domestic abuse. People who approach the Council for support with homelessness tend to be of working age, with very few applications from those under 18 or over 65. Also, more applicants are employed than solely in receipt of benefits.

Anyone who feels they are in danger of becoming homeless should [contact the Council](#) as soon as possible.

Have your say in the South Cambridgeshire Polling District Review

The district council is inviting comments, views and suggestions on how polling arrangements can be improved in South Cambridgeshire. The focus is on ensuring polling districts and polling places are fit for purpose to enable effective local democracy. This includes feedback on the accessibility and suitability of polling stations for voters with disabilities.

Local authorities are required to review their polling districts and polling places and polling stations every five years. The last review took place in 2019.

Further information, including a list of polling stations used and maps of the current and proposed polling districts, can be found on the Council's website at www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/elections/polling-district-review.

Residents can respond to the consultation by writing to the Elections Team marked 'Polling District Review' either by email to elections@scambs.gov.uk or by letter to: Electoral Services, South Cambs District Council, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA.

All responses must be received by 27 November 2023. Any representations made during the review may be published alongside reports to the Civic Affairs Committee and Council and will help inform decisions made by those bodies.

Please note, you can only vote in elections if your name appears on the register of electors. Since May 2023, voters are now also required to show photo ID in polling stations. Find out more and how to register at www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/elections.

Four-day week trial at Council

The 4-day week trial is an attempt by SCDC to reduce its agency bill and take control of serious recruitment problems (especially in the Planning Service) linked to the high cost of living in the district. This trial does not affect opening hours and residents can continue to contact the council as before (<https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/contact-us/>).

Up-to-date information on the trial can be accessed at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial/>.

Update from South Cambs Business Support Team on the Markets Programme

The Economic Development Team is delivering the South Cambridgeshire Markets programme as part of the Council's wider business plan objective to 'support businesses'. This work includes working with small businesses to identify meanwhile pop-up market and trading opportunities across the district, as well as working with market and event organisers to ensure that these events are successful. Over the last year the team has:

- Created a South Cambridgeshire Markets brand which includes a [Market Toolkit](#), [Market Directory](#) and [Stallholder Directory](#).
- Promoted local Markets and events through our visitor economy website [Visit South Cambs](#) and campaigns on the SCDC main social media platforms.
- Delivered hands-on market support to 22 different markets and events over the last year. 7 of these are new markets in the district namely *Cottenham Community Market, Hauxton Food & Craft Market, Marleigh Market, The Gransdens Farmers Market, Great Shelford Village Market, Histon Farmers Fayre, and Northstowe Market*.
- Hosted the South Cambridgeshire Christmas Market (Dec 2022), which had 70 stallholders and 1,500 – 1,700 visitors in attendance.

Plans are underway for the 2023 Christmas Market (10th December 2023), as well working with market organisers to start-up, reinstate or help expand additional markets in South Cambridgeshire. We also have an exciting project as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund in the pipeline to establish a Youth Enterprise programme for disadvantaged groups to develop future market traders.

For any further information please contact Katherine Southwood at businesskeyprojects@scams.gov.uk.

Homes for Ukraine Landlords' incentive scheme

South Cambridgeshire has seen one of the highest number of Homes for Ukraine arrivals for a lower tier authority with over 850 Ukrainian guests since the scheme began in April 2022.

The first phase of the project has been a tremendous success and is now considered 'business as usual' for officers working on it. In the last few months, the focus has been helping guests to move on to independent accommodation. Getting into the private rental sector is expensive and has proved challenging for guests. In mitigation, SCDC is launching a Landlords' Incentive scheme to provide more affordable and sustainable housing options for our Ukrainian guests.

The scheme will offer up-front payments to landlords, depending on circumstances such as property size and whether they offer a tenancy at the local housing allowance rate or at market rent. Larger incentive payments will be available to landlords who offer a tenancy at the local housing rate. Payments come from the government's Homes for Ukraine fund.

Making Connections update

To the satisfaction of some and the sadness of others the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has decided not to proceed to the next stage of its Making Connections project. The aim was to make travelling in and around Cambridge quicker, simpler, and faster by easing congestion and offering better, fairer, and greener travel choices. Despite not offering alternative proposals to the problems of city congestion, the anti-congestion charge lobby has been very effective and a widespread antipathy to congestion-charging has grown, leading to a lack of political consensus. The focus will now fall on other areas of the City Access programme such as resident parking, road hierarchy and freight consolidation plus other infrastructure projects.

A major implication for our villages is that improved bus services will not be delivered as quickly as hoped, since the congestion charge was to provide the long-term funding to underpin these improvements following the use of government City Deal money to make initial short-term improvements. Work is currently ongoing to assess other possible implications of this decision including whether there are impacts on large-scale developments such as at Bourn Airfield, which require high quality public transport, and consequently the targets of the emerging Local Plan and the ability of the council to demonstrate an adequate 5-year housing land supply.

Bus service review by the CPCA

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), the authority responsible for public transport that subsidises rural bus services, is assessing the bus services currently supported and the funding available. Of the 77 bus services currently under review, it was recommended at the September 13 Combined Authority Transport and Infrastructure Committee that 51 contracts be extended from March 2024 until March 2025, with the Combined Authority continuing to work with bus companies and local partners to help promote these services to encourage more people to use buses. The 18 service is included within the 51 contracts to be continued.

The Combined Authority will continue to gather information on the remaining bus routes, including the 75 service (Cambridge – Orwell – Wrestlingworth) that serves Barton. Options for improvement could include route or timetable changes, and where it makes sense, to help explore alternative proposals, for example linking with home to school services. Information, including the report, can be accessed here: [First findings into review aiming to improve bus network - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/first-findings-into-review-aiming-to-improve-bus-network).

Reliability of 18-bus service

Cllr Atkins and I discussed the reliability of the 18-bus service with Ed Cameron, who is the new Commercial Manager at Whippet and is working to improve the service. He explained that last year Whippet took over the service with just a week's notice and so there was not time to buy buses and recruit/train drivers in advance. He highlighted that Whippet have since upgraded their bus fleet to reduce mechanical issues and there has been an improvement in the number of journeys run from 85% of scheduled journeys in Nov/Dec 2022 to 90% of scheduled journeys in Sep/Oct 2023. There is clearly still more improvement needed and Whippet are working on driver recruitment and reducing signal blackspots to improve tracking.

Whippet has recently launched a new website which includes a [live bus tracker map](#) and a [Services Update page](#) that shows cancellations via Twitter. They have also just launched a new app which is available at: [App, Tap, Go. \(whippetbus.co.uk\)](#). The key functions of the app are a live bus tracker, the ability to buy tickets in advance, and to see the service updates. These are both new so there may be a few teething issues initially.

We have been passing reports of missed services to the Passenger Transport team at the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and we're aware that they have been working to support Whippet to improve. Please continue to let us know about any problems and we will continue to liaise with them. If you would like to contact them directly the email address is: passenger.transport@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk.

Home energy efficiency upgrade schemes

On 14 September the government launched the Great British Insulation scheme to help families in lower council tax bands with less energy-efficient homes to insulate their homes. Information on eligibility and an online eligibility checker are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-great-british-insulation-scheme>.

For those who live in homes without a gas connection, there is also the Home Upgrade Grant which provides energy efficiency upgrades and low carbon heating. An online eligibility checker is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-home-upgrade-grant>.

Electrical safety campaign – a message from Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service are urging residents to keep in mind some simple steps when using electrical devices, especially those with Lithium-Ion batteries. The idea is that by following a few simple safety measures, like adding fire safety to your bedtime routine and being awake when using and charging some devices or appliances, people can keep themselves and their families safe in their homes. Information is available at their [Take Charge and Be Safe!](#) Page.