

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – March 2024

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 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 handy person service and; support if you are in distress.

Are you claiming the right benefits?

SCDC is making a big push to raise awareness of benefits entitlements. It's estimated that around 25% of some benefits go unclaimed. There is an easy-to-use on-line benefits calculator at: <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

Energy saving schemes

Action on Energy is a partnership of councils across Cambridgeshire – including South Cambridgeshire District Council - helping to support people to create more energy efficient homes, which, in turn, makes them cheaper to heat and more comfortable to live in. The partnership coordinates, and offers advice on grants including:

- The [Home Upgrade Grant 2 \(HUG2\)](#), offers funding from government, delivered by Action on Energy and can provide home energy efficiency improvements for people on low incomes with properties not heated by gas. The funding aims to make the poorest performing homes more efficient by installing improvements like insulation, solar panels, and heat pumps.
- [Boiler upgrade](#) scheme to replace gas boilers with cleaner heating systems.
- The [ECO4](#) and [Great British Insulation](#) schemes.

Find out more about the funding schemes and advice available on the [Action on Energy website](#). Simply visit the 'Get in Touch' page and complete the short [grant funding application form](#).

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.

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/>

Full Council

South Cambridgeshire District Council budget

Full Council recently voted to approve the Budgets and Business Plan for the next 12 months.

The budget is intended to continue to grow services and includes significant investment in the council's recycling and waste collection service, funding for new staff to tackle fly-tipping, and the expansion of the Zero Carbon Communities scheme, which has supported projects across the district. It also continues to include the council's transformation programme, which is a long-term process to drive improvements in customer service and to save money. For example, within Revenue and Benefits there's been £1/4 million worth of savings already, with an expected further £1/4 million to come.

Commercial investments bring in around £7 million per year, which helps to mitigate the large cuts in Government support in recent years. If it were not for the expectation of a future redistribution of business tax revenue (via the Government's Fair Funding Review), then SCDC would have a projected surplus to 2029.

However, financial pressures and high inflation have meant that SCDC, along with most councils in the UK, has increased council tax by the maximum. With price inflation remaining at around double the Bank of England target of 2%, a £5 per year, or 3.1% increase, in council tax for the average band D home has been agreed to ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. This is an increase of around 10p per week, and this rise maintains the council's position in the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country.

The Council Tax relief threshold has been increased in line with inflation so that people on the lowest incomes can continue to claim. SCDC is one of the few councils offering up to 100% relief for those residents most in need.

Rent increases were also agreed to allow continued upgrading of council housing stock to make it more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to live in. The plan is to deliver 75 new council homes for rent and shared ownership, as well as continue to improve the insulation and heating for existing council housing.

You can find out more and access the reports via: [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 27 February 2024, 2.00 p.m. \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#).

Care experience will be treated as a protected characteristic

SCDC passed a motion where it will now treat care experience as a protected characteristic – meaning that when the council makes decisions moving forward, as part of its Equality Impact Assessments, it will now also assess the impact on care leavers. This is a positive step towards treating care leavers more inclusively in society and was agreed unanimously by district councillors. The County Council, Combined Authority, Peterborough City Council and Cambridge City Council have all passed similar motions. Part of the motion was to call on town and parish councils to also take a similar step in support of care leavers.

Support of the White Ribbon Campaign

SCDC also passed a motion in support of the White Ribbon Campaign, after a decision was taken to seek accreditation with them. White Ribbon are a domestic abuse advocacy organisation who work to provide education against domestic abuse, in particular violence against women. This motion was also agreed unanimously.

Planning

Planning monitoring report

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (between Cambridge City and SCDC councils) has set out the progress made during the past years on building sustainable and affordable new homes. The latest monitoring report (April 2022 to March 2023) shows that:

- The councils remain on track to deliver the need for homes identified in their adopted Local Plans. This includes 794 new affordable homes which were completed in 2022/23 – with 322 in Cambridge and 472 in South Cambridgeshire.
- Three new Neighbourhood Plans—West Wickham, Gamlingay, and Fulbourn—were agreed.
- Employment floorspace increased by 21,338 sqm, which included new office and technology research facilities at Melbourn Science Park.
- Planning policies in both council areas positively impacted climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, with planning permissions including water efficiency and carbon reduction conditions

You can read more of the findings and access the full report via:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/report-shows-increase-in-building-sustainable-and-affordable-homes/>.

Biodiversity net gain requirements

The legal requirement for developers to deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain on new major housing developments came into effect on the 12th February 2024. For smaller sites of between 1 and 9 dwellings, biodiversity net gain comes into effect on the 2nd April. Biodiversity net gain is a pivotal component of the 2021 Environment Act, which allowed a two-year transition before coming into law.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has taken proactive measures in anticipation of this significant new environmental legislation. These include rewriting local guidance on biodiversity, expanding our Ecology Team, and working with neighbouring councils.

The importance of biodiversity and our natural environment are steadily emerging as central topics in environmental discussions, mirroring the heightened awareness surrounding carbon emissions. There is a growing consensus among residents and policy makers on the critical need to protect and enrich our natural habitats.

Alarming statistics reveal that the UK has witnessed a staggering 60% decline in biodiversity over the past five decades, according to the Environment Bank. This loss has not only impacted humans but has also led to habitat degradation and a decline in animal populations. Cambridgeshire faces challenges with its historically low amount of land dedicated to nature, primarily dominated by monoculture arable farming, which has resulted in poor biodiversity levels.

Under these new regulations, developers will be required to demonstrate a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain above the baseline lost due to their developments. Strict guidelines have been established to ensure accurate submission and verification of evidence. Developers found to provide incorrect data on existing biodiversity could face fines of up to £5,000.

The Built and Natural Environment Team in the shared planning service has put two new measures in place to help applicants: a) a technical guidance note and b) a bespoke pre-application advice service. More details can be found at:

<https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/planning-applications/pre-application-advice-service/biodiversity-net-gain-advice/>

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning secures funding to improve digital planning services and biodiversity

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has successfully secured funding totalling £375,000 from the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) in its latest PropTech funding round.

This funding will be used to streamline the planning process, improve the way planning proposals are assessed and managed, and provide clearer information about proposed developments identified in the emerging Local Plan. Through these digital tools, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning aims to make Local Plan consultations easier to understand and visualise, foster greater transparency, and boost environmental enhancement efforts across Greater Cambridge.

The first project, allocated £225,000 and dedicated to the 'Local Plan Site Assessment Process,' will see the integration of 3D modelling technology into the Local Plan process. Developers will be able to submit their proposals in 3D, allowing site assessors to better understand potential impacts to determine whether the proposal would be suitable based on the local context and sensitivities like Conservation Areas, listed buildings and important viewpoints. For the sites put forward in the new Local Plan, residents would be able to view these proposals in 3D images, showing how the development could look. It is hoped that this will bring this part of the Local Plan to life for residents and in turn be able to make better informed comments on the proposals.

The second project granted £150,000 and dedicated to 'Biodiversity Net Gain' underscores Greater Cambridge Shared Planning's commitment to environmental sustainability and conservation. With the recent national requirements for biodiversity to be enhanced as a result of a new development, the funding will allow the councils to accurately monitor how this is being achieved across the Greater Cambridge area. The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning's Ecology team will be able to import, manage, verify, report on, and monitor biodiversity data to ensure that new development makes a lasting positive impact on local biodiversity habitats and species.

Housing

More new, modern council homes for South Cambridgeshire

The District Council has signed a deal for 23 newly-built, modern council homes at the Redrow Homes developments in Barrington and Cottenham.

The homes benefit from modern double-glazed windows and high-quality insulation as well as a high specification on the build. Some homes also have Electric Vehicle chargers.

In Barrington, 13 homes will be available at All Saints Gardens:

- 2 x 2 bed shared ownership houses
- 4 x 1 bed maisonettes for affordable rent
- 7 x 2 bed terraced houses for affordable rent.

In Cottenham, 10 homes will be available at Cottenham Grove:

- 2 x 3 bed shared ownership houses
- 2 x 2 bed shared ownership houses
- 2 x 1 bed maisonette affordable rent
- 4 x 2 bed terraced houses affordable rent.

For enquiries about the shared ownership properties, please contact William H Brown by email at SCDC@williamhbrown.co.uk. For interest in the affordable rent homes, you will need to be registered with Home-Link at <https://www.home-link.org.uk/choice/>.

Private sector housing Landlord Forum

SCDC is hosting an online private sector housing Landlord Forum on Thursday 7 March from 6pm to 8pm. The agenda includes:

- Fire Prevention: Focus on e-bikes and e-scooters (Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service)
- Damp and mould in the private rented sector
- Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards
- A Q&A session

This is a free event - but you'll need to secure your place. To do so, email env.health@scambs.gov.uk.

Home adaptations

Last year Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency (Cambs HIA) helped more than a hundred families in the District access grants such as Disabled Facilities Grants and Special Purpose Grants to undertake adaptations and repairs in their homes. Adaptations in homes can help prevent accidents, assist people with long term health conditions and help people live comfortably and independently.

Cambs HIA is strategic partnership between South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council dedicated to enhancing the living conditions of residents, particularly focusing on older adults, individuals with disabilities, and those with limited incomes. Please use this link to find out more: <https://www.cambshia.org/>.

Communities

Over £500,000 in community grants awarded in 2023

South Cambridgeshire communities benefited from grants totalling over £500,000 from the District Council last year (2023). This funding was awarded through nine grant schemes with various focus areas such as promoting community well-being, environmental sustainability, and inclusive participation.

You can find out more about all the different grant schemes that the District Council offers at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/grants>.

The grants were made up of the following:

- £80,321 in Community Chest grants was awarded to 54 voluntary and community sector groups, charities, and public sector bodies to help further improve quality of life of residents in the district. For example, Cambourne Town Football Club received £1,143.96 to start a Community Football Kit Exchange where people can donate and collect good quality items of football kit for reuse. Swavesey Parish Council received £330 for five large, raised planting beds in which to plant drought tolerant species, to create a community garden and to encourage insects and pollinators back into the area.
- Six grants amounting to £71,708 were given out through the Council's Mobile Warden Schemes which have been set up to support older people to live independently in their homes and stay in their community.
- 11 Service Support Grants worth £173,900 were granted to help the Voluntary and Community Sector provide services and support to local residents. This includes Care Network Cambridgeshire who received £8,000 for the development and support of Community Car Schemes to assist the elderly and vulnerable within South Cambridgeshire. Citizens Advice Cambridge & District also received £100,000 to provide free, independent and impartial advice to residents of South Cambridgeshire on their rights and responsibilities.
- The Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme which helps communities to take action on climate change at a very local level awarded £125,901 to nine applicants. Cambridge Carbon Footprint were awarded £15,000 to develop their network of repair cafes in the district. The grant will support the set-up of new cafes in South Cambridgeshire, train volunteers in how to

run cafes, and provide them with support and resources to thrive – including a new toolkit supported by local businesses. CCF received a further £11,095 to continue their work supporting individuals and communities to upgrade homes and reduce energy use – providing thermal camera loans, free tours of low carbon homes and a Home Energy Officer to guide people in reducing energy consumption and retrofitting their homes.

- 49 parish councils received trees worth £4,973 through the six free trees scheme.
- The District Council's Long Term Health grant is aimed at supporting residents with chronic health problems and will be available to groups and organisations who provide physical activity programmes for people with specific health conditions. £13,312 was awarded to 9 organisations with Active with Parkinson's Sawston and the Body Toning class at Shelford Cancer centre both receiving £2,000 of this.
- Five leisure centres received £4,698 to restart fitness classes that stopped during Covid. Anglian Leisure Linton, Cambourne Leisure Centre and Melbourn Sports Centre all received £1,000.
- An Electric vehicle Charge point grant gave £15,000 to 3 applicants. Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust received £5,000 towards four EV chargers at Milton Country Park.
- Tenant community grants help fund a project, by up to £1000, that benefits the local community. £5948 was given to 8 applicants including St Vincents Close in Girton which received £1000 to start a communal garden as well as Coolidge Gardens in Cottenham also receiving £1000 for a communal outdoor seating area for residents and visitors to socialise.
- The Ukraine Small Grant which promotes the integration of Ukrainian guests into the South Cambs community gave out £5,512 to 19 applicants. One of these was the Ukrainian HAM Centre to run a Children's Drawing Competition. The project supported Ukrainian children aged five to 10 years. The drawings were sent to soldiers on the front line.

New Changing Places toilet opens at Imperial War Museum Duxford

A Changing Places toilet has opened at Imperial War Museum (IWM) Duxford providing extra space and specialist equipment for visitors with profound or multiple disabilities. It is only the third Changing Places toilet in South Cambridgeshire, providing additional disabled-friendly features like an adult size changing bed and a hoist for safe lifting.

IWM Duxford was inspired to set up the specialist toilet space following a visit by Peterborough-based charity, [Little Miracles](#), who support families with children with additional needs and life limiting health conditions.

The museum approached SCDC who secured £120,000 of funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as part of £30 million earmarked by the government to increase the number of Changing Places toilets across the country.

Established in 2005, the [Changing Places campaign](#) wants Changing Places toilets to be installed in all big public spaces so that people can access their community and use a toilet facility with dignity and hygienically. Changing Places toilets are provided in addition to, and not in place of, standard disabled toilets.

An estimated 240,000 people are unable to use standard toilets, according to the campaign consortium, with the number increasing rapidly. People who require a Changing Places toilet include those with profound and multiple disabilities whether physical or learning, such as muscle-wasting conditions, cerebral palsy, or those who have suffered major physical trauma, or a stroke.

The other Changing Places toilets in South Cambridgeshire are at Bar Hill Tesco and the Extra Cambridge Services on the A14/M11. Opening soon will be a Changing Places facility at the Western Park Pavilion in Northstowe.

The new Duxford facility adds to more than 1,937 Changing Places toilets across the UK.

Civil Parking Enforcement – tickets with fines are now being issued

Civil Parking Enforcement has been live in South Cambridgeshire since late December. Since the 1st February, tickets with fines have begun to be issued by Cambridgeshire County Council's Civil Parking Enforcement Officers.

The officers can only enforce restrictions that are in place, such as parking on single or double yellow lines, or the footpath where restrictions are adjacent. Other parking matters, such as causing an obstruction by parking on the pavement will remain police matters.

There will be two enforcement officers dedicated to South Cambridgeshire as part of a wider team that enforce the scheme in Cambridge City. It is not possible for the officers to be everywhere all the time and work has been done by Cambridgeshire County Council, utilising available data and insights, to maximise the time they spend enforcing and minimising travel time across the large rural area they will cover. These plans will be reviewed as the team learn more from their patrols.

For further information you can visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CPE.

4 day working week trial

In response to some requests, all of the data that is being submitted weekly to DLUHC is being published on the website for the public to look at – if you have lots of free time and energy to do so. The original aim was to publish this at the end of March when the trial completes along with a lot of information to help it make sense. The BBC reported a lot of positive things about the trial but did point out that money had been spent on agency staff in the Finance team and the Waste teams recently. The Finance team is automating a lot of its operations and will need fewer staff so when vacancies occur are using temps rather than having to make permanent people redundant. During the recent changes to the bin collection rounds (as every council does every few years) some additional lorries and crews were used so that no one went too long without a collection.

Information on the trial is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial>. The data submitted to DLUHC is available at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/best-value-notice-data-requests/>.

Award shortlisting

The Council has been shortlisted as a finalist in the [iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2024](#) in the Efficiency and Effectiveness category for the four-day week trial. The category is described as looking for an organisation that has “*harnessed the real potential in their organisation, delivering elevated performance, creating efficiencies, and delivering outstanding customer service with improved value to their residents. Above all, this organisation has shown its ability to adapt to a fast-paced and ever-changing environment, while achieving fantastic results in doing so.*” The other finalists are Kent Police and Swindon Borough Council. The winner will be announced on Wednesday 6 March.

Green Business Impact Programme

The [Green Business Impact Programme](#) can help local SMEs create a practical plan to deliver on Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) targets, through free tailored advice from environmental experts from [PECT](#) and [Allia](#).

If you have any questions about the scheme, please contact the Business Support Team at OpenForBusiness@scambs.gov.uk.

Police online community meetings

Our local police team hold an on-line community meeting every quarter – anyone who'd like to attend is very welcome. You can hear about recent activity, share any concerns, and help shape future activity.

The next event is 7-8 pm Wednesday 22nd May.

You can book and find out more at: <https://www.cambs.police.uk/police-forces/cambridgeshire-constabulary/areas/campaigns/nhp/neighbourhood-policing/South-Cambridgeshire/>.

Measles

Cases of measles are rising in some areas of the country. Make sure you and your family are protected by having both doses of the free MMR vaccine. Measles is more than just a rash – it is an infection which spreads very easily and can cause serious complications in some people. Find out more about measles, including symptoms and how you can get vaccinated at: <https://www.cpics.org.uk/measles>.

EWR preparing for the Development Consent Order (DCO)

EWR Co. has published an [article](#) about this year's consultation programme. They state:

During the first stage of the consultation, we will share our updated proposals, as well as updated information on design areas. We will also provide an overview of potential environmental impacts and mitigations. Building upon the work we've completed to date, our proposals will be presented in more detail than in previous rounds of non-statutory consultations and will again seek feedback from the public.

We will then analyse and consider all consultation responses to finalise a single proposal for the entire route, which will be presented in the second stage of the statutory consultation, before the submission of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

Before we launch the first stage of the statutory consultation, we'll develop a Statement of Community Consultation (SoCC). This document sets out how local communities will be consulted on the process and will provide an overview of the two-stage approach to the statutory consultation. As part of the requirements of the SoCC, we'll consult local authorities across the route on the draft SoCC to ensure that our plans meet the needs of the communities along the route by enabling as many people as possible to share their views with us during both stages of the statutory consultation.

In advance of the consultation this year, we will share another update which confirms the consultation dates, information about what we're asking for feedback on, as well as how you can get involved.