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# Report: County Councillor (Hardwick div.) District Councillor (Harston & Comberton) Cllr Michael Atkins March 2024

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## Highlights

- A14 flooding
- Holiday Activity and Food programme – Easter bookings open
- District Council Budget
- Cambridge 2040/2050
- Contact information

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## *News from the County*

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### A14 flooding

Residents may be aware of significant flooding on the A14 between Junctions 37 (Newmarket) and 38 (Red Lodge). National Highways are continuing to pump water off the road (12m litres so far), but will need to carry out additional resilience works, requiring night closures and/or day lane closures, alongside temporary speed restrictions over the next few weeks. Please allow extra time for any journeys and obey any speed restrictions as they will be actively monitored.

### Shire Hall back on the market

Bids are invited for the lease or purchase of part of the Shire Hall site in Cambridge, after the previous preferred bidder was unable to continue their interest. Shire Hall had been the County Council's headquarters since the 1930s, but the site itself was the seat of government in Cambridge for over a thousand years. Previously the site of two medieval castles, the building was the county council's administrative centre from its completion in 1933 until 2022, when the council relocated to Alconbury as part of its planned savings programme. Interest bidders should consult:

<https://propertylink.estategazette.com/property-details/6943307-shire-hall-site-castle-street-cb3>

### Further changes in Council composition

We are awaiting the by-election in Yaxley; in the meantime, Cllr Prentice has moved from the Conservatives to join the Independent Group which is part of the Joint Administration.

### Holiday Activities and Food Easter programme

Children who are normally eligible for free school meals should have received a voucher for 16 hrs of access to HAF schemes from 2-12<sup>th</sup> April. Bookings are now open so please make sure that you take full advantage of local options. This is an excellent scheme to support families who may be struggling (or close to struggling) so do publicise it.

### 20mph zone funding deadline this month (repeat)

The 2024/25 round of funding for 20mph zones has now opened, both for new and resubmitted applications. The deadline for submissions is 5pm on 15<sup>th</sup> March. The website has been updated with

the latest details and advice here: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/improving-the-local-highway/20mph-funding>

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## News from GCP & Combined Authority

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### News from the District

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#### Budget

On the 27<sup>th</sup> February the Council approved the administration's budget and business plan for the 2024/25 period.

The Council remains on a secure financial footing in the short-term, however if the much delayed Fair Funding Review is completed by central Government the Council would lose most of its business rates income and would likely be facing significant deficits. To help mitigate this possibility Council Tax for the District will rise by £5 for a typical Band D home i.e. about a 3% increase. Thanks to our strong commercial and investment income, the Council remains one of the lowest taxing authorities in the UK.

In the meantime we will continue to support services where these are valued by residents, including activities such as grant making (see below) which have disappeared from many localities across the country.

#### Council hands out over £500,000 in grants 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.

#### Cambridge 2040/2050

We are awaiting further details on Mr Gove's ambition to transform Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire into the UK's Silicon Valley, including 250,000 new homes. Given that the Environment Agency has paused our much more limited proposed developments until the looming crisis in water supplies is resolved (by the utility companies), there are clearly a number of issues to be considered before this scheme can be considered practical.

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## Contact Details

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

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