

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – September 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.

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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>

The Local Wildlife Trust is the new council charity of the year

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has been chosen as charity of the year by the new Chair of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

From protecting precious pollinators to restoring wildflower meadows and safeguarding endangered species, the partnership will shine a spotlight on the vital work being done to protect local wildlife and wild spaces.

As the newly appointed Chair, Cllr Peter Sandford selected the [Wildlife Trust BCN](#) in recognition of its vital work protecting local wildlife and restoring natural habitats across the region. Cllr Sandford said: "Nature is at the heart of our communities, and the work of Wildlife Trust BCN is more important than ever. From preserving ancient woodlands to inspiring young people through education, their efforts make a real difference to both people and the planet. I'm honoured to support them."

Wildlife Trust BCN manages over 100 nature reserves and leads numerous conservation and community engagement projects. The Chair's support aims to help raise awareness and funds for the Trust's ongoing mission to create a wilder future for everyone.

Is there a need for affordable housing for people with a local connection?

The Housing team at South Cambridgeshire District Council is investigating whether there are opportunities for rural exception sites in local villages. These are small scale developments outside of the development framework that provide affordable housing and can be set up to prioritise people with an existing connection to the area.

If there is some interest, then an early step is to arrange a housing needs survey to understand what the needs in the village are. These are funded by a registered housing provider so there is no cost for this to the parish. There is also support available from Cambridgeshire ACRE.

There is some information about rural exception sites at:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/affordable-housing-development/rural-exception-sites>

Planning

Consultation open on how section 106 obligations are used to mitigate the impacts of new developments

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, on behalf of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, are re-consulting on the Draft Greater Cambridge Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The SPD provides detailed guidance on how planning obligations, also known as section 106 contributions, will be used to mitigate the impacts of new developments across Greater Cambridge. These financial contributions from developers go towards infrastructure that mitigates the impact of new development for homes or businesses. Examples include new schools and roads, upgrading playgrounds, or providing additional waste collection services. The draft SPD sets out our proposed approach and clarifies this process for both developers and residents, ultimately aiming to reduce delays in securing necessary infrastructure.

A draft version of the SPD was previously consulted on between November 2024 and January 2025 and 198 representations were received. The results of the consultation were taken to [South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet meeting](#) and the [Cambridge City Council Planning and Transport Scrutiny Committee meeting in March 2025](#). It was agreed at both meetings that subject to the draft Planning Obligations SPD providing additional evidence and making necessary revisions, another round of public consultation could take place in Summer 2025.

Public consultation on the Draft Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document is open from 9am on Friday 22nd August and will run until 5pm on Friday 17th October 2025.

Please visit www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/supplementary-planning-documents/ to view the documents and find out how to comment.

Paper copies of the documents can also be viewed at the Customer Service desks at Mandela House, Cambridge and at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne. There will also be copies at the Central Library, Cambridge and viewing materials available at in-person events.

Government pulls funding for Cambridge wastewater plant relocation to Honey Hill

Despite recently approving the relocation of the Cambridge wastewater plant to Honey Hill to allow a housing development of around 3,900 homes in North East Cambridge, the government has now announced that the funding has been withdrawn. This may have an impact on the proposals for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which aims to set out sufficient development for the area and locate homes where they have the least climate impact, where active and public transport is the natural choice, where green infrastructure can be delivered alongside new development, and where jobs, services and facilities can be located near to where people live.

Using technology to summarise public consultation responses

A groundbreaking new AI tool, PlanAI, developed by researchers at the University of Liverpool, has summarised thousands of pages of public consultation responses in just minutes, showing the potential to support planning officers in future public consultations.

Funded by the Government's PropTech Innovation Fund, PlanAI was developed in collaboration with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning – the shared planning service for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils.

The tool was tested on three live planning consultations, guidance documents that the Councils were consulting on relating to the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Planning Obligations, and Health Impact Assessments.

The trial results were striking: PlanAI generated detailed summaries of every individual submission and a compendium report for all three consultations in just 16 minutes. By contrast, human planners took over 60 hours to log and summarise the 320 public submissions, including over 18 hours creating summaries – longer would have been required if human planners had been tasked with producing an overview analysis of the consultation exercise as Plan AI does. In terms of the quality of the summaries, the project team found that there were no noticeable differences between the AI summaries when compared to the human generated ones. The AI-generated reports included descriptive statistics and analytical insights, offering a clear, data-driven overview of the submissions' content and themes.

The AI tool was developed by Professors Alex Lord, Alex Singleton and Dr Mark Green from the University of Liverpool's Department of Geography & Planning working in partnership with the Planning Policy and Strategy team at Greater Cambridge Shared Planning. This close collaboration was an important part of the development of the AI tool in making sure that the reports that it generates were consistent with how the Councils currently report back to local communities and elected members.

Professor Alexander Lord, Lever Chair at the University of Liverpool, explained: "The PlanAI tool harnesses the power of artificial intelligence to do what it does best – to read large volumes of text, summarise them, and identify patterns across submissions. While the GCSP planners will still read each submission when responding to them and making decisions, the tool can free up planners' time to focus on the technical aspects of plan making."

Public consultation is a legal requirement in planning, and public participation is critical—especially as planning issues often provoke strong local interest. However, local authorities often face an overwhelming volume of feedback, sometimes ranging from short notes to submissions of over 100 pages long.

Professor Lord added: "By streamlining the analysis process, PlanAI could allow planning departments to engage the public more frequently and thoroughly on a wider range of issues. This opens the door to more inclusive and democratic planning processes, without compromising the quality or depth of engagement."

Cllr Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning for South Cambridgeshire District Council, said: "Our Shared Planning service is one of the first local authorities in the UK to commission its own bespoke AI tool, as we work to provide more reliable and meaningful insights into what our local communities think about proposed developments and planning policies. The new tool is already saving planners a substantial amount of time, freeing them up from administrative tasks to focus their time where their expertise is in high demand."

Healthy living boosted for hundreds of people of all ages

Hundreds of residents of all ages have been supported to live healthier lives thanks to community programmes and initiatives delivered and managed by South Cambridgeshire District Council. From cookery classes to athletics camps, wellbeing walks and cardiac rehab, the Council is committed to inspiring healthier lifestyles for all.

Cllr Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities for the District Council, said: "It's important to help make South Cambridgeshire a healthier, happier place for everyone. We're proud of the partnerships, volunteers, and residents who made this possible through a wide range of health and wellbeing programmes. These initiatives support physical and mental health, but also strengthen community connections, reduce isolation, and empower individuals to lead more active, fulfilling lives."

Some of the successful health and wellbeing activities from 2024 – 2025 include:

- Three family cooking programmes brought together 35 residents to learn healthy eating habits and practical cooking skills. Children tried new foods, families cooked together, and confidence soared. One resident said: "Many children tried different types of food for the first time, and because they cooked it, they ate it and enjoyed it!"
- Thanks to funding from Care Together, chair-based exercise sessions were introduced in 6 sheltered housing schemes, benefiting 59 older adults. One participant said: "I have arthritis pain, but after six weeks, the pain eased, and I feel better for it."
- Health and activity advice talks reached over 175 people across 19 venues, including schools, sheltered housing and libraries. The activity talks included helping young people understand the importance of activity in changing focus, having a positive mindset and controlling stress and emotions during 2 court experience days on the dangers of knife crime.
- In schools, over 2,100 students took part in Healthy You Schools Week, with fun challenges and discussions on food and fitness, and Fit 'n' Healthy sessions helped 151 Year 5 and 6 pupils understand the link between nutrition and activity.
- The Council's physical activity coordinator supported the annual colour run day and spoke to children about healthy eating, activity. A teacher said: "The colour run, and activity village were a hit – children learned, laughed, and got moving!"
- Athletics and netball holiday sport camps welcomed over 775 children aged 7-14, supported by 58 volunteers.
- Inclusive events ensured children with disabilities could compete and thrive in outdoor and indoor athletics. These events saw a total of 194 young people get involved.
- Two new walking cricket sessions were launched in Melbourn and Cambourne, adding to eight regular walking sports sessions across the district, including football, rugby, and netball.
- Nine regular wellbeing walks now take place across the district, with three new routes added this year and 37 new walkers joined, enjoying safe, social, and supportive strolls.
- Grants of £8,300 supported activities for people with conditions like Parkinson's, cancer, and anxiety. One participant with Parkinson's said: "My balance is improved as is my tremor and arm strength. The classes lift my mood and make me feel positive. My consultant said my condition is stable – I believe the classes made the difference."
- Exercise4Fun sessions at local leisure centres saw 91 people join, with 14 achieving significant weight loss. One participant shared: "After a near-fatal accident, I gained weight and lost confidence. Now, I've lost over 5 stone and feel healthier and happier than ever."
- A total of 257 patients were referred to the Active & Healthy 4 Life exercise scheme with 102 completing the four-month programme and making exercise part of their daily lifestyle.
- A new cardiac rehab class in Cambourne supported 18 patients on their recovery journey.

Find out more about the [Exercise Referral](#) scheme, the [Cardiac Phase 4 rehabilitation](#) referral scheme, holiday [sports camps](#) for young people or email AandH4L@scambs.gov.uk

SCDC Local Climate Action Conference 2025 – Save the date!

South Cambridgeshire District Council will host its third climate conference in October, open to councillors, community groups, charities, and anyone interested in meeting the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. Attendees will also have the opportunity to input into the upcoming SCDC Climate and Nature Strategy 2026-2030 and learn about different climate-friendly initiatives around the district. Further details to follow, including the agenda, speakers, and how to register.

- When: Friday 17 October 2025, 12pm - 5pm
- Where: Storey's Field Centre, Eddington Ave, Cambridge CB3 1AA

New draft Climate and Nature Strategy

South Cambridgeshire District Council has developed a new draft Climate and Nature Strategy, with the aim of a public consultation in October 2025.

The key principles are:

- a. Lead by example with our own estate, embedding knowledge and action on climate and nature throughout the organisation to deliver success in all areas of our work.
- b. Collaborate effectively across all levels of governance, with businesses, third sector organisations, local communities and parish councils to share knowledge and work together to tackle the shared challenges faced.
- c. Prioritise actions that create co-benefits to protect and enhance nature, reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change, whilst supporting a sustainable economy and improved health and wellbeing.
- d. Maximise opportunities to accelerate delivery of our targets where appropriate, based on availability of resources and funding.

The seven key themes are:

- a. Transport
- b. Energy and Retrofit
- c. Nature and Water
- d. Sustainable Food
- e. Waste Minimisation
- f. Community Support and Behaviour Change
- g. Business, Supply Chain and Finance

If you'd like to look at the strategy ahead of the consultation, it is available at:

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1095&MId=10320&Ver=4>

Tiger bus route information

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) launched several new Tiger Bus routes earlier this year. The seven new Tiger bus routes are:

- Tiger 1 – run by Whippet: [Huntingdon to Cambridge](#)
- Tiger 2 – run by Stagecoach: [Newmarket Road P&R to Madingley Road P&R](#)
- Tiger 3 – run by Stagecoach: [Fulbourn to Grantchester](#)
- Tiger 4 – run by Stagecoach: [Newmarket to Addenbrookes](#)
- Tiger 5 – run by A2B: [Soham to Cambridge](#)
- Tiger 7 – run by Stagecoach East Midlands: [Wisbech to Chatteris](#)

To learn more, please visit: <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/tiger-bus-routes/>.

Mental Health – Closing the Gaps Summit – 8th October 2025

I've been asked to share an invitation to Healthwatch Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's Mental Health summit.

This important event aims to bring together people with lived experience, community voices, and service providers to explore ways to improve mental health services across our region.

The summit will feature keynote speeches from:

- Louis Smith MBE, Retired Olympic Gymnast
- Sarah Hughes, CEO of Mind
- Steve Grange, CEO of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust (CPFT).

Morning breakout workshops will focus on:

- Supporting children and young people with Neurodivergence
- Looking after your own mental health
- Information and advice to support people with access to benefits and access into employment
- Support for carers.

In the afternoon, there will be a Question Time-style panel featuring:

- Dr Helen Gilbert, The King's Fund
- Matt Gladstone, CEO, Peterborough City Council
- Jan Thomas, CEO, NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough ICB
- Jonathan Wells, Carer and Advocate

The event is on Wednesday 8th October 2025, at the Delta Marriott Hotel, Kingfisher Way, Huntingdon, PE29 6FL. Please use this link to sign up:

<https://www.healthwatchcambridgeshire.co.uk/form/sign-up-to-join-our-annualsummi>