

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – March 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.

Michael Atkins:	Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk	07968 264637
Ariel Cahn:	Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk	07455 128924
Lisa Redrup:	Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk	07855 324580

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 handyman 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>

Discounted menstrual cups available via Recap

Residents from South Cambridgeshire are eligible to buy a Mooncup for £5 rather than the usual £23.50. You can find out more and access the form to claim the discount at: [Get a Mooncup for £5 with Recap](#).

This discount is provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (Recap). Recap partners work together to improve waste services, increase recycling, and reduce waste. You can find out more at: <https://www.recap.co.uk/>.

Help for people working with health problems

The District Council has worked in partnership with neighbouring councils to launch a new programme called WorkWell, offering help to anyone struggling to find or keep a job due to a health problem.

To find out more, visit <https://www.growthworkswithskills.com/employer-hub/workwell/>

Council's four-day week public consultation open until 23rd March 2025

The four-day week public consultation is still open, so please share your views on the quality of South Cambridgeshire District Council's services at: www.scambs.gov.uk/4DW. Please email communications@scambs.gov.uk or call 01954 713 000 if you would prefer a paper copy. The consultation closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 23rd March.

The consultation is designed to allow residents to comment on the services they received during the four-day week trial and the information gathered during the consultation will help South Cambridgeshire District Councillors decide on the next steps for the four-day week at the Council. Please take this opportunity to comment, and a comment of 'no discernible change is as valuable as positive or negative comments.

Bringing empty homes back into use

National Empty Homes week runs between March 3rd and March 9th, and so the council is asking private property owners to turn empty houses into homes. Anyone who is looking to turn an old, neglected property into a home may be able to save thousands of pounds in VAT on renovation costs - just by contacting South Cambridgeshire District Council's Empty Homes Officer.

Home maintenance and improvements are usually charged at the standard rate of 20% VAT. However, the Government offers a 5% VAT rate on renovations for properties that have been unoccupied for more than two years – but were lived in beforehand. Anyone who has recently purchased, or is about to buy, an empty property which meets these criteria simply needs to contact the Council. The Empty Homes Officer can then provide paperwork needed to confirm the house was unoccupied - triggering a substantial saving. To see if you qualify, email env.health@scambs.gov.uk and provide as much information as possible on the property you have recently purchased or are looking to purchase.

Over the last 2 years, efforts by the District Council have helped bring around 60 empty homes back into use. In addition to providing the paperwork to allow VAT reductions, the council has also issued Community Protection Warnings, and if needed legally enforceable Community Protection Notices, on severely overgrown and neglected empty homes, supported owners to sell empty homes at auction, and worked with a Probate Genealogist to successfully trace ownership in several complex cases.

As part of other efforts to bring local empty homes back into use - [Council Tax will be doubled](#) on long-term vacant and second properties in South Cambridgeshire from April 2026. The aim is to encourage people to sell or rent their properties to tackle the national housing shortfall - which is particularly acute in South Cambridgeshire. Council estimates suggest there are around 2,640 empty homes in the district, and a further 360 second properties.

For more support to help bring an empty property back into use – such as details of the Council's Shire Homes private sector leasing scheme or its Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme – [visit the District Council website](#).

The year ahead...

South Cambridgeshire District Council has approved its new [Corporate Plan](#) for the next few years with the main aspiration being to 'create a better district to the benefit of everyone in our communities'. It has also agreed a new [Corporate Action Plan](#) that outlines the specific actions the council will take to achieve its aspirations. This includes new websites for the Council (launching on Tuesday 25th March 2025) and the shared planning and waste services to make it easier for residents to access services, find information and complete tasks online.

It also includes preparations to begin collecting residents' food waste every week from 1st April 2026. This involves providing households with a 5-litre indoor caddy, caddy liners and a 23-litre outdoor caddy, procuring up to 22 food waste collection vehicles, hiring up to 66 additional staff, and expansion of the depot. This change in bin collections is required by government and will allow food waste to be used to generate renewable energy by anaerobic digestion.

Balancing the budget

South Cambridgeshire District Council has agreed to increase the SCDC portion of Council Tax by £5.09 per year for the average band D home to help ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. This means that the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council will be £175.40 per year. This is still expected to maintain the Council's position among the lowest 25% of District Councils in the country when it comes to its Council Tax charge.

Less than half of the District Council's annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. Other funding sources include some outside of the Council's control, such as Business Rates and grants, whilst funding is also generated from investments.

Most of the Council Tax that South Cambridgeshire District Council collects is passed to Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and parish or town councils. Some is also passed to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, to support local buses.

Local Government Reorganisation

Due to the government's plans to replace District and County Councils with Unitary Councils covering around 500,000 people, SCDC (and other local councils) needs to submit a letter to the Government by the 21st March 2025 with interim plans for this change. Due to the complexities involved it is likely that this letter will include the options under early consideration and potential criteria to assess those options rather than a firm plan.

At SCDC, this submission will be discussed at an [Extraordinary Council Meeting at 6pm on the 19th March](#), before being approved [by Cabinet at another additional meeting at 7.30pm on the 19th March](#). At the time of writing, the meeting agendas are not yet available.

The first set of papers covering local government reorganisation has been published by Fenland District Council ahead of their Extraordinary Council Meeting on the 14th March. If you're interested to look at them, they are available at: [Agenda for Council on Friday, 14th March, 2025, 5.30 pm - Fenland District Council](#)

Later stages in the process of reorganisation include submitting full proposals to the Government by the 28th November 2025. Elections for the new unitary councils would be likely in 2027 and there would then be a year where the new unitary councils are being set up and the current councils continue to operate.