

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – November 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.

Tackling period poverty with environmentally friendly menstrual products

South Cambridgeshire District Council is once again providing free environmentally friendly menstrual products for hundreds more residents to help tackle period poverty. Councillors agreed to champion the cause, to ensure dignity for all. A funding pot of almost £10,000 has been agreed for the project, which will offer South Cambridgeshire residents a choice of one of three period product packs - either washable pads, period pants or reusable period cups.

Hey Girls, a UK-wide social enterprise, will be distributing the packs, and [residents can now apply online](#). The scheme will run on a 'first come, first served' basis.

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>

Christmas market – Sunday 7th December at Cambourne Village College

Save the date for the annual SCDC indoor Christmas market in Cambourne. They'll be around 100 local businesses stalls offering a fantastic variety of gifts, crafts, festive treats, and hot food - there's something for everyone!

'How are we doing?' survey launched

SCDC has launched a new survey at www.scambs.gov.uk/leave-feedback to give residents, businesses and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the Council's services – both positive and negative – to ensure that we are delivering the best services possible. Feedback will be reported to the Leadership Team and the appropriate teams. Official complaints or service requests should still go through the usual channels.

Planning

Greater Cambridge Local Plan consultation

SCDC and Cambridge City Council have been working together on a combined Greater Cambridge Local Plan. This will set future land use and local planning policy and so it is important that everyone has a chance to provide their feedback. A public consultation on the proposals will take place between 1st December 2025 and 31st January 2026. These times have been chosen to enable submission of the Local Plan to the Secretary of State by the end of 2026.

If you'd like to look at the draft proposals ahead of the consultation, you can access the report for the [Scrutiny and Overview committee meeting](#) where it will be discussed on the 6th November or the [scrutiny document pack](#). Alternatively, you can wait until a more user-friendly version becomes available in readiness for the consultation.

New Planning website

The new Planning website is designed to give users a cleaner, more streamlined user journey, as content that was split across three sites is moved into one. You can enter your postcode to instantly view planning information relevant to your area, including conservation areas, live planning applications, tree preservation orders, listed buildings and flood zones.

You can view the website at: <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/>. It officially launches on the 2nd December, but before then you can choose to explore the new site and provide any feedback you may have.

Fens Reservoir consultation – closes 10th December 2025

The Phase 3 consultation for a new reservoir in the Fens will close on Wednesday 10th December 2025. Locally, proposed works relate to transfer of the water into the area, which involves a new service reservoir at Madingley along with a supply pipeline. Since the previous consultation, Anglian Water has extended the area identified for the service reservoir to include additional land that may be needed for an outfall pipeline connecting the reservoir to the Bin Brook stream.

You can find out more about the plans, details of community events and access the consultation at <https://fensreservoir.co.uk/>.

Empty properties transformed into modern family homes across the district

A major milestone has been reached in tackling long-term empty homes in South Cambridgeshire, with 75 properties brought back into use in the last three years.

Success stems from the District Council's strategic decision to appoint an Empty Homes Officer in 2022 - an initiative that has transformed neglected properties into vibrant homes for new families, eased housing pressures, and revitalised communities across the district.

Cllr Natalie Warren Green, Lead Cabinet Member for Environment for South Cambridgeshire District Council, said: "A recent case involved a home in Comberton, which had been empty for 17 years with an overgrown garden. Thanks to our intervention and support the property has been renovated and sold as a striking modern home for a new family. The work to enable this highlights the dedication and persistence required to bring long-term vacant properties back into use and showcases the transformative work happening quietly behind the scenes by our Empty Homes Officer. Their role supports families, unlocks housing potential, and breathes new life into communities. We're committed to tackling empty properties and creating opportunities for them to become homes again. This is a fantastic example of what can be achieved with the right support. We encourage anyone who either owns or knows of an empty property to get in touch. Whether it's been vacant for years or just recently, we're here to help bring it back into use - and make a real difference to local neighbourhoods."

To find out more about our work bringing empty homes back into use visit our [webpage](#).

Council campaign secures free school meals for 81 extra children in South Cambridgeshire

More than 80 extra children in South Cambridgeshire are now receiving free school meals, thanks to a pioneering initiative between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County council. The campaign combined an innovative IT system called the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT), designed to identify residents who may be eligible for benefits, and a data sharing agreement between the two councils to identify and contact families eligible for support but not currently claiming it.

The additional free school meals are expected to be worth more than £314,000 to the 66 families over the lifetime of their claims – if they claim from now until their children reach the end of year 11. For each of the 81 extra children now claiming free school meals, South Cambridgeshire schools will also receive extra funding called the pupil premium, aimed at improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The additional funding schools will receive is worth £116,555 in its first year alone and is expected to be worth more than £1 million (£1,020,560) should families claim from now until each child reaches year 11.

One young parent in Cambourne, now receiving free school meals after being contacted as part of the joint campaign, said: “It really will make all the difference. I’ve been going without things to try and pay for their meals. I’ve gone without things like clothing and haircuts - basic things most people don’t think twice about - because there just wasn’t enough money that month. It’s not just the school meals, although these are absolutely massive - it helps with everything. I had to tell my son that he couldn’t do Geography because I couldn’t afford the school trip that went with it. My kids have always come first, and I’m so grateful that they’ll be able to eat well without me having to make those sacrifices.”

Since adopting the LIFT system 12 months ago, South Cambridgeshire District Council has helped secure nearly 1,000 additional claims for residents for a range of benefits they were previously unaware of. These claims are worth over £500,000 to residents in their first year alone, with a lifetime value of nearly £4 million based on average claim lengths. In addition to the families now claiming free school meals, this includes:

- 113 households now receiving [Pension Credit](#)
- 65 households now receiving [Healthy Start](#)
- 480 households receiving a payment from the Household Support Fund
- 69 households now on a reduced water tariff.

Council leaders welcome multi-million-pound investment in Greater Cambridge – but say more detail is needed

The leaders of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils have welcomed the Government’s announcement that they will invest up to £400 million to help solve some of the challenges that hamper inclusive and sustainable growth in the area.

The Government announced on Thursday 23rd October their intention to consult on setting up a centrally led Development Corporation to help plan, manage, and deliver large-scale development projects in Greater Cambridge.

Council leaders have said for many years that national intervention on matters such as water supply, wastewater, power, transport and healthcare has been urgently needed and have lobbied successive governments. Lack of water supply and infrastructure to deal with wastewater is already insufficient to ensure all the current locally planned high quality new communities and homes can be delivered.

The leaders of the councils have said that, like any announcement of this kind, further discussion and details are now needed to understand the Government’s intentions and to ensure it also supports local priorities.

Both councils will work with Government to ensure decisions on the precise form and purpose that any development corporation takes are shaped and informed by good evidence and input from the democratically elected and accountable leaders for the area. Once more information is known the Government will consult local residents on setting up a development corporation, allowing local voices to be heard.

The Government's announcement included:

- Up to £400 million of initial government funding to kickstart development
- A pledge to increase the supply of affordable homes
- Investment in infrastructure
- Business expansion – with £15 million for the University of Cambridge for a proposed Innovation Hub to create lab space for science start-ups to grow and compete on the global stage

Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire District Council, said: “We have lobbied successive governments for national support on the infrastructure we need, including on wastewater and water supply. We've also made clear time and time again the challenges our local area faces when it comes to traffic and public transport. Getting this right is a top priority if we are to continue to ensure Greater Cambridge is a great place to live, grow-up, work and learn.

“We recognise that a Development Corporation's capabilities, including the ability to call upon the resources of the Government, do potentially provide a means to address some of these challenges but it's key that local voices shape any decisions about our area.

“An intention to also increase the number of truly affordable homes is also very welcome but, like any announcement of this kind, we need to understand the detail that sits behind it and how it can become a reality. It's also personally very welcome that ministers have recognised our advocacy for growth in a way that protects more land for nature and will soon be setting out plans for a new forest locally.

“We will be working with Government to ensure we get this information, and we will want to be sure that the priorities of local people are fully considered. We know that for a Development Corporation to be formed the Government will need to consult. When all the information is available and the Government is able to do that, we will ensure we encourage everyone locally to have their voice heard.”

Government proposals to increase the number of planning permissions granted

The government has announced that housebuilding near well-connected train stations will receive a default “yes” in future if they meet certain rules. Housebuilders will be encouraged to build more homes near these transport links and there will be minimum housing density standards for these sites.

Councils in England will also be required to inform the government when they intend to reject new housing developments of 150 homes or more. The Housing Secretary would then be able to have the final say on whether they should go ahead.

These changes will be introduced with proposals to streamline the statutory consultee process.

Report warns of widespread drought in 2026 without a wet winter

The Environment Agency has published its [Drought Prospects Report](#) examining the weather needed through the winter to ensure the country's current low water levels recover by spring 2026. Despite recent rainfall, the drought situation across the country is still precarious following a record dry spring and a continued run of heatwaves and dry weather

throughout the summer. The new report analyses three different rainfall scenarios over winter and what each one would mean for water security across England's regions ahead of next year's traditionally drier months. Without average rainfall, most of England will experience a drought with widespread impacts felt by consumers, farmers, businesses, and nature. The Environment Agency is urging the public to continue to play their part and use water wisely through winter, in anticipation of another drought year.

Press release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/report-warns-of-widespread-drought-in-2026-without-a-wet-winter>