

## South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

### District Councillors' Monthly Report – July 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:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.Atkins@scambs.gov.uk</a>	07968 264637
Ariel Cahn:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.CahnA@scambs.gov.uk</a>	07455 128924
Lisa Redrup:	<a href="mailto:Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk">Cllr.Redrup@scambs.gov.uk</a>	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 handy person 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:

Toft Community Hub, High Street, Toft, CB23 2RL.

Opening times: Mondays, 10:30am – 12:30pm

Grantchester Communal Hall, Tabrum Close, Grantchester, Cambridge, CB3 9NW

Opening times: Friday, 10am – 12pm

Find out more at: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-and-people/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 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/>.

## Healthy Start vouchers for parents of under 4s

Parents of under 4s may be eligible for free Healthy Start vouchers to help buy food and milk. The vouchers are offered by the NHS to parents receiving certain benefits but are thought to go unclaimed by 38% of eligible parents in South Cambridgeshire.

You can find out more and apply at <https://www.healthystart.nhs.uk/>.

## District Council launches new grant to get South Cambridgeshire active

New funding will support adults across South Cambridgeshire to lead more active and healthier lifestyles. The Let's Get South Cambridgeshire Active Grant aims to help kickstart new initiatives and increase opportunities for sports and physical activity, particularly within rural communities.

Up to £500 can be applied for to support the creation or expansion of physical activity sessions, sports clubs, or fitness classes. The funding can be used towards venue hire, staff training or qualifications, marketing, and equipment purchases.

Eligible applicants for this grant include small fitness businesses or entrepreneurs that can deliver physical activity sessions, or health and wellbeing sessions. Primary Care Networks, community and voluntary groups can also apply.

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and the fund will remain open until all monies are allocated, but it is encouraged to get applications in promptly.

For more information on funding criteria and how to apply, visit:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/lets-get-south-cambridgeshire-active-grant> or contact Ben Truett, Physical Activity Locality Co-ordinator [Ben.Truett@scams.gov.uk](mailto:Ben.Truett@scams.gov.uk)

## Expiry of postal votes

Following a change to the law as part of the Elections Act, **postal votes no longer apply indefinitely**. They now expire after a period of three years.

Due to the timing of the reapplication legislation, around 15,000 South Cambridgeshire postal votes are due to expire at the end of January 2026.

The South Cambs Elections Team has started the process of contacting those residents whose postal vote will be expiring. They will explain to those voters that to keep their postal vote in place they will need to make a fresh application. They may contact affected electors via email, post or text message (or via a combination of means) to raise awareness of the changes and to ensure they have sufficient time to make a new application if they want to before next year's elections.

# Local Government Reorganisation

## Three options for new unitary councils announced

Council leaders have announced three preferred options for creating new unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in response to a national government requirement to replace the current district, county and city councils with unitary councils.

From April 2028, rather than dealing with separate county, city, and district authorities, residents will access all services—from road maintenance and bin collections to education, planning, social housing, social care, and support with benefits—through a unitary council.

Parish and town councils will not be affected and will continue to operate as they do now, serving your local communities.

In a joint statement, the leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Fenland District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. have said: “As Council leaders we are working collaboratively in the best interest of residents and businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Government’s reorganisation agenda has raised some challenging issues for us all which we have been working through collectively over the last few months. We still have outstanding questions and issues which have yet to be resolved.”

"However, we agree that there are currently three options that appear to be the most financially viable based on the Government’s criteria. These options are based on existing authority boundaries and are being further developed to be submitted to Government by late November. The three options each contain two new unitary councils that would in future cover the entire Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area and replace all existing local authorities:

- **Proposal A - A North-West/South-East Option**  
Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils - along with County Council functions.  
Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils - along with County Council functions.
- **Proposal B - A North/South Option**  
Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils - along with County Council functions.  
Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District - along with County Council functions.
- **Proposal C - An East/West Option**  
Unitary 1: Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils - along with County Council functions.  
Unitary 2: Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils- along with County Council functions.”

"We recognise each option has different strengths and different implications for services, our local communities, and businesses. We are taking an evidence-based approach, inevitably the different needs and local identities of our areas will have a significant impact on the preference of our own councils, and we must respect that. We encourage residents, our partner agencies and businesses to feed into this process by sharing what matters most to them through an engagement exercise being launched next week."

"We also want to take this opportunity to reassure residents that services will not be affected, and to praise the collective local government workforce across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for their continued efforts on behalf of our communities during this period of change. We appreciate that reorganisation may create some uncertainty for them which we will work with Government to do our best to mitigate."

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### **Have your say on plans for the future of local councils**

Communities across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are being given an opportunity to have their say on a once in a generation opportunity to shape the future of local government.

An [engagement survey](#) was launched on Thursday 19th June and focus groups are being run in June and July so people can help inform the biggest shake-up of local government since the 1970s.

Council leaders want to hear the views of residents, businesses and local stakeholders like Town and Parish councils and community groups, to inform the business cases being developed for each of these proposals. Those business cases will then be submitted to the government in November. The final decisions on which new local government structures are put into place in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough will ultimately be made by national government.

The engagement focuses on the connections that people feel they have to different areas; where they work, socialise or get healthcare, for example. It also covers what priorities they think new unitary authorities should have and what is important to them when it comes to dealing with local government.

The survey closes at the end of Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> July. Hard copies will be available at council offices and in all libraries.

### **Fair Funding Review 2.0 and Council Tax Modernisation consultations**

MHCLG has published its second consultation on local government funding reform, the [Fair Funding Review 2.0](#). The publication of this consultation is a crucial step in the government's mission to deliver significant reform through the first multi-year Settlement in a decade, with updated funding formulae, simpler funding streams and a reset of the Business Rates Retention System.

MHCLG has also launched [a consultation to modernise the administration of council tax](#). The consultation will explore options to improve support and the council tax collection, and enforcement processes to deliver a fairer and more efficient system for taxpayers and councils. The funding reform consultation will close on 15 August and the council tax consultation on 12 September. MHCLG is encouraging all with an interest in the sector to respond to the consultation and provide feedback.

Correspondence:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/council-tax-information-letter-42025-consultation-on-council-tax-administration/council-tax-information-letter-42025-consultation-on-council-tax-administration>

Press notice:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/council-tax-shake-up-to-deliver-fairer-billing-and-support>

## **HSE guidance on running an event safely**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is reminding organisers to protect event workers and the public by using their event safety webpages. Whether you're organising a small gathering or large-scale event, HSE guidance provides practical advice to help you meet your health and safety obligations. HSE's guidance helps to plan, manage and monitor events effectively with three key sections:

- [Getting started with event planning](#) – ensure planning is proportionate to your event's scale and risk level
- [Managing an event](#) – understand legal duties as an event organiser
- [Planning for incidents and emergencies](#) – develop effective response plans appropriate to potential risks

Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

## **Planning**

### ***Greater Cambridge Planning Service honoured for Excellence in Regional Planning***

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) Service has been crowned Planning Authority of the Year – East of England at the prestigious Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence. This recognition celebrates GCSP's outstanding commitment to innovation, inclusivity, and excellence in planning.

Formed in 2018 as a partnership between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, the team serve as the Local Planning Authority for the Greater Cambridge area. The service has 160 colleagues, of which 32 are Chartered RTPI members, and 21 are working towards Chartered membership. The service processes over 7,000 planning applications annually and has achieved an accreditation for its commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

Among the highlights of GCSP's award-winning work:

- Youth Engagement Service (YES): A nationally recognised programme giving young people a voice in planning and design, recently winning the Thornton Education Trust's Social Value Award.
- Biodiversity Net Gain Leadership: GCSP proactively secured over 200 hectares of habitat for biodiversity offsetting, ahead of national policy requirements. This project recently won the 'Planning for the Natural Environment Award' at the Planning Awards 2025.
- Inclusive Planning: Through initiatives like the Cambridge Neighbourhoods Design Code, GCSP is tackling inequality and improving access to green spaces in some of the region's most deprived areas.
- Apprenticeship and Talent Development: A structured programme supporting future planners through hands-on experience and academic study, ensuring a strong pipeline of planning professionals.

For more information about the awards, visit: [RTPI | East of England Awards for Planning Excellence](#).

### ***National consultation on proposals to modernise planning committees***

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is currently consulting on its proposals to modernise planning committees. The key points under consideration are:

- Types of planning decisions that will be made by officers under delegated powers or made by planning committees.
  - The proposals include all minor commercial developments (up to 1000 square meters of floor space or a site of less than 1 hectare) and all minor residential developments (up to 9 dwellings) always being decided by officers. As part of the consultation the government is asking if there are exceptional circumstances where these minor types of developments might be brought to planning committee. They are also asking if there are circumstances where medium residential developments of 10 to 49 dwellings should always be decided by officers rather than sometimes by planning committee. These proposals are likely to reduce the number of applications that would be considered at planning committee.

- The proposals include a gateway test for the chief planner and chair of the planning committee to decide if larger developments should be considered at planning committee and asks for views on it.
- The government asks if some other types of applications should always be delegated to officers or have the option of consideration at planning committee meetings. These include tree preservation orders, listed building consent and advertisement control.
- Size and composition of planning committees
  - It is proposed to limit the size of planning committees to a maximum of 11 members (this is the size of the planning committee at South Cambridgeshire District Council; following local government reorganisation this would probably mean the same size committee covering proposals over a larger area so fewer councillors making those decisions). The government asks if this size seems right and if there should be a minimum size.
- Mandatory training for planning committee members
  - The government is considering either a national certification scheme which would be procured by MHCLG and involve an online test for certification or a local based approach where the local planning authority provides certification. (At South Cambridgeshire District Council all councillors must attend annual training to be able to take part in planning committee and there are regular briefings on particular relevant topics e.g. self and custom build housing and biodiversity net gain.)
- Reducing the threshold to assess quality of decision making
  - Currently planning authorities are expected to have no more than 10% of decisions overturned at appeal. The government is asking if that should be lowered to 5%.

You can read the full details of the proposals at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultation>. You can respond to the consultation up to the 23<sup>rd</sup> July at:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/planning/reform-of-planning-committees-technical-consultati/>.

### ***National consultation on size thresholds of developments***

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is currently consulting on its proposals to switch from defining minor and major development to minor, medium and major development. The key points under consideration are:

- Simplifying the planning process for minor residential development (up to 9 dwellings)
  - This could include a full exemption from biodiversity net gain requirements, retaining the exemption from affordable housing contributions, retaining the exemption from the proposed Building Safety Levy (BSL; fund to help the remediation of high-rise structures with fire safety defects), reducing validation requirements when submitting the planning application, requiring that all applications are decided by officers (see above), and reducing the number of statutory consultees during the consultation process.
  - Further streamline the planning process for very small sites of less than 0.1 hectare.
- Introducing a medium residential development category of 10-49 homes or up to 1 hectare and simplifying the planning process relative to major developments by:
  - Considering simplifying biodiversity net gain requirements, potentially exempting these sites from the BSL, exempting these sites from the government's proposed build out transparency proposals (aims to ensure developers build out at the rate they've agreed with the local authority), having some of these applications always decided by officers (see above), reducing validation requirements when submitting the planning application, reducing the number of statutory consultees during the consultation process, and allowing Permission in Principle applications.

You can read the proposals at: [Planning Reform Working Paper: Reforming Site Thresholds - GOV.UK](#). You can respond to the consultation up to the 9<sup>th</sup> July at: [Planning Reform Working Paper: Reforming Site Thresholds - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government - Citizen Space](#).

### ***Future Homes Standard announced***

On 6th June the government announced the [publication of the Future Homes Standard this autumn and have confirmed that solar panels will be included](#), leading to installation on the vast majority of new build homes. Under proposed changes, new homes will also have low-carbon heating, such as heat pumps. To deliver these aims, the proposed Future Homes Standard would see building regulations amended to explicitly promote solar, subject to practical limits with flexibility in place for new homes surrounded by trees or with lots of shade overhead.

## **Plans to simplify local leadership structures announced**

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> June, the government announced that it intends to introduce legislation to simplify governance arrangements for councils in England. The government plans to legislate to abolish the committee system, requiring councils currently operating this model to transition to the leader and cabinet model. This will ensure all councils operate an executive form of governance, providing clarity on responsibility and accountability, and improving efficiency in decision making. The government also intends to prevent the establishment of new local authority mayoralties while permitting existing legacy directly elected mayors to continue. Ahead of introducing primary legislation, the government has made regulations to pause any change processes between governance models, in order to allow time for Parliament to consider the proposed measures. WMS: [Written statements – Written questions, answers and statements – UK Parliament](#)