

Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for April 2025.

This report contains factual information which we hope will be of use and of interest to the parish council and to the wider community of the parish.

For queries please email us at cllr.williamsjg@scambs.gov.uk or cllr.hofman@scambs.gov.uk

Council Fraud Team finds Council Tax underpayments

The fraud team set up four years ago has been credited with getting back £360,000 from council tax underpayments mainly due to council taxpayers wrongly claiming for the single person discount. This involves the fraud team using data from public sources which can identify co-habiting at an address. Most of the time it's a genuine mistake but there has been some criminal activity. The fraud team has also been checking Right to Buy applications, council tenancies, Government Covid grants which has led to a criminal investigation and the purchasing of goods and services by the Council. The amount of money so far recovered has more than paid for the cost of the team.

Council leaders issue joint letter on Local Government Reorganisation

Council leaders across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have sent a letter to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution setting out progress on plans to move towards a new system of local government, with unitaries delivering the day-to-day services and Mayors taking the strategic decisions.

The letter, signed by the Leaders of Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, is in response to the invitation from Government for councils to work together to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation.

The invitation from the Government was issued in a letter on 5 February 2025 to Data published by local councils indicates Greater Cambridge will once again enjoy the full protection from unplanned and inappropriate development provided by its Local Plans. Every council leader in two-tier areas of local government and neighbouring unitary authorities. The invitation asked for an interim update to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025.

Six alternative schemes are now being worked on by officers of the councils in accordance with Government guidance, the primary purpose being to support the costs of adult social care and children with special educational needs. The strategic roles for planning, housing, social services and transport will pass to the Mayor.

The reorganisation will lead to a drastic reduction in councillors and a greater role for parish councils.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has published an FAQ-style webpage for residents – trying to answer what we believe are likely to be some of their most common questions around local government reorganisation. You can view the page on our new website. We plan to keep the page updated with further questions and answers as the weeks and months go by.

Updated assessment provides greater assurance over unplanned development in Greater Cambridge

Data published by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service indicates the Greater Cambridge area of South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City councils will once again enjoy the full protection from unplanned and inappropriate development provided by its Local Plans.

This follows recent changes by the Government to housing requirements in the area. These changes resulted in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils having to acknowledge that planning decisions could be impacted by national requirements to give greater emphasis in favour of approving new homes.

Through their Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service, the councils have now published a report that shows how, based upon a new survey of development sites and feedback from local developers, they can once again meet Government requirements for the provision of new housing land.

This updated assessment shows that in the five years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2030, 13,383 homes are anticipated to be built, giving a 'housing land supply' of 5.5 years.

As a result of this 'housing land supply' being restored to above five years, planning applications will again be assessed against all the councils' local policies – which include a clear plan for where homes should be built - as well as those set nationally.

The short-term loss of a five-year housing supply came when, in December 2024, the Government published new planning policy along with new planning targets for housebuilding for every Council. The new housebuilding targets came into effect immediately.

The joint housing target for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire rose by around a third, from 1,726 to 2,309 homes per year. A buffer was also re-introduced which, combined with the increase, means GCSP needs to be able to demonstrate a supply of just over 12,100 homes in Greater Cambridge over the next five years.

Investing in Green Spaces across South Cambridgeshire

Tree planting and outdoor furniture are among a range of projects to create a greener future for South Cambridgeshire thanks to £175,000 of funding from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority distributed by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

One recipient has been Orchard Close, Little Wilbraham where an accessible pathway has been built from the MUGA to the play area, with ornamental cherry trees, wildflowers and a community orchard planted.

Millions secured for warmer homes in South Cambridgeshire

More than £8 million in Government funding has been awarded to South Cambridgeshire District Council to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes.

The idea is to upgrade thousands of social homes across the country which are currently below the standard of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C.

Improvements to South Cambridgeshire's Council homes could include insulation, ventilation, heating controls, double glazing, solar panels, and heat pumps - cutting bills and tackling fuel poverty.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will now work to allocate funding to properties with priority given to those most in need of energy efficiency improvements. Council tenants will be contacted direct if their home is able to benefit – with the aim for the Council to have as many of its 5,800 properties above an EPC rating of C in the next four years.

The funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is part of the national Warm Homes Plan. A total of £8,280,376 is being provided for South Cambridgeshire under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund scheme. South Cambridgeshire District Council will contribute £10 million from its Housing Revenue Account – consisting of Council house rents – to the improvements too.

Over £360,000 awarded to climate-friendly causes through Net Zero Villages grant scheme

Nine local organisations are celebrating grant awards of more than £360,000 from South Cambridgeshire District Council. The funding for the scheme was provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, with supplementary funds contributed by the District Council.

In line with the District Council's 'Green to our Core' commitment, the scheme empowers voluntary groups, parish councils and community-minded businesses to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from community assets, such as village halls, and using nature-based solutions to adapt these buildings for a future with more extreme weather patterns. The grant also welcomed proposals for low carbon transport schemes, such as e-bikes or community shuttle buses

Carla & John