

+Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for January 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.

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Local Government Reorganisation

You will have heard that the new Government intends to reorganise district and county councils into unitary authorities to manage the day-to-day business of local government, whilst strategic policy is given to directly elected mayors. For us in South Cambs this means the abolition of the district and county councils and their replacement by a single authority for all council services. The Government expects the new unitary authorities to serve a population of around 500,000 and given the population of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is just short of a million, this would imply that there will be two unitaries for the county and Peterborough. This was proposed in 1974 but was subsequently dropped in favour of the present arrangement.

The present local authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been asked to provide an outline plan by March and a full proposal by the autumn. As you can imagine this is a massive task and will inevitably divert senior officer attention from managing council services. The financial implications alone will require a lot of work. John as the Cabinet member for Resources is involved with this.

Budget for 2025/6

Despite the above the world must go on and although the new Government has broken its promises already over local government funding, with South Cambs receiving less money than it anticipated. This is made worse by the Government not offsetting the raise in employer NI in full leaving the council to find an extra £200,000 on its wages bill. Fortunately, South Cambs is one of the financially strongest local authorities in the country so we believe we can avoid serious cuts.

Four Day Week Consultation

Now that the Local Government finance settlement makes no mention of penalties for council working a four-day week, we are preparing to consult widely on making our scheme permanent, as promised. The consultation plan goes before the Scrutiny and Overview committee which is chaired by fellow councillor Graham Cone later this month. We will then undertake a consultation with all stakeholders which will inform a meeting of the full council. Having taken legal advice, under the current constitution of the council Cabinet has to make the final decision.

£2 single bus fare stays for now

John who is a member of the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority Board was delighted to support the Mayor continuing the £2 maximum single fare to the end of the current financial year at the end of March. The former Government scheme ended on 31 December and a new one has been introduced with a £3 cap. Having spoken to bus operators, some commercial routes would either have their timetables reduced or been withdrawn without the £2 maximum continuing due to lower passenger numbers, which would have cost CPCA more to maintain than the fare subsidy of £1 million. There is time now to model what can be done in the new financial year. There is one route that this does not apply to and that is the 18 which runs once a week between Newmarket Road Park and Ride and Newmarket, because this subsidised route was not included in the Government scheme.

Almost £10,000 in grants for community groups across South Cambridgeshire

Five projects ranging from a recycled bike scheme to village tree planting are set to benefit from South Cambridgeshire District Council's Community Chest fund.

The grants are available to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies, looking to further improve the quality of life for district residents.

A sum of £2,000 each was awarded to:

The Farmland Museum at Waterbeach for new guttering at the education block and cart shed which were built almost 30 years ago. The guttering joints are leaking, and the system needs totally replacing. The monies will also fund associated rainwater capture mechanisms to help with the watering of the Museum allotment and gardens.

Fen Drayton Village Hall for new blinds in the committee room, to encourage more people to hire the facility eg businesses, clubs, weddings, exercise groups, children's play groups and parties. By installing pleated blinds with brush seals in the window/door frames, it will help reduce heat loss from the building.

Gransden Bowls and Croquet Club for a specialised refurbished lawnmower to maintain the green, as well as new club croquet mallets suitable for both children and adults, as most of the club's stock is on loan or donated. The club is keen to increase its membership and improve access by families, young people and those with disabilities.

Foxton Parish Council to plant six large trees along the internal fence line of the new children's playground on Foxton Recreation Ground to provide shade for the new under- five's play equipment and seating area as well as acting in part as a wind and sound barrier to benefit all users of the playground.

In addition, **The Liberation Cycle** was awarded a grant of £1,657.13. This newly formed charity provides free reconditioned bikes and bike servicing to people on low incomes or suffering from a critical illness. Many of these beneficiaries have no other primary mode of transport and having a bike will enable them to access services in their community. Funding will go towards the start-up costs needed to create a community-based workshop where participants can come together to dismantle bicycles, learn the basics about their inner workings, and develop essential mechanical skills as well as make new friends.

Zero Villages Grant Scheme

Just a reminder that this scheme closing on Sunday 26 January. There is a total funding pot of £362,547 for South Cambs to help rural communities become low carbon, more sustainable and more resilient to the effects of climate change. Funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, provides grants ranging from £20,000 to £100,000 to support transformative, community-led projects.

With climate change at the forefront of global and local concerns, this grant scheme is designed to support the district's villages in taking meaningful steps towards reaching net zero and securing a more sustainable future.

Unfortunately, this fund is not available to Fen Ditton, Fulbourn or Teversham as the Office of National Statistics upon which the Government bases its decisions considers these villages to be built up areas of Cambridge.

For the rest of you the Net Zero Villages scheme will fund capital projects under the following themes:

Energy Efficiency and Generation – Examples include installing insulation, LED lighting, solar panels, wind turbines, or battery storage for renewable energy.

Low Carbon Transport – Initiatives such as community-run electric shuttle buses or other sustainable transport solutions.

Nature-Based Solutions – Projects like green roofs, walls, or tree planting to cool and enhance community spaces.

Best wishes for 2025, Carla and John