

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – May 2026

Newly elected Councillors!

As of last week, Cllrs **Laurence Damary-Homan**, **Ariel Cahn**, and **Lisa Redrup** have been duly elected as the District Councillors representing Harston and Comberton Ward. Thank you very much for your support! We will endeavour to live up to the duties of a District Councillor and do our best to represent and support all our residents.

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.

Laurence Damary-Homan:	Laurence.damaryhoman@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 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: Fridays, 10am – 12pm

Caldecote Sports Pavillion, Furlong Way, Caldecote, Cambridge, CB23 7ZH

Opening times: Tuesdays, 11am – 4pm

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

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.

LGA guide to disinformation for local councillors

The Local Government Association has developed [a guide on approaching and countering disinformation in response to interest from councillors seeking support in this area](#). The guide sets out key tangible actions councillors can take to respond effectively themselves while working closely with officers. Further information is available on the LGA's website and you can also find [a similar guide which was produced for officers earlier this year in LGA's Comms Hub](#).

Updates from MHCLG

The Renters' Rights Act Information Sheet 2026

The Renters' Rights Act has taken effect on the 1st of May. On 20 March, MHCLG published a Renters' Rights Act Information Sheet 2026 designed to give tenants helpful, practical advice on each of the changes and what it means for their tenancy agreement. It simply breaks down the key information that renters need to know – from stronger protections against rent increases to better rights to request pets – and scrapping Section 21 evictions, fixed-term assured tenancies and more. The Renters' Rights Act Information Sheet 2026 is live on GOV.UK. Tenants won't need to do anything but read the information carefully. Landlords and their letting agents must legally give this information to tenants by 31 May to avoid risking a fine. Landlords can give this information to tenants as a hard copy or attached electronically as a PDF to an email. More detailed instructions on the process are available GOV.UK and the government's campaign site, where landlords can find everything else they need to know for the Act's implementation. The government has published a full package of guidance for tenants on the new rights they have (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-renters-rights-act-information-sheet-2026>). Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Reminder: SCDC ZCC Grants Pre-launch workshops 20th May

Ahead of the next round of Zero Carbon Communities Grants, there will be two pre-launch workshops on Wednesday 20th May. The daytime one is 12.30-1.30pm and the evening one is 6-7pm. The workshops will provide information and guidance to help you with your application.

Following the workshops, the application window will run from the 25th May to the 24th July 2026. Funding of £2,000-£19,500 is available to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and parish councils to support communities in South Cambridgeshire to take action on climate change.

If you have any questions about the workshops or the grant, please contact ZCC@scambs.gov.uk.

Reforms to Right to Buy announced

Earlier this month, the government confirmed it will bring forward further reforms to Right to Buy. Right to Buy is a government scheme allowing eligible council tenants in England to buy their home at a discount. Last year the government published its consultation response to overhaul Right to Buy, that will support councils to better protect and rebuild depleted housing stock while maintaining a responsible route into homeownership for longstanding tenants. New reforms to be brought forward will include:

- Increasing the minimum eligibility period from three to ten years before tenants can apply to buy their home
- Amending discount rules so that discounts start at 5% of the property value and increase by 1% each year up to the maximum discount of 15% of the property value or the cash cap (whichever is lower)
- A 35-year new build exemption period so new social homes cannot be sold under Right to Buy for 35 years after they are built

English Devolution Bill receives Royal Assent

On 29 April, the [English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill received Royal Assent](#). The Act will introduce new measures to expand devolution and empower mayors and local people. A new Community Right to Buy will give local people the first right of refusal for valued community assets such as shops and community centres when they are put up for sale. Gambling Impact Assessments will be introduced to address the proliferation of gambling shops on the high street, so councils can prevent new gambling shops opening. Upwards Only Rent Review clauses in new and renewal commercial leases will also be banned, which previously prevented businesses' rents from decreasing – even if the market rate decreased – for new commercial rental agreements.

On the roads, the Act introduces new national standards for taxi drivers, allowing enforcement officers to suspend licences issued by other councils where a driver is operating outside their licensed area. More local transport authorities will be given new powers to enforce against dangerous pavement parking including through fixed penalty notices, and there will be new licencing powers for rental e-bikes which will allow local authorities to set specific requirements on parking, safety, and accessibility standards. Beyond making changes for communities and high streets, the Act introduces 'Strategic Authorities' into law, to make it quicker to devolve powers out from Whitehall. Strategic Authorities with elected Mayors will receive more devolved powers over transport, planning, housing, and economic regeneration. The Act also establishes Local Scrutiny Committees for mayoral authorities, which will provide scrutiny of local public spending and decision making. Further measures in the Act include:

- Mandating Mayoral Strategic Authorities to develop local growth plans, aligning regional economic strategies with national policy
- A new bespoke duty for Mayors and Strategic Authorities to ensure they formally consider local health improvement and health inequalities when making policy decisions
- New powers for Mayors to intervene in planning applications of potential strategic importance, make mayoral development orders and charge a mayoral community infrastructure levy on developers
- The establishment of the Local Audit Office to help manage council finances, ensuring auditing is carried out more efficiently and transparently

Press release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/english-devolution-bill-receives-royal-assent>

Changes to local planning applications

[From 1 April 2026, most planning applications made to local planning authorities will follow a new, simpler route if they are appealed and decided via written representations.](#) Regulations laid by government in February 2026 brought about this change in approach to keep decisions local and provide a quicker route for appeals. Under the new process, the majority of written representation appeals will accept only the evidence put before the local planning authority during application. This will not only speed up appeals but will also, importantly, encourage a full body of evidence to be provided at application stage, giving local planning authorities the information they need to make decisions – aligning with universal planning principles of keeping decisions local. Appellants will be able to indicate which procedure they consider most appropriate, along with their reasoning, during the appeal process. The procedure (written representation, hearing or inquiry) that an appeal follows is decided by the Planning Inspectorate using the [same criteria as before](#), and the suitability of the procedure will remain under review throughout the appeal.

[For further details about the process, please read the updated procedure guide.](#)

As this only applies to applications made from 1 April 2026, both the current and updated procedures guides will be maintained until the current guidance is no longer relevant.

Water resources planning guideline update: government response

On 8th May, the Environment Agency published the [government response to the consultation on proposed updates to the water resources planning guideline](#) and announced that they are progressing with changes to the guidance as outlined in the consultation document.

The guidance will support water companies in England and Wales, and regional groups in England, to plan for secure water supplies and environmental protection. The Environment Agency has published the [updated Water resources planning guidance](#) and the [Environmental Destination for Water Resources planning guidance](#).

£5 million to install water saving measures in council buildings

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service has received Government funding of over £5 million to deliver part of the Greater Cambridge Water Efficiency Programme and help address water scarcity locally. South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council will use this funding to install water saving devices in existing council-owned buildings through a programme of retrofit work.

As part of this work, SCDC has partnered with Control Flow Technologies to help council tenants reduce their water use and lower their bills, at no cost to tenants. For some households, this could mean savings of up to £360 a year. To do this, there will be free water audits for council tenants with water meters and water-saving devices will be fitted where appropriate. The water audit involves three short visits:

- Visit 1: An engineer will take a meter reading, provide water-saving advice, and discuss current usage.
- Visit 2: The engineer will install a water-saving device on the incoming water mains (a 30–45 minute appointment). They will also check for hidden leaks in toilets, taps, or showers and carry out minor repairs where possible.
- Visit 3: To measure water usage

Emerging draft joint Local Plan

Work is much advanced on the joint Local Plan with Cambridge City that should determine how our district is developed over the period 2025-2045 (Development Corporation permitting).

The recently concluded consultation on the Reg18 stage showed strong community engagement with over 4,500 responses gained from over 80 events online and offline. These comments are now being compiled and analysed. The proposals will go through normal process with members to finalise the version to go to the final Reg19 stage. This will then come out for final public consultation in the summer and subsequently be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by the deadline of December 2026.

There is more information at: <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/>

Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Housing Land Supply Report 2026

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning have published a report that includes a new Greater Cambridge housing trajectory and the latest housing land supply calculations. The housing trajectory shows anticipated delivery of new homes across Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire up to 2045. The report also demonstrates that jointly for Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire together) the area has 5.6 years of housing land supply for the 2026-2031 period.

National planning policy and guidance sets out the circumstances where planning policies should be considered out of date when making decisions on planning applications, and this includes where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. On the basis of the housing land supply calculations for Greater Cambridge, this does not apply to Cambridge or South Cambridgeshire. This is relevant for any planning applications that are being considered.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service YES team wins award

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service's Youth Engagement Service (YES) has won a national award – the Thornton Education Trust Inspire Future Generations Award for Best Local Authority in Youth Engagement.

It was awarded for helping children and young people have a say in how their communities are designed. The award celebrates organisations that listen to young people and include their ideas when planning new places.

Since 2017, YES has worked with over 2,000 young people through projects like Have Your Say and Our Public Art. The team also ran school workshops and gave young people the chance to try out jobs in planning.

You can read more about it on the website at:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/news/greater-cambridge-yes-team-wins-national-award-for-excellence-in-youth-engagement>.

Electric bin lorries powered by solar energy

Construction has begun on a pioneering renewable energy solar park to power electric bin lorries for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. The £6.1 million scheme is jointly funded by Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority - which agreed its contribution in December 2022.

It will see the installation of a one-megawatt solar system paired with a battery that can store enough energy to keep operations running smoothly. This will feed into 36 electric vehicle charging points for use by electric bin lorries and other vehicles at the councils' Waterbeach Depot. The aim is to help future-proof waste and recycling collections locally.

The Waterbeach Renewable Energy Network will enable the councils to significantly reduce carbon emissions from their waste fleets. These carbon emissions are currently among the highest contributors to the councils' overall emissions. By 2027, the Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service between the two councils will have 18 electric bin lorries in operation, supported by clean, renewable energy generated on-site. There are currently four electric bin lorries in use but there is not enough capacity in the local electrical grid to power more without this work.

As well as powering electric bin lorries, the project is expected to supply 59% of the depot's total energy needs from renewable sources and achieve over 40% biodiversity net gain through measures such as wildflower planting and new hedgerows to create a haven for local wildlife.

The scheme is due for completion in late 2026, with the costs expected to be paid back through clean energy within 15 years. The energy generated could power the equivalent of 250 UK family homes for 30 years, showing the scale of the scheme's environmental impact.

SCDC breaks record for new council houses

In January, SCDC confirmed the completion of 113 new council homes since 1st April 2025 – the highest annual number achieved, surpassing the previous year's record of 91 homes with over two months of the financial year still to go. 31 of these new homes are nearby in Barrington. This is beyond what is achieved in many other areas but is vital due to high house prices and rents. In order to maintain council house building at this rate the council agreed to the government's recommendation to increase council house rents by 1% above inflation which amounts to 4.8%. However, this will be fully covered by housing benefit for those people on the lowest incomes.

You can read more about the locations and energy efficiency features of the new council homes at: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/news/south-cambridgeshire-district-council-smashes-record-for-new-council-houses>.

The new Council homes across South Cambridgeshire are a range of tenures. To express an interest in any Council home in South Cambridgeshire, you need to be registered with Home-Link. For enquiries about the shared ownership properties, you can contact William H Brown by email at SCDC@williambrown.co.uk

South Cambs District Council - looking forward

SCDC Corporate Action Plan and Budget

At the February Full Council meeting, councillors approved the Corporate Action Plan for the next year. It focuses on environmental action, stronger community support and protecting frontline services.

Environmental action

Plans for the next 12 months will see major progress on the Council's Being Green to Our Core priority, including the ongoing roll-out of weekly food waste collections and continued construction of a solar energy park to help power the Council's growing fleet of electric bin lorries.

Expanded funding for Service Support Grants

Alongside environmental action, the Council will significantly strengthen its support for the voluntary and community sector. A total of £900,000 over three years - £300,000 per year - has been made available through the Service Support Grants programme, offering long-term funding agreements for groups delivering community support and development services across the district.

An additional £49,650 is also available for the years ahead to support services that help prevent and relieve homelessness. This investment supports a wide range of activity including mental health and wellbeing services, advice provision, independent living support, cost-of-living assistance and community projects.

Continuing support for Mobile Warden schemes

The Corporate Action Plan outlines ongoing funding for Mobile Warden Schemes, which provide crucial support for older, disabled and vulnerable residents - ensuring they can live safely and independently in their own homes. These schemes form a core part of the Council's work to promote healthy and supported communities.

Boosting financial resilience and tackling the cost of living

With many residents still facing financial pressures, the Council plans to continue providing its comprehensive cost-of-living support package. A budget of £449,000 is set aside to help residents through the next two years through schemes such as emergency food and energy support, workshops, budgeting and debt advice, white goods and furniture for vulnerable people and laptops with digital training.

The Low-Income Family Tracker will continue to proactively identify households at risk of financial hardship and ensure they are claiming the benefits they are entitled to, helping prevent crises before they escalate. In the last year alone, this scheme supported South Cambridgeshire residents with more than 1,000 successful benefit claims – worth an estimated £4 million over the lifetime of those claims.

Next steps for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan

The Council continues to work on the new Greater Cambridge Local Plan through its Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service with Cambridge City Council. It will be the first joint Local Plan for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire.

Elsewhere, GCSP, which was recently crowned the Royal Town Planning Institute's Local Planning Authority of the Year, will be supporting the Council's engagement with the Cambridge Growth Company and its response to the Government's ambition to establish a development corporation to take forward the national priorities for Greater Cambridge. This is all whilst continuing to process around 6,000 planning applications a year.

Delivering facilities for growing communities

The Action Plan continues the work to deliver new community facilities at Northstowe. This includes the new permanent community centre for phase one – the Unity Centre – which was completed in March, helping ensure Northstowe has new, state of the art spaces to support its growing and thriving community.

Balancing the budget

A £5.24 per year, below inflation, increase in Council Tax for the average band D home was agreed at the Full Council meeting in February – to help protect essential frontline services in the face of continued rising costs. It means the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council is £180.64 per year. It is expected that this will still maintain the Council's position among the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country. This comes after the Government recently reduced the amount of Business Rates which local authorities can retain. This means councils must find ways to cover the shortfall. For South Cambridgeshire, this has resulted in an overall loss of around £3 million in funding when also considering changes in other grant arrangements.