

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

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

District Councillors' Monthly Report – October 2026

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
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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.

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>

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](#).

Grants & Consultations

Have Your Say on proposed changes to how bus franchising would be introduced

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is consulting on proposed changes to how bus franchising would be introduced across the region.

This is a supplementary consultation on proposed changes to how bus franchising would be introduced across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In 2024, the Combined Authority consulted on proposals to introduce bus franchising across the region. Since then, the Mayor commissioned an independent review to look again at the affordability and practicalities of introducing franchising. The review recommended a phased approach, with franchising introduced in stages rather than all at once. The Combined Authority has accepted this recommendation and developed a revised plan for how franchising would be introduced. The first franchised services are now proposed to begin in June 2028, with the rollout continuing in stages through to June 2030.

The overall Bus Franchising Scheme has not changed.

This supplementary consultation focuses on the proposed changes to how it would be introduced, including the timetable, how bus services would be grouped into contracts, and plans for bus depots and vehicles. The consultation will help the Combined Authority understand the potential impacts of the revised approach, including any risks, unintended consequences and implications for passengers and communities across the region.

The consultation closes at 5pm on Tuesday 27 October 2026.

To complete the consultation questionnaire, please visit: <https://cpca-yourvoice.co.uk/bus-franchising-consultation-2/>

6 Free Trees – Apply by 31st October 2026

The popular Six Free Trees initiative is returning for its sixth year, offering parish and town councils the opportunity to claim either six small trees (whips) or one larger pot-grown tree from a selection of native species.

The trees are supplied with stakes, ties and biodegradable tree spirals to help them establish successfully. Additionally, this year a mulch mat will be added to every order, and an optional watering system for bigger trees to help them stay hydrated in dry and hot conditions.

Parish and town councils interested in applying can find further information and application details on the Council's [Six Free Trees webpage](#).

Applications for taking part in the initiative must be made **before 31st October**.

MHCLG updates

Planning guidance: letters to chief planning officers

On 22 July, MHCLG issued [a planning update newsletter to chief planning officers of local planning authorities in England](#). It contains details about the latest announcements relating to planning practices and policy. The newsletter draws attention to the final regulations on the national scheme of delegation and size of planning committees which Ministers made on 15 July 2026 following parliamentary debates, as part of the government's reforms to modernise planning committees. The government has also published [statutory guidance to support local planning authorities in applying the national scheme of delegation: Planning Committees and the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions](#). These regulations will come into force on 31 October 2026.

In addition, this edition also draws attention to forthcoming changes to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Defra Ministers laid regulations on 13 July which will introduce the first set of changes arising from the BNG consultation held last year (as set out in the government response published in April).

Finally, it also includes information on regulations laid by the government on 16 July to increase planning application fees and published its response to the consultation on planning fees and local fee setting.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, the new fees will apply from 8 December 2026. The new fees are expected to achieve around 90% cost recovery nationally, providing a substantial uplift in funding for planning services.

New reforms to bring more long-term empty homes back into use

On the 27th September, MHCLG announced [reforms to Empty Dwelling Management Orders \(EDMOs\)](#), supporting councils to bring long-term empty homes back into use and helping ensure existing housing stock is used more effectively. EDMOs allow councils to take over the management of long-term empty homes and return them to occupation for up to seven years while ownership remains with the property owner. The changes will reduce the period a property must be empty before it becomes eligible for an EDMO from two years to six months, allowing councils to act sooner where homes have been left vacant and preventing properties from falling into serious disrepair. The reforms will also streamline the application process by removing evidential requirements relating to issues such as anti-social behaviour or community support for intervention, making it simpler for local authorities to seek an EDMO through the Residential Property Tribunal. The government is also exploring further changes to strengthen the EDMO regime and support councils to use the powers more effectively.

The Building Safety Levy is now live

The Building Safety Levy came into force on the 1st October 2026 and now applies to new building control applications on eligible new residential developments and eligible purpose-built student accommodation. The Levy is part of the government's wider approach to ensure industry contributes to the costs of remediating building safety defects, while protecting leaseholders and taxpayers. Revenue raised through the levy will support remediation efforts and help make affected buildings safer for residents. Councils with building control responsibilities will act as collection agents. MHCLG has today launched a new Building Safety Levy Information Hub where all of the information previously circulated on the Building Safety Levy is accessible, including guidance, templates, FAQs and other supporting material. [To access the hub, please register here](#). Please use this site as the first point of reference for levy information. If you are unable to answer your query with the information on the site, please contact: BuildingSafetyLevy-Operations@communities.gov.uk.

[Comprehensive guidance on the Building Safety Levy is available on GOV.UK](#)

Funding for local communities to restore nature

On 30 September the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs announced [£79 million in government funding to help local communities to restore nature and adapt to climate change](#). The £53 million Community Trees Fund will be funded over three years and will be available for organisations in England to carry out urban, peri-urban and rural tree planting projects that sit outside of the Government's larger woodland creation offers. The fund will be available to councils as well as other organisations, including environmental NGOs, farm clusters and National Park Authorities. Further details will be set out in due course. £26 million will be shared across 48 councils ([list and map on GOV.UK](#)), worth around £185,000 per councils per year. This year's funding has already been handed to councils that have published their Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

[Further information on local nature recovery strategies, including how communities, farmers and businesses can get involved, is available on GOV.UK](#)

Upcoming national resilience campaign

Later this year, the Government will launch a national campaign detailing the simple, practical steps households can take to prepare for everyday emergencies. This campaign builds on the existing ['Prepare' website](#), updating advice to make it highly visible and easy to follow. The campaign will bring the UK into line with our international allies and European neighbours, who already run established, successful national resilience campaigns. The Prime Minister has been clear that Britain must become more resilient and better prepared for any possible challenge.

Please note that all media questions regarding the upcoming campaign should be directed to pressoffice@cabinetoffice.gov.uk.

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Resilience Forum will be coordinating the local response to the campaign and sharing it with all partner agencies and we will ensure that we share this messaging as part of that locally coordinated effort.

Campaign to raise awareness of simple steps households can take in case of everyday emergencies launching soon

On 2nd October, the Cabinet Office announced that [communities and businesses in the UK will benefit from more resilient infrastructure this winter as the government takes action to protect the country in case of extreme weather](#). Following severe winter weather last season, such as storms Goretti and Chandra, the government is committed to ensuring the country is better protected this year, particularly as a strong El Niño could make wetter and stormier conditions more likely during late autumn and early winter. This comes ahead of the government's national campaign launching later this autumn to raise awareness of simple steps households can take in case of everyday emergencies, like severe storms. This will include simple, low cost and free actions, such as preparing basic household items or joining the Priority Services Register, which helps vulnerable households to get help quicker in the event of electricity, water or gas outages. To design the campaign, the government has engaged more than 5,000 people and 400 partners, including councils, NHS England, British Red Cross, and National Emergencies Trust. The campaign will bolster long-running initiatives, such as Flood Action Week and the Met Office's Weather Ready campaign, which already give households prepare effectively for extreme weather.

Winter preparedness – important information for councillors

Each winter the UK experiences several major flooding events. In previous years, some areas of the district have experienced localised flooding. Officers have been working with the Lead Cabinet for Environmental Services to provide some reminders – please see the winter preparedness PDF included in this email. Along with the PDF is a PowerPoint presentation which contains some extra context around the work we do. The PDF guide will also be shared with parish councils in the third week of October. We are keen to ensure people read and think about this in advance of the wetter weather that we will see this winter as being prepared is the key message we'd like people to consider.

Community Safety Partnership – New Operational Plan agreed

New proposals to keep South Cambridgeshire communities safe include work to prevent exploitation, improve support for those affected by domestic abuse, tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce shoplifting.

The priorities are all in the 2026-27 Operational Plan for the South Cambs Community Safety Partnership (CSP) which was agreed by Cabinet on 29th September.

While South Cambridgeshire is widely regarded as a safe place to live, partners are committed to ensuring residents feel even safer. The proposed plan includes:

- support for people affected by domestic abuse and sexual violence
- targeted work to prevent young people becoming involved in exploitation or serious violence
- action to address anti-social behaviour hotspots
- joint initiatives with retailers and police to reduce shoplifting
- awareness campaigns in schools and communities.

The plan also includes continued work to combat fraud, scams and cybercrime, reduce substance misuse and reoffending, support vulnerable residents, and help communities identify and respond to emerging local concerns before problems escalate.

The proposals have been informed by analysis of local crime and community safety data, alongside intelligence and insights from partners. Targeted work is expected in several areas where data suggests extra support may be needed, including Cambourne, Northstowe, Milton and Waterbeach, Histon and Impington, and Fen Ditton and Fulbourn.

The South Cambs Community Safety Partnership brings together partners responsible for community safety, including South Cambridgeshire District Council, the police, health services, probation, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, Cambridgeshire County Council and voluntary and community sector organisations. Together, they work to reduce crime, disorder, substance misuse and reoffending, while helping residents feel safe in their communities.

Recently, the CSP has worked to implement Public Space Protection Orders at the Milton and Babraham Road Park and Ride sites to combat anti-social driving issues. It also ran a series of court experience days to provide knife crime and criminal justice system awareness to year nine students – with 120 young people attending during the last year and more events planned this year. Elsewhere, following research into effective interventions for young people, the CSP partnered with Public Health to contribute funding to the Skill Mill project - which aims to support young people away from offending and into training or employment.

As the accountable body for the Partnership, South Cambridgeshire District Council plays a leading role in coordinating its work. It oversees governance arrangements, commissions an annual assessment to identify priorities, coordinates partnership activities and supports a dedicated Community Safety Partnership Project Officer, funded by Cambridgeshire's Police and Crime Commissioner, who works with residents and communities to address local concerns. The Council also helps ensure community safety considerations are reflected in wider work – such as helping design safer new communities as the district grows.

The operational plan is available as part of the agenda for [the Cabinet meeting on Tuesday 29 September](#).

Council allocates £180,000 to help residents facing financial hardship

Plans to allocate £180,000 to help low-income households across South Cambridgeshire who are facing financial hardship have been agreed. The package of targeted support - which will also be used to help households build longer-term financial resilience - was outlined at the South Cambridgeshire District Council Cabinet meeting on 29th September.

The funding comes from the new Crisis and Resilience Fund, a national Government scheme through the Department for Work and Pensions and held locally by Cambridgeshire County Council. Through the programme, Cambridgeshire County Council allocated £180,000 to South Cambridgeshire District Council for local projects during 2026/27. The funding will support a range of initiatives across South Cambridgeshire, including:

- Baby boxes containing essential items for newborns in low-income households.
- Emergency supermarket vouchers for residents facing crisis situations.
- Travel support to help people get to healthcare, employment, training and essential services.
- Debt reduction schemes linked to financial advice and income maximisation support.
- Specialist disability benefit advice appointments.
- Energy prepayment meter vouchers to help prevent households being cut off from their gas or electricity supply during winter.
- A savings incentive scheme to encourage residents to build financial resilience through the Government's Help to Save programme.

The plans were developed using local knowledge, experiences and evidence, including discussions with residents about the challenges faced by lower-income households across the district. Data held by the Council was also used, offering a further layer of insight to better target those who need it most.

Further details about the schemes, including eligibility criteria and how residents can access support, are expected to be confirmed soon.

Pension Credit campaign

156 letters have been sent to South Cambridgeshire residents identified through the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) as eligible for, but not claiming, Pension Credit. This is as part of a countywide Pension Credit campaign. Following the success of South Cambridgeshire's LIFT Programme, Cambridgeshire County Council have funded a LIFT Programme across all five District and City Councils using the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF).

This Pension Credit campaign marks the first LIFT campaign run in unison across Cambridgeshire, with over 700 households contacted across the county. [Hundreds in Cambridgeshire urged to take unclaimed pension credit - BBC News](#)

Government changes to the planning process – from 31st October 2026

The government is bringing in a mandatory *National Scheme of Delegation* from the 31st October 2026, which means many more planning applications will be decided by officers and so conversely, many fewer planning applications will be decided by planning committee.

The key changes are:

- **End of Ward Call-Ins:** Powers for individual ward councillors and parish councils to "call in" applications to planning committee for determination will no longer be permissible.
- **Representation Triggers:** The threshold for consideration by the Delegation Panel for Planning Committee referral based on the number of representations received (currently 5 representations) will be removed.
- **Definition of Schedule 1 Applications:** These include householder applications, minor residential schemes (up to 9 dwellings), minor commercial development (Class E), discharge of conditions, certificates of lawfulness, non-material amendments and most prior approval applications. These are routine, minor, or technical developments which must be delegated to planning officers for determination. The Planning Committee no longer has the authority to decide these cases.
- **Definition of Schedule 2 Applications:** These include major residential, major commercial, industrial and mixed-use development, and proposals affecting heritage assets and applications that raise significant policy, environmental or community considerations. The category also includes certain development proposals involving the local authority's own interests. These are considered to be more complex applications. There is still a presumption that these will be determined by officers, but they may be referred to the Planning Committee, if they pass the new 'Gateway Test'.

More information on this is available in the Planning Committee report at: <https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s144623/NSOD%20Committee%20report%201.pdf>.

Cambourne to Cambridge busway/active travel route approved by the Secretary of State

On the 8th September the Government approved the Cambourne to Cambridge busway and active travel route, intended to connect Cambourne, Bourn Airfield (recently renamed High Bourn), Hardwick, Coton and Cambridge. The scheme will also include a 2,000-space travel hub at Scotland Farm.

The Secretary of State's decision letter, the habitats regulations assessment, the busway order and the inspectors' report are available at: [Cambourne to Cambridge guided busway: Transport and Works Act order - GOV.UK](#)

Following the Secretary of State's decision, Cambridgeshire County Council will begin the procurement process, with contractors expected to be appointed next year to complete the detailed design. During this time further engagement with parish councils, landowners and other key stakeholders will take place to help shape the final design of the scheme. Main construction will follow the detailed design phase although some preparatory works may begin earlier. The Greater Cambridge Partnership's news release is available at:

<https://www.greatercambridge.org.uk/news/cambourne-to-cambridge-route-approved>.

Private Rented Housing – new requirement to register properties

A new national register will require landlords to record every rental property under the Renters' Rights Act. The scheme aims to improve transparency and strengthen local enforcement to help tackle poor housing conditions and support better outcomes for tenants.

In Cambridgeshire, registration is expected from **15th January 2027** to **14th April 2027** and will cost £65 per property annually. Landlords must provide tenancy, rent, and safety documentation, including gas, electrical, and EPC records.

The register will be managed nationally by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). Councils will have access to a dedicated system to verify landlord and property information and will be able to take enforcement action where registration requirements are not met. Penalties may be up to £7,000 for an initial breach and up to £40,000 or prosecution for repeat offences.

Christmas Market 2026

Plans are well underway for this year's South Cambridgeshire Christmas Market, which will return to Cambourne Village College on Sunday 6 December 2026. Now in its fifth year, the indoor market will once again bring together local traders and independent businesses, celebrating the brilliant businesses and talent we have across South Cambridgeshire. As preparations continue, SCDC is looking for colleagues and Members who may be able to lend a hand with stewarding and volunteering on the day. Whether you're able to spare a few hours or support us for a full day, every bit of help makes a real difference in keeping the event running smoothly. The main timeslots we are looking to cover are:

Event set-up: 8:00am – 10:30am

Market open: 10:30am – 3:00pm

Event close-down: 3:00pm – 6:00pm

We'd be hugely grateful for your support in helping us make this year's market another success. If you have any questions, please contact the team at businesskeyprojects@southcambs.gov.uk.

GBE Funding - Are you interested in developing a community energy project?

The Great British Energy Community Fund is open for applications from community and voluntary sector organisations interested in developing community energy projects.

Community energy projects are owned by, led by, and benefit local communities. They can help generate income for local priorities, strengthen community resilience, and create opportunities for communities to play a direct role in local energy projects. Funding is available for:

- Feasibility and project development work
- Business case development
- Planning and technical studies
- Eligible capital costs for project delivery

The fund is intended for organisations developing community-owned energy projects, including projects hosted on sites where the community retains ownership and benefits. Please let us know if are interested in submitting an application by contacting the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority team at environment@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk. Applications close: **12 November 2026**. More information: www.gbe.gov.uk/funding/gbe-community-fund.

Community policing engagement meeting

The South Cambs Neighbourhood Policing team run a three-monthly engagement meeting online. The next meeting is at **7-8 pm on Wednesday 4th November 2026**. If you'd like to attend to hear about current work and priorities, as well as ask any questions, please register for the meeting at:

<https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/53cbe591-63e5-4fcc-b792-57418819a8cd@a3c59d1b-b8f1-4299-9d6a-39ad8f570422?source=copyLinkLegacyShareLinkDialog>

Future dates for this meeting are always advertised on the Police website in the South Cambridgeshire team's area, this also includes upcoming local meetings they are running, such as coffee with a cop. – [South Cambridgeshire | Your area | Cambridgeshire Constabulary](#)

Community Policing Survey

The Neighbourhood Policing team also have a continuous survey running, which helps feed into their local priority setting.

This is not to share details of incidents or the request for police attendance, but to share any concerns you may have or may have heard. The survey is available at: [Community Policing Survey](#)

New online tool helps residents judge whether they need planning permission

[“Do I Need Planning Permission?”](#) is an online tool to help householders and those considering small-scale developments understand whether planning permission may be needed for their building works or change of use. It can also identify planning restrictions that may affect a property, such as being a listed building or within a conservation area.

To use the service, residents simply need the address of the property and details of the changes they are considering. Through a series of structured questions, the tool then provides guidance based on the answers given. Results are for guidance only and do not constitute an official planning decision or legal advice, and users are advised to apply for a Lawful Development Certificate before starting work.

If they require a formal decision as to whether changes of use or building works, proposed or existing, are lawful, residents should apply for a Lawful Development Certificate at www.planningportal.co.uk/applications.