

Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for July 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
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Also, look out for the Parish Clerks e-Bulletin from South Cambridgeshire District Council

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 18 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. It follows a national government requirement to replace current district, county and city councils with single-tier “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.

Where areas have parish and town councils, these will not be affected and will continue to operate as they do now. South Cambs has held two on-line briefings for town and parish councils in its district.

Since the changes were announced in December 2024, all seven existing county, district and city councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working collaboratively to identify viable options for new unitary councils across the region.

No decisions have yet been made on what these new arrangements could look like, but the government has made it clear that it wants these councils to be unitaries (providing all services and covering all county and district functions).

Council leaders now 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 three 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 the Secretary of State.

The three proposals are based upon having two unitaries for the current area covered by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough made up of the following district council areas:

- 1. Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Fenland: 2. Cambridge City, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire.

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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.

New QR code stickers make reporting full litter and dog waste bins easier than ever

South Cambridgeshire District Council is making it simpler for residents to help keep streets clean, thanks to new QR code stickers being rolled out across Council-maintained litter and dog waste bins. Each bin that the Council is responsible for will now display a new sticker featuring a QR code. Residents can simply scan the QR code with their smartphone to instantly report issues, like full bins, directly through the website. For those without a smartphone, the sticker also provides a phone number for quick and easy reporting. This initiative is part of the Council's ongoing commitment to enhancing street care services and making it easier for residents to report issues quickly and conveniently.

District Council launches new grant to get South Cambridgeshire active

A new funding pot has launched which 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.

The new scheme adds to the £9,340 grant funding that was awarded last year (2024/25) towards activities supporting people with long term health conditions. For example, the grant helped fund strength and balance fitness classes for those living with Parkinson's disease to help manage their condition.

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 the South Cambs [website](#) or contact Ben Truett, Physical Activity Locality Co-ordinator: Ben.Truett@scambs.gov.uk

Disabled residents set to benefit from increased funding for home adaptations

Disabled residents and people with long-term health conditions can now access more support to live independently at home, thanks to increased funding. Some residents will be eligible for up to double the funding available compared to last year

to make their homes safer and more comfortable with essential adaptations like ramps, hoists, or showers.

The changes were approved by the District Council as part of an update to the adaptations and repairs policy for Cambs Home Improvement Agency. The new policy includes enhanced assistance for low-income households to improve home energy efficiency. To find out more or apply, visit www.cambshia.org call 01954 713330 or email hia@cambshia.org

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. This latest accolade comes after GCSP was awarded the 'Planning for the Natural Environment Award' at the recent national Planning Awards 2025.

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.

Contact Centre shines in Mystery Shopper exercise

A mystery shopper exercise at South Cambridgeshire District Council's Customer Contact Centre found 98% of advisors answered enquiries to a high standard. Conducted by an independent team of 16 researchers, the exercise involved 400 calls made at various times of day and across the week – at the Council's busiest time of year. The calls tested the Contact Centre's responsiveness, professionalism, and knowledge across a wide range of services.

The results show:

- The Contact Centre achieved an average customer satisfaction score of 81% across all service areas. This compares to a benchmark score of 68% amongst other councils.

- It earned a Net Promoter Score of +43, significantly above the scores for other councils, indicating customers are likely to recommend the service to others.
- Every single Advisor gave their name to the customer and nearly every call was classed as 'jargon free'.
- Customer service advisors were consistently praised for their politeness, helpfulness, and ability to resolve queries effectively.
- The Contact Centre demonstrated strong knowledge across diverse service areas, including Council Tax, recycling and waste, and housing.

The exercise – which was carried out by external provider Insight6 – was a repeat of a mystery shop of the Customer Contact Centre back in 2023.

Carla & John