

District Councillors' Annual Report to Madingley Parish, May 2026

This municipal year 2025/26 has been quite a busy one and this report covers the last 12 months of activities by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Councillors.

Your District Councillors have been Richard Stobart and Corinne Garvie

In addition to ward work we have served on the following committees: Scrutiny and Overview, Audit, Civil Affairs, Licensing, Planning, the Joint Development Management Committee (Strategic Planning), SCIP, the South Cambridgeshire and Investment Partnership which has recently started the development of the Cambium Square estate in Cambourne, and the Blue Plaque committee.

We attended most Parish Council meetings and when we missed some we would endeavour to attend the monthly coffee mornings to hear about any concerns residents may have. We hope that we have been able to keep the Parish Council up to date with developments in the District, and to offer advice and guidance where it has been most needed.

We have responded to planning proposals for infrastructure projects which may affect the village. Examples include the Fen Reservoir project and the associated holding reservoir in Madingley.

We have been concerned about the many potholes in the roads and are pleased to see that they have been filled. We kept an eye on the Reporting tool to check that the holes had been reported and even added a pothole which had not been logged.

We were concerned about an empty home and reported it to the Empty Homes office who contacted the university who owned it and it was repaired eventually, though sadly it is still empty.

Governance

SCDC has a Liberal Democrat administration. The statutory services provided are: Waste Collection & Recycling, Planning (these two are shared services with Cambridge City but we host them), Housing, Environmental Health, Licensing, Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Business Development & Support, and Electoral and Community Services.

SCDC adopted the new corporate plan that has been shaped by feedback from residents in our communities.

The priority areas we identified are:

- **Healthy and Supported Communities (HSC)** – We want to create a district where people feel safe, supported, and confident in their communities. Together, we will focus on what delivers for residents, enabling healthier, more independent lives for everyone.
- **Sustainable Homes and Vibrant Places (SHVP)** – We want to help people live near their work, shops, schools, leisure, and healthcare, with affordable and reliable public transport.
- **Being Green To Our Core (GTOC)** – We will consistently promote a cleaner, greener, zero carbon future for our communities. We aim to safeguard and enhance the natural

world for future generations and help our communities do the same as we strive to be among the most sustainable places to live and work in the country.

· **Helping Businesses To Thrive in South Cambridgeshire (HBT)** – We will support Local businesses as they start up and grow and as we transition towards a sustainable economy. Working with partners we are helping our residents develop the skills they need to take full advantage of local opportunities.

· **Financially Secure and Fit For The Future (FSFF)** - We will make it easier for residents to engage with our services and democratic processes. We will make smart financial decisions to safeguard our services for the future and invest in our staff to ensure they remain equipped to deliver for our district s needs.

Full details on the SCDC website at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/our-corporate-plan>

Elections

This is the final year of the current District Council Administration, and also the last election of SCDC as we know it, as Local Government Reorganisation is moving to a Unitary Authority within the next two years.

Highways and Road Conditions

Road conditions remain a priority, and we continue to press on pothole repairs and the need for longer-term resurfacing solutions.

While there are maintenance programmes in place, we very aware that many residents are not yet seeing the level of improvement they expect. We have raised specific concerns about the quality and consistency of repairs, as well as the need to prioritise roads where there are clear safety concerns.

Zero Carbon Grants

Since its launch in 2019, the Zero Carbon Grants Scheme has funded 82 different projects, awarding over £855,000 to initiatives across the district. This has included energy generation, energy efficiency and conservation measures at community buildings, community cycling events, cycle shelters, food waste reduction initiatives, community allotment and gardening projects and much more.

South Cambridgeshire communities will benefit from further money to cut carbon emissions - after the District Council committed another £152,000 to this popular grant scheme. It was agreed to increase the maximum amount that can be handed out from £15,000 per project in previous years, to £19,500 this year.

The application process will open on Monday 25 May 2026 and close on Friday 24 July 2026. Projects on school sites and by parent / teacher associations will be able to apply if there is a benefit to the wider community. Sports groups – like bowls clubs – will also be eligible, so long as they provide benefits to the wider community like improving mental health or strengthening community ties.

Groups will also be able to apply for money to pay for electric vehicle charging points under the grant.

Of the total of £152,000 available for the forthcoming financial year, half is set aside for carbon reduction or projects that lock-up carbon, and the other half is earmarked for

community engagement and nature projects – reflecting the aspirations of the Council's new Climate and Nature Strategy. Those interested in applying for a Zero Carbon Communities grant can join a workshop to find out more. Two sessions will be held on Wednesday 20 May. One will run from 12:30pm to 1:30pm and a second will take place from 6pm to 7pm. Potential applicants are encouraged to register for either.

More Grants

SCDC has awarded Community Chest grants to projects that aim to bring an improvement to communities - improving wellbeing, tackling isolation, expanding support services, and creating welcoming spaces for residents of all ages.

New Hub for Northstowe

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Kier Construction came together last month to celebrate the completion of the Unity Centre – the permanent community centre in Northstowe

Government's Plans for an Urban Development Corporation

South Cambridgeshire District Councillors have voiced their strong opposition to Government proposals for a Greater Cambridge Urban Development Corporation. An Extraordinary Council Meeting was held to discuss the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) Plans which would result in the creation of a board with most of its members appointed by Government, rather than being elected. At that meeting, Councillors also made clear they were strongly opposed to MHCLG's plans to remove key elements of the Council's planning powers and pass them to the new organisation for 25 years.

Councillors discussed how there is already approved or proposed development in Greater Cambridge's pipeline for over 100,000 new jobs and up to 77,000 new homes and suggested Government should focus on bringing forward these new homes and offices first in partnership with local councils. They said the main barriers to meeting current commitments are the lack of funding and slow delivery of transport and utility improvements. They stressed these problems do not come from the local planning system, but from wider infrastructure challenges and national regulations.

MHCLG are proposing that the new Development Corporation would become the local planning authority for major planning decisions above a certain threshold, as well as on larger development sites – removing that responsibility from the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) service which South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City councils share.

It would also replace the council's role in preparing Local Plans after the conclusion of the current emerging Joint Local Plan. This would mean that, in future, decisions about where new homes and jobs come forward across Greater Cambridge would be made by the Development Corporation, rather than by local communities through the council and the democratically elected councillors.

Plans to protect the South Cambridgeshire's Natural Environment

Plans for how the environment in South Cambridgeshire will be protected and improved over the next five years have been launched following an extensive consultation. South

Cambridgeshire District Council has confirmed its new Climate and Nature Strategy, which will guide environmental priorities until 2030.

The launch of the new strategy comes after residents, community groups, businesses and partners contributed ideas for the vision - a district that leads boldly with a clear pathway for climate action, biodiversity recovery, and community resilience. Feedback to last year's consultation into the proposed strategy showed strong public backing for the Council's environmental ambitions and for the strategy's eight focus areas.

- Doubling the land managed for nature across the district by 2050, with support for meadow creation, enhanced waterways, and connected wildlife corridors.
- Reaching Net Zero district-wide by 2050, with significant interest in renewable energy, low carbon transport, and home retrofit.
- Reducing the Council's operational emissions by 75% by 2030, being an important leadership example for the district. The new solar farm at the Council's Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Waterbeach depot to fuel electric bin lorries is part of this vision.
- Ensuring communities are resilient to at least a 2°C rise in global temperatures, with feedback emphasising flood resilience, heat adaptation and community preparedness.

More Free Trees

Parish and town councils across South Cambridgeshire have been given free commemorative blossom trees by the District Council - to honour community volunteers and remember those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The trees were provided for this year's UK-wide COVID-19 Day of Reflection - which took place on Sunday (8 March 2026).

South Cambridgeshire District Council offered all parish and town councils a free wild cherry tree – with 58 taking-up the offer. The idea is for the trees to stand as living tributes to the strength and compassion shown by the community during the pandemic.

The trees are being provided with plaques that honour the volunteers who gave their time and care to support those in need and remember all who were impacted and those who lost their lives.

Weekly food waste collections

This year will see the roll-out of the government's weekly food waste collections. This will help reduce the amount of food waste being sent to landfill and the waste will be used in anaerobic digesters to produce biofuels. The reason for the delay is that it takes a lot of time to acquire all the additional lorries that are needed. More information is here: <https://tinyurl.com/ykwrf83t>

Local Government Reorganisation LGR

The council has spent a great deal of time during the last year dealing with government requirements for a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This is the Government's plan to merge two-level County and District councils across the country into a single layer of unitary councils. In November 2025, the principal authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough submitted their proposals for what those new councils should look

like. The Government consultation ended on 26th March 2026 and decisions are expected to be announced during the summer.

SCDC submitted Option B. Elections will take place in May 2027 into the shadow councils, giving them a year to prepare ready to start operating in May 2028.

New Council Homes

We recognise that everyone deserves a high-quality, safe, and affordable place to live. When the current administration came to power in 2018, the council was building about 35 new council houses each year. Furthermore, because of right to buy sales its portfolio was shrinking so the period 2013 to 2018 saw a net reduction of 99 council houses.

Since 2018 the current administration has nearly quadrupled the rate of council house building. This year, at the time of writing, at least 130 new council homes had been completed across the district and by the end of the financial year, we will have delivered 139 new council homes with a further 160 planned for next year. This is something the administration is very proud of - developing affordable housing in our district, responding to resident requirements as quickly as possible.

Affordable Housing Delivery

Affordable housing is generally delivered by housing associations, often through S106 schemes especially on major sites. The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) recently published by the GC Shared Planning Service shows that 2024-2025 2,265 new homes were completed across Greater Cambridge, the highest since 2011. Of these 1,735 new homes were in South Cambridgeshire, of which 424 were affordable homes.

Work has begun on building out the SCIP (South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership) development next to South Cambs Hall in Cambourne. SCIP is a 50:50 partnership of SCDC and The Hill Group. The project will deliver 256 new low-carbon Passivhaus principles homes of which 40% (102) will be affordable comprising 72 for rent and 30 for shared ownership.

We are well into a programme of upgrading the thermal efficiency of our existing council housing stock using grant funding from Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to bring them up to EPC Band C which will result in a significant reduction in energy running costs for tenants.

Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use

A major milestone has been reached in tackling long-term empty homes in South Cambridgeshire, with 75 properties brought back into use in the last three years. This was achieved by appointing an Empty Homes Officer in 2022. To find out more about our work bringing empty homes back into use visit our webpage at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/housing/empty-homes>.

M&Me App—For council tenants to report repairs

The Council has launched M&Me, a new mobile app developed in partnership with Mears, offering council tenants a quicker and more convenient way to report repairs. Using the app, tenants can report a repair at any time, choose an appointment slot that

suits them, receive real-time alerts and updates about their repair, see who will be attending their home and when.

Mears will be writing to all council tenants with full details about the new app, including their unique access code.

Multi -award Winning Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS)

South Cambs hosts the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS), the joint planning service for both SCDC and Cambridge City. As the Cabinet Member responsible for the Service, it was pleasing to see the focussed transformation work over the years (from 2018 when we took over administration) result in the service winning three prestigious awards in 2025.

- The Royal Town Planning Institute s national Local Planning Authority of the Year 2025
- The Planning Award for 'Planning for the Natural Environment',
- The TET (Thornton Education Trust) Inspire Future Generations Award for 'Best Local Authority in Youth Engagement' 2025.

The service has come a long way and hopefully will continue to provide this level of service when the councils transform to a new unitary authority and if/when the proposed Development Corporation is established.

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 (DevCo permitting). The recently concluded consultation on the Reg18 stage showed strong community engagement with over 4500 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 final Reg 19 stage. This will then come out for final public consultation in the summer and subsequently submitted to MHCLG by the deadline of December 2026. More information at <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/>.

Current Local Plan and Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

The AMR is a requirement by Government and is a report tracking how well Greater Cam-

bridge is delivering its current adopted Local Plans. The report is for the 2024-2025 municipal year and highlights include:

- 7,000+ applications handled
- 9,900 homes approved
- 2,264 homes completed — highest since 2011 – 1735 in South Cambs
- 687 affordable homes - 424 in South Cambs (part of total)
- 62,000 sqm employment space completed - 51,956 in South Cambs
- 408,000 sqm approved

Helping Businesses To Thrive in South Cambridgeshire

The Business team is doing a lot of work to support local businesses (specifically SMEs) to grow, which will help local communities thrive, bringing jobs and opportunities into our villages.

The team continues to work closely with local businesses, stallholders, traders and event organisers to run markets across the district. It benefits residents and communities by being able to shop locally. One of these is the Girton Farmers Market that takes place in Williams Collyn Village Hall on the second Saturday of the month. The full list available at <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/see-do/markets/>.

South Cambs Christmas Market

South Cambridgeshire District Council hosted its indoor Christmas Market for the fourth year running. The festive extravaganza usually has around 100 stalls from local independent small businesses and market stallholders.

Visit South Cambs Website

The VisitSouthCambs website at <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/> is increasingly popular with small businesses advertising and used by visitors to the area to see what is available to do in the district.

South Cambs Business Newsletter

The Business Newsletter is available and anyone can sign for business support, news and information. More information at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business>

Healthy and Supported Communities

We are making more and more of our services available online and launched our new website with much improved accessibility. SAM – the web chat help has been very useful.

Our commercial investments are successfully bringing increasing income to the Council enabling us to provide more facilities. One example is the recently completed Unity Centre at Northstowe. The construction combines Passive House principles (low operational carbon) with low lifecycle carbon materials to deliver a net zero design. The building has been leased to the Northstowe Town Council who are now the operators of this impressive new facility. Doors will open to the public from 30 March.

We are also providing targeted health and wellbeing support for vulnerable residents and ensuring our staff have the training to respond appropriately to safeguarding issues.

Mobile Wardens scheme

SCDC continues to support the Mobile Wardens Scheme, which offers support and assistance for older people. This allows them to continue to live independently at home by providing daily contact (Monday to Friday) either by a personal visit or by a telephone call, to ensure a sense of security and wellbeing. SCDC has set out a funding programme which will enable mobile warden schemes to become more financially independent, hopefully securing their long-term viability across the district.

Homes for Ukraine scheme and Newsletter

Sadly, it has now been four years since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and many Ukrainians are still unable to safely return home. South Cambridgeshire

continues to support Ukrainian guests. There are 104 Ukrainian guests being hosted in South Cambridgeshire, being hosted by 75 households. Many have moved on to private rented accommodation in the UK. In total 1,009 people have arrived in South Cambridgeshire under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. South Cambs provides a regular newsletter for Ukrainian guests living in our district.

Cabinet and Town / Parish Council Liaison

Cabinet holds meetings with parish councils, to share information relevant to communities and give opportunity to parish councillors to raise issues of concern directly to the administration.

Cost of Living Support

With many residents still facing financial pressures, the Council will 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.

Town and Parish Council Liaison Officer

The council continues to employ a Town and Parish Council Liaison Officer – Jack Bullimore – who has acted as a point of contact for parish councils over the last year. Along-side your district councillors, please look out for communications from Jack.

Solar Energy Park Construction

Construction has begun on a pioneering renewable energy solar park to power the growing fleet of electric bin lorries for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. Due for completion by end of 2026, it is expected to supply 59% of the Waterbeach depot's total energy needs and achieve over 40% biodiversity net gain through measures such as wildflower planting and new hedgerows to create a haven for local wildlife. More details at <https://bit.ly/SolarEnergyPark>.

Financial Position and Budget

At the Council's budget meeting, members approved its business plan and budget for the coming financial year. The meeting agreed to a £5.24 increase for an average Band D property. This works out to 10p a week and below inflation rise.

The table below shows comparison of the different precepts charged across Cambridgeshire

District	Unitary Precept	District Precept	County Precept	Total
East Cambs		£142.14	£1,785.42	£1,927.56
Huntingdonshire		£170.86	£1,785.42	£1,956.28

South Cambs		£180.64	£1,785.42	£1,966.06
Cambridge		£239.07	£1,785.42	£2,024.49
Fenland		£253.35	£1,785.42	£2,038.77
Peterborough	£1,836.72			£1,836.72

This doesn't include the police, fire, parish council or Mayor's precepts which are not set by SCDC but are collected by the council. It also doesn't include town and parish precepts (which in an increasing number of cases are now larger than the District Council's). As seen, South Cambridgeshire charges slightly more than Huntingdonshire DC, but significantly less than both Cambridge CC and Fenland DCs.

SCDC is one of the best run councils in the country and is often held up as an exemplar. It continues to deliver high quality services in the face of sustained cuts by central government, including recent reductions to the amount of Business Rates that local authorities can retain. Our core spending power is being cut by over £5 million over the next 3 years, thanks to the Government's "fair funding review 2.0" which is hurting councils in rural areas like ours. That drop is the equivalent to 15% of our core spending power.

As a result of the government's funding changes, we are increasingly reliant on council tax. In this budget - council tax represents 35% of our core spending power. Come 2028/29 - council tax will represent 47% of our core spending power.

We have council tax relief offering up to 100% relief from council tax for those residents who need it most. Even with the rise, South Cambridgeshire would remain among the lowest-taxing district councils in the country.

Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)

Another proud initiative is the LIFT scheme, which was made permanent in the last year. The LIFT software interrogates the council's databases to identify residents living in South Cambridgeshire who are missing out on benefits that they are entitled to claim. A two-year apprentice role has been added to the scheme to make the most of the LIFT programme.

It's already done fantastic work for residents – helping over 1,000 residents so far to secure more than £4 million in benefits for local households.

Support Grant funding

South Cambs District Council has committed Service Support Grant funding of £300,000 a year to local community groups to underpin the delivery of services to support people with their mental health, independent living, advice services, and to help residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

The Service Support Grant funding has almost doubled compared to the previous budget, made possible by prudent management of the council's finances and a recognition of the acute need for these services.

East West Rail (EWR)

Finally this year, EWR has started communicating better. We were pleased that they finally listened to councillors, parish councils and MPs and decided to use a mined tunnel (not cut-and-cover) underneath A428, Bourn Airfield and Highfields Caldecote.

Corinne Garvie

Richard Stobart