

Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for September 2024.

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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Marleigh community development officer to be provided by South Cambridgeshire

The Marleigh community development officer funded by a Section 106 contribution is now being provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council following the end of the contract with Locality and the appointment is imminent following a very successful recruitment campaign. The post holder will promote and help develop the community in Marleigh, liaising with external agencies and in particular Hill Marshall, master developer for this growing new town, Land Trust, L&Q, Fen Ditton Parish Council, small enterprises, the existing community and new residents.

Government funding for 'Planning Super squad' awarded to Greater Cambridge Shared Planning

Audit Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has been allocated up to £650,000 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to help make the whole planning process even more efficient.

This funding is part of the accelerator project aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of planning services locally, colloquially named the 'Planning Super squad'. Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP), a partnership between South Cambridgeshire District and Cambridge City councils, is also contributing money to the project.

The planning service already performs at above target for the speed in which it determines planning applications. This funding is intended to support the service to develop new approaches that will enable performance to be improved further, to help raise standards and benefit planning authorities across the country.

One objective of this Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding is to implement a virtual 'development team' approach in a partnership between GCSP and key partners. This initiative is designed to create additional capacity to speed-up the determination and issuing of planning decisions even further. By streamlining processes and using digital tools, the planning service aims to set a new standard in efficient service delivery.

As part of several new projects, the funds will go towards a comprehensive evaluation of all areas within the planning service to look at where processes can be faster or more efficient. The culmination of this effort will be the development of an accelerator model, which will be reported back to central government as a blueprint for potential wider implementation.

One area of focus for the accelerated implementation includes two existing projects: Northstowe and the Wellcome Genome Campus expansion. These projects will serve as focal points for testing and refining the accelerated process delivery model.

GCSP will work closely with development partners, namely Homes England for the Northstowe project and Urban&Civic for the Wellcome Genome Campus expansion.

Senior planners have said that these collaborations are essential in ensuring that the accelerated planning processes meet the needs of everyone involved and deliver tangible benefits.

The idea is that the projects will showcase the successful delivery of accelerated schemes through the planning process, providing valuable insights and lessons that can be applied to future projects elsewhere.

Support for local climate action in South Cambridgeshire continues with sixth round of Zero Carbon Communities grants

The sixth round of South Cambridgeshire's Zero Carbon Community (ZCC) grants have been announced, distributing £125,000 across 11 innovative projects. Launched in 2019, ZCC grants have funded 82 projects with around £625,000 to date. Funding ranges from £2,000 to £15,000 per project.

The grant scheme supports projects which help reduce carbon emissions, lock up carbon, and foster community engagement on climate change.

This year's ZCC grant initiatives include solar panels for community buildings, a strengthened repair café network to encourage waste reduction and a group aiming to help people adopt climate-friendly gardening practices at home.

The ZCC grants are open to parish councils and community groups across the district and provide financial support for schemes that demonstrate a sustainable and lasting impact. Projects receiving funding this time are:

- **Solar Power for Community Buildings:** Five grants were awarded to install solar panels on community buildings at Balsham Village Hall, Caxton Village Hall, Kingston Village Hall, Over Day Centre, and the Spicers Pavilion in Sawston.
- **Energy Efficiency Improvements:** Cambridge and District Citizens Advice received a grant to replace their lighting with energy-efficient LEDs, and Cottenham Community Centre will renovate and repurpose an underused space into an energy-efficient activities hall with enhanced insulation and heating controls.
- **Community Engagement Initiatives:** Four grants were awarded to projects aimed at increasing community engagement around climate change. Cambridge Carbon Footprint will expand their repair café network, promoting a culture of waste reduction and repair. Let's Cook Project will continue their work in educating communities on reducing avoidable food waste, while Climate Change Gardening will establish a kit for events to encourage gardeners to adopt climate-friendly practices.

The ZCC grant scheme is funded through the Council's renewables reserve (business rates from renewable energy projects) and builds on a long-standing commitment to supporting community-level action on sustainable energy.

The program will continue through 2025/26 and 2026/27, with two more rounds of funding planned before its conclusion.

For more information on the Zero Carbon Community grant scheme visit the South Cambridgeshire District Council ZCC webpage, or email zcc@scamb.gov.uk.

Councils to tackle housing challenges in Greater Cambridge in the next five years

Affordable housing, improving housing conditions and building low carbon homes are among priorities in a new strategy plan for Greater Cambridge for the next five years.

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have drawn up a comprehensive plan on how both councils can address housing needs until 2029.

The Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy 2024 to 2029 sets out aims and priorities for new and existing homes - including building the right homes in the right places that people can afford to live in and improving existing homes.

The vision includes high quality, low-carbon, energy and water-efficient homes.

Following a public consultation, which gathered the views of a wide range of interested groups including people who live and work in the region, the Strategy was approved by both councils.

Carla and John