

Report of Councillor Carla Hofman and Councillor John Williams to Parish Councils for October 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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What are your priorities for South Cambridgeshire District Council?

Residents and businesses are being asked to help shape South Cambridgeshire District Council's plans for the years ahead – to help ensure the area remains one of the best places to live and work in the country.

The Council has identified five key priorities to help achieve its goals. Councillors now want to hear the views of local people so they can help influence the production of a full Corporate Plan for 2025 and beyond. This Plan, when finalised, will set out the actions, initiatives and strategies the Council will work through to meet its targets.

The five priority areas the Council has put forward are:

- Healthy and flourishing communities – which could include supporting communities to tackle local issues, support for arts and culture projects, providing cost-of-living support and working with partners to combat crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Sustainable homes and vibrant places – such as continuing to deliver new, high quality Council homes, bringing empty homes back into use, making new towns vibrant and attractive places to live and supporting improved access to green spaces.
- Being green to our core – including reducing local carbon emissions, protecting air quality and working with others to tackle water scarcity and other environmental issues.
- Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire – through methods such as promotion of local businesses, renting out space, supporting new markets and events and providing business support resources.
- Financially secure and fit for the future – which could mean completing reviews of services to make sure processes are efficient, exploring new ways of generating income, acting to reduce fraud and making it easier for residents to access services online.

The Council is keen to hear from as many people as possible – especially those who live, own businesses or work in South Cambridgeshire, as well as regular visitors to the area.

The public consultation and online survey will run until Tuesday 29 October, go to: <https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Yr5uzntVNkShnHZ-yizUUSEbKQeTT7JPluyOclGOy9JUQ0MwNkJWV0gwTIRLMVdYNTJZU1BVMTIQQyQIQCN0PWcu&route=shorturl>

New £100,000 small business grant programme is launched in South Cambridgeshire

Small businesses in South Cambridgeshire are being invited to apply for funding of up to £5,000 each in a new grant programme launched this week. The funding is available to those already trading with ambitions to grow and will provide grants, advice and support for existing businesses with up to nine employees.

The new support grants are available as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) is the lead authority for delivery of the Fund, while the District Council is responsible for grant scheme delivery and allocation.

Applications will be open until 31 October 2024. Businesses may only make one application. The District Council reserves the right to close the application window earlier should the level of demand exceed the maximum funding available.

More information can be found online at:

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/small-business-grant/>

Street trading policy change allows a three-month trial for new locations in South Cambridgeshire

An updated street trading policy is set for South Cambridgeshire to allow greater flexibility and opportunities for businesses. The new policy brings two key changes into force to support the growth of street traders such as food vans, flower stalls and cake vans. The two changes align with the District Council's corporate objective to grow local businesses and economies. They are:

- A three-month trial for new premises. This allows traders to assess suitability or viability of a new location before committing to an annual consent.
- A new ad-hoc trading consent, enabling trading for up to four times a year in one location to meet business needs or assess viability.

The existing fair approach to street trading continues across the district while ensuring it complements local shops.

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to ending violence against women and girls as a White Ribbon organisation

South Cambridgeshire District Council has become White Ribbon Accredited in recognition of its commitment to preventing harassment, abuse and violence against women and girls. The District Council is committed to working towards ending men's violence against women by becoming accredited and aligning with White Ribbon UK, the leading charity engaging men and boys to end violence against women.

As part of our work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation, we introduced and strengthened policies and practices to support staff and residents of all genders who experience domestic abuse. This work was praised by assessors as inspiring and exemplary. As part of our White Ribbon action plan, our Ambassadors and Champions will continue to raise awareness of the White Ribbon promise to “never use, excuse or remain silent about men’s violence against women”.

National Fraud Initiative (NFI)

South Cambridgeshire participates in the National Fraud Initiative to help proactively detect fraud and error in our systems. Since its creation in 1996 there have been cumulative savings of £2.4 billion nationally.

While there is not a huge amount of fraud and error at the Council, it is important that we remain vigilant. This data matching exercise helps us to proactively safeguard our public funds. The Council submits various data sets to the Cabinet Office for data matching. These include data from: Licensing, Trade Creditors, Housing, Council Tax, Benefits, Electoral roll, plus our Payroll and Pensions. This happens at least every two years, with the Council Tax and Electoral roll data also being submitted annually.

The data is matched across all of the Councils, and this helps us to detect any payments or benefits which may not have been correct. We can then recover the money for the Council. This process also helps us to learn where our processes can be improved to prevent further risks. All data is handled according to General Data Protection Regulations using secure Cabinet Office computer systems. Further information about the processing of data is included in the Councils NFI webpage and the Cabinet Office's Fair Processing Notice.

Grants boost community support in South Cambridgeshire

Art for mental health, domestic abuse support and a community transport charity are among groups sharing a grant funding pot of more than £180,000 from South Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Service Support Grants are being awarded for advice services, independent living, mental health and wellbeing and to provide support to the wider voluntary and community sector.

Eleven non-profit groups will share a total of £167,400 and include Citizens Advice and Cambridge Dial-a-Ride and £14,250 has been allocated to Cambridge Cyrenians, Cambridge Reuse and Cambridge Women’s Aid all of whom also support South Cambs residents.

Benefits of District Council’s cost-of-living support highlighted by report

The latest cost-of-living support that has benefited thousands of South Cambridgeshire residents has been outlined in a new District Council report.

Last winter 500 more people were given a free electric blanket during the winter – to add to the 400 South Cambridgeshire residents who received either a blanket or slow cooker the winter before. The electrical products were targeted at people claiming Attendance Allowance or a certain level of Personal Independence Payment who are also receiving Council Tax Support. 90% of recipients who responded to a Council survey said they had noticed at least some difference to their energy bills – with the Council estimating that every resident who received one saved more than £33 a week. Additionally, almost all respondents said they'd noticed a difference in how warm they felt at home.

Meanwhile Warm Hubs – established in late 2022 to provide warm community spaces in South Cambridgeshire – evolved into Community Hubs. Run by Cambridgeshire ACRE, they have been funded largely by a two-year Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System grant. The 16 Community Hubs operate in communities across South Cambridgeshire – with three additional Hubs due to open this Autumn. They are a place where residents can receive debt advice, food aid, housing, and health services. Between February and July this year, more than 5,470 people visited these hubs.

Elsewhere a Mobile Food Hub – a partnership between South Cambs and not-for-profit organisation Hope CIC – visits eight locations across the district on a rolling basis. The Mobile Food Hub is stocked with fresh fruit and vegetables, essential items such as canned foods, pasta, rice, cereal, and long-life milk. Personal hygiene, period, and infant products are also available, plus household cleaning items such as laundry detergent. All items are sold at below retail price, with some offered for free. The initiative – which recently purchased an electric vehicle thanks to funding from the District Council's Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme – has received more than 2,000 visits from residents since it launched last summer. In addition, 263 emergency food parcels were supplied to residents as an emergency last resort

Elsewhere, three local groups covering Girton, Barton and Melbourn have successfully applied to the District Council's Community Growing Grant scheme. The £500 grants support communities to grow their own food sustainably. A South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Food Network has also been established, linking together all the foodbanks in the district. The network is now working to share surplus food to reduce waste.

Going forward the council has purchased software to better target its support and advice to residents on a low income, and there will be another distribution of free electric blankets for this winter.

Carla and John