

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

District Councillor's Monthly Report – August 2023

Contacting South Cambs District Council

South Cambs has now implemented a web chat facility on its web site to provide an additional method of contacting the council. You can use this feature to ask questions and get information from advisors about all council services except for planning. (Planning is currently excluded due to the complexities of the service and the individual nature of each query.) Initially web chat will be available from 10.00am to 3.00pm weekdays while the demand for the service is assessed.

You can still call the Customer Contact Centre on 01954 713000 to talk to an advisor. The line is staffed between 8.00am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday, with late opening to 6:30pm on Wednesday. Recent tests by a third-party organisation found that 81% of calls are answered within 4 minutes so please stay on the line.

Bin Collection Changes - Update

Cambridge City Council has now approved a 4-day working week trial for the Shared Waste Service. South Cambs already approved the trial earlier in the year. The new collection arrangements are currently planned to start on Monday 11th September and details will be rolled out shortly.

Note that this trial is completely separate from the 4-day working week trial for office based staff and will be measured by different criteria. The trial for office based staff is now 3 months into the second, 12 month, phase. Newspaper headlines that the government has “instructed” South Cambs to end this trial are incorrect and the council is asking for discussions with the responsible minister.

250,000 New Dwellings in Greater Cambridge?

Media stories about government plans for 250,000 new dwellings in Greater Cambridge have caused a great deal of confusion, not least because it would be necessary to concrete over the entire county to accommodate that much construction. Minister Michael Gove's interviews haven't clarified the situation either. However South Cambs DC officers have spoken to civil servants at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and learnt more:

- The 250, 000 was a 'leak' and it is not the official number for Cambridgeshire. In fact, there is no official target number.
- References to a “new quarter” in Cambridge appear to centre on Hartree, the latest name of the North East Cambridge development on the current water treatment site. It may also encompass the Science Park and Waterbeach. However, the civil servants cannot confirm any details yet. The City Council has been talking to DLUHC about extra funding to accelerate the move of the water treatment works to the new site on Honey Hill.
- It is not clear how much growth will be proposed in South Cambs rather than in the City. However, district council representatives have been invited to initial meetings, which suggests there will be some impact.
- The “Super Squad” of planners does not apply to Cambridge despite all that has been in the press. It will be created to unblock major stalled sites and Cambridge sites have slowed but not stalled. Its focus will be primarily in Leeds and London.
- Additional funding is being proposed - £3 million to address the water shortage issues, £500,000 for planning for Cambridgeshire and £1million towards infrastructure and transport. There is no detail about any of this yet.

GCP Reworking Sustainable Travel Zone Proposals

The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) Board has completed its review of the comments received from its consultation on initial proposals for a Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) in Cambridge. It was determined the proposals were not acceptable to the majority of respondents. The board has instructed its technical team to come up with a range of alternative, costed solutions. Changes could be made to the days and hours of zone operation, the congestion charge amount (including exemptions), and the boundaries of the STZ (for example, excluding Addenbrookes). Another suggestion is that local residents could be entitled to a certain number of free trips per year, possibly 50. The team will report back in the autumn.

Shared Planning Service ISO9001 Certified

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service's Quality Management System (QMS) has been certified to the International Organisation for Standardisation ISO9001 standard. The ISO certification covers the Development Management and Compliance teams. The Development Management Team is responsible for ensuring development proposals are assessed and managed in accordance with relevant planning policies, regulations to promote sustainable development and the public interest. The Compliance Team checks that developments have any permissions they require to proceed with their build. If a resident is unsure if their project needs planning permission, ask them to visit <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/> or contact the Planning Service for advice if they do not find the information online. If necessary, they can schedule a short call with a Planning Officer at no cost.

The Planning Service has managed to fill almost all the vacancies in the organisation since the 4-day week trial started. It has also replaced most of the (expensive) temporary staff who were holding vacant planning officer positions. It is hoped that a full complement of staff and recent improvements to the online portal will make applying for planning permission a less stressful process than in the past.

Cambridge South Station

A further £200 million has been allocated to the four-platform Cambridge South railway station at Cambridge Biomedical Campus. The fully accessible station is due to be completed by 2025 and is expected to accommodate 1.8 million passengers a year when fully operational.

Council thanks residents for supporting vital local services

South Cambridgeshire councillors have thanked residents for their support of front-line services, after the District Council was named the joint top District Council nationally for collecting Council Tax. Government figures show South Cambridgeshire District Council collected 99.2% of the Council Tax funds it was due to in the 2022/23 financial year, helping fund social care, bin collections, police and fire services, schools, support to prevent homelessness and much more. Across England, the total collection rate when considering all councils was 96.8%.

By 31 March 2023, the Council had collected a total of £135,293,000 during the previous 12 months. As a result, South Cambridgeshire District Council is the joint top performing District Council out of almost 320 tax-collecting authorities in England.

South Cambs District Council collects Council Tax on behalf of the Police, Fire Service, County Council, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, and Parish and Town Councils. Only around 9% of residents' annual Council Tax bill goes towards services which the District Council provides, like emptying bins, determining planning applications and homelessness support. The rest is passed to those other organisations.

The council is very aware of the ongoing cost of living crisis and continues to do all it can to support residents. It will always do its best to help those who need assistance paying their Council Tax bills, for example, by arranging plans to spread payments. The most important thing any resident who is concerned about their Council Tax bill can do is to talk to the council as early as possible. There may be financial support available, for example, through the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme.

The Government figures also show that South Cambs District Council collected 98.2% of the Business Rates that was due from local companies during the 2022/23 financial year, a total of £92,053,000.

District Council charity of the year

A local grassroots youth organisation has been chosen as charity of the year for the District Council. Cambourne Youth Partnership (CYP) was chosen by Cllr Peter Fane after he was elected as the new South Cambridgeshire District Council Chair. CYP enables young people to participate in activities they help to develop, including sport, cookery, and community action projects. In addition, young people can access mental health and well-being support.

CYP runs open access and targeted youth clubs out of its base, called Cambourne Soul, including activities ranging from boxing and gaming to playing pool, pizza making to movie nights and litter picking. Its youth workers also engage young people in detached sessions in the community and deliver one-to-one sessions for those needing further support. The charity's key aims are to inspire and raise the aspirations of young people in the local community, particularly those who are experiencing disadvantage in various forms including social and economic isolation, and challenging life situations.

The council will be bringing forward a number of initiatives to encourage the involvement of young people in its activities. A working group of councillors has been developing proposals and will report back in the autumn.

External Defibrillators fund

If your parish does not currently have a public defibrillator, you can bid for a share of £1 million of government funding to buy defibrillators for community spaces like village halls and local parks. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is inviting interested organisations to register expressions of interest for its Community Automated External Defibrillators (AED) Fund, aimed at increasing the number of AEDs in public places.

An estimated 1,000 new defibrillators are to be provided by the fund. As part of the grant award, applicants will be asked to demonstrate that defibrillators will be placed in areas where they are most needed, such as places with high footfall, vulnerable people, rural areas, or due to the nature of activity at the site. To apply, submit an expression of interest form here:

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=MIwnYaiRMUyMH-9N6Jc6HLfy1IJ_IPFFotCZIB4mEYIUQ1VUWU9ISjI4MjNNTVzIPWFk1SDQ2SzhRSi4u

Policing in South Cambs - have your say

The next police engagement event is Tuesday 8th August 7-8pm, and you can obtain your free ticket and meeting link online at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/south-cambs-community-engagement-meeting-august-2023-tickets-491855191117>.

Each quarter you can complete an online Community Policing Survey (https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=G53Fo_G4mUKdajmtj1cEIrVu85PPd6xFgF657-q3ftJUMEU1NUszTII4MFY3QUFTUVRXMjMxSlgzOSQIQCN0PWcu&web=1&wdLOR=c90DDC63E-7BD2-4579-91EA-8404B2E2F679) The survey allows police can build up a picture of what is

happening in your area and what is concerning you most. The engagement event will include a report from the officers policing your area about recent activity and the results of the survey. More details of the engagement event and survey can be found on the Cambridgeshire Constabulary website (camb.s.police.uk).

Peter Sandford

2 August 2023

Email: cllr.sandford@scamb.s.gov.uk

Mobile: 07985 425414