

Cambridgeshire County Council – Papworth and Swavesey Division

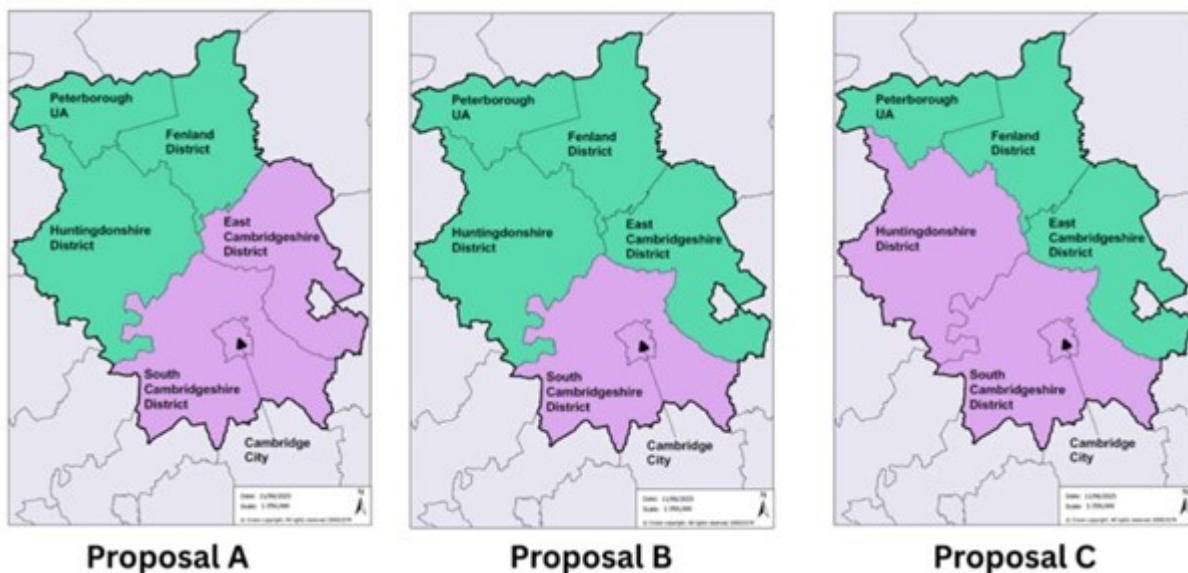
South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caxton and Papworth Ward

County and District Councillors' Monthly Report – November 2025

Local Government reorganisation

Local Government reorganisation

The Full County Council meeting on Tuesday 21 October resolved by a majority to submit Option A to Government for its consideration. Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire will probably vote to submit Option B, as will East Cambridgeshire. (South Cambs will hold an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 24th November to choose its preferred option.)



Huntingdonshire may submit either Option C, or its own Option E which looks like Option C but with a separate Huntingdonshire. Peterborough is likely to submit either Option A or Option D which is being pushed by its two MPs. Option D would split Huntingdonshire in two, with East Cambridgeshire in a council with Fenland and the east half of Huntingdonshire. It is not clear what if anything Fenland will submit.

Surrey is further along in the process than we are, and the Government has just announced its decision on the new boundaries there. This will create just two unitary authorities, with five of the current districts in one, and six in the other. The majority of respondents to the Government's consultation did not want this solution for Surrey—just 19 per cent supported it while 56 per cent opposed it.

Cambridgeshire’s outcome may be different, but at the moment it appears that Local Government Reorganisation is being led by the Treasury and resulting in larger councils, with local opinion not counting for much.

News from the County Council

County Council composition

In the last month, the Reform UK group on the council has lost one of its members who now sits as an Independent, and appointed a new interim leader Cllr Stefan Fisher to replace the previous leader, James Sidlow.

Meanwhile the 31 Liberal Democrats and two other Independents have joined forces to form a single Liberal Democrat & Independent Group. The new composition of the council is as follows.

Liberal Democrat & Independent	33
Conservative	10
Reform UK	9
Labour	5
Green	3
Independent	1

Strategy Resources and Performance

Customer care

The Council has amended its Customer Feedback Policy and Care Standards in line with recent changes made by the Ombudsman. Among other things, these changes mean that a council’s internal complaints system must have no more than two stages—Cambridgeshire’s had three, which has now been reduced.

Budget and business plan

The council continues to forecast an overspend for the current year, which is gradually reducing. The overspend reflects the key pressures facing the council, including the increasing number of children requiring care and the shortfall of local placements; the cost of home to school transport; higher costs for services for people with learning disabilities following the end of a pooled budget arrangement with the NHS; and higher capital financing costs.

Every year, the council must set a balanced budget to support a wide range of services including social care, education, libraries, highways and transport, environmental services, and waste management. With rising costs, a growing population, and increasing demands, more than half of the council’s spending currently goes toward social care, while other major areas of spending include special educational needs and disabilities, transport, and the environment.

Budget survey

The council has launched a public engagement survey to gather residents’ views on where the council should prioritise spending and savings in the years ahead.

The engagement survey, which will close on Monday 24 November, asks residents for their views on how the council should approach budget priorities. It asks questions such as whether the council should be looking to increase its income, or decrease spending on some of its services.
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/finance-and-budget/business-plans/business-plan-2025-to-2026>

Highways & Transport

20MPH schemes

Swavesey was successful in its bid for a new 20MPH zone which is now at final consultation stage.

LED street light replacements

The county council's programme to replace existing street lights with LEDs continues. Where vegetation or trees are obscuring the street lights, contractor Balfour Beatty should arrange for works to be completed as a separate task to trim up to one metre around the lantern where required. Balfour Beatty should also send the council a monthly report of any vegetation or trees needing to be cut back to allow street lights to light the road correctly.

Public Rights of Way maintenance hierarchy

The council has now agreed a new hierarchy for maintenance of Public Rights of Way, targeting activity on the rights of way which are most used and valued by local communities.

Council officers have reviewed feedback received over the summer, and undertaken a map-based review of school catchment areas. Any Public Rights of Way that provide a direct alternative to on-road walking or cycling routes towards a school site from residential areas within the catchment have had their rankings increased. 221 Public Rights of Way have had their rankings uplifted.

Parishes will be formally invited to comment every two years on the rankings of Public Rights of Way within the hierarchy beginning in 2027.

Inspectors will continue site audits, identifying any recurring issues with excessive or poorly placed signage and escalating these with the companies concerned.

Adults & Health

Arthur Rank Hospice

Arthur Rank Hospice is facing a funding deficit of £829,000, primarily due to the withdrawal of a long-standing funding contribution from Cambridge University Hospitals. This cut could force the hospice to close nine of its 23 beds—a 40 per cent reduction in capacity, and a contradiction of the government's own 10-year Health Plan to shift care into the community.

This dramatic loss of service will mean that over 200 people a year could be denied the option of dying with dignity, receiving compassionate, specialist palliative care in the community until the very end of their lives. The hospice's financial crisis is worsened by the government's increase in

employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs), which is costing the hospice an additional £225,000 a year and further threatens patient care.

A petition to save the Arthur Rank Hospice beds and protect end-of-life care in Cambridgeshire was presented to the Government on Monday 3 November.

Integrated Care System

In response to Government requirements for cost savings, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough's NHS Integrated Care Board, responsible for planning and commissioning local health services, has now been gathered into a much bigger cluster of boards. Stretching from Milton Keynes to Hertfordshire, the new Board will be one of the biggest in the country, with the focus on Cambridgeshire very much reduced.

The change is being implemented at breakneck speed, in a way which means it cannot deliver. The Boards must cut their running costs by fifty per cent in a matter of months. Many of the staff are at risk of redundancy, but there is no money for those redundancies to be enacted. Staff cannot be let go from their current jobs, or the new system staffed, because there is no money to do so.

Health scrutiny

The first meeting of the council's new Health Scrutiny Committee reviewed how the system of annual health checks for young adults with learning disabilities was working. It also considered the Government's ten-year plan for the NHS.

CCS Trust merger

Cambridgeshire Community Services (CCS) NHS Trust is planning to merge with Norfolk Community Health & Care NHS Trust, to form East of England Community Health & Care NHS Trust. The organisations will be engaging with the public, stakeholders and local MPs, and working with NHS England on the process to ensure everything is in place for the end of March 2026.

CCS provides a range of health services in Cambridgeshire, from services for children and young people and dental provision to musculoskeletal physiotherapy, contraception and sexual health services.

Be Winter Wise

Cambridgeshire County Council has relaunched its annual #BeWinterWise campaign, for winter 2025–26. The campaign aims to help Cambridgeshire residents stay safe, warm, and healthy throughout the colder months by sharing practical advice, highlighting local support, and encouraging communities to look out for one another. It will:

- Raise awareness of how winter weather, financial pressures, and health challenges can be connected.
- Provide support by signposting residents to useful services, and sharing advice tailored to different needs.
- Encourage community spirit, empowering neighbours to support one another and build resilience together.

The campaign will share useful information about cost of living support, including practical guidance on how to claim Pension Credit for those over State Pension age and on a low income. It

will explain how families can apply for supermarket vouchers for children eligible for free school meals during the school holidays, helping to ease pressures on household budgets. In addition, the campaign will signpost to support and information from local partner organisations who provide essential services during the winter months, from heating and energy advice to community-based wellbeing support.

Children & Young People

New special schools delayed

The Department for Education was due to build two new special schools in Cambridgeshire, in March and Gamlingay, as part of an agreement with the council to help contain overspending on special educational needs and disabilities.

However, the Government's special schools and free schools programme has been paused and the council is unclear when the promised schools will be built. Without these extra schools, children are being placed in expensive specialist independent schools, which is creating increased costs for the county council.

The Government had promised to publish a schools white paper in the autumn, but this has now been delayed until the new year. While this will create more time for reforms to special educational needs and disabilities support, it does not help the council address its financial pressures.

Education Health & Care Plans

The council has agreed to move an additional £780,000 from reserves to improve the timeliness of the production of Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Recent years have seen significant increases in the numbers of children needing these plans—8,007 now, compared with 4,667 in 2019.

Care leavers celebration

The council held a celebration event for young people between the ages of 17 and 25 from across Cambridgeshire moving on out of care. The council has in place a 'local offer' for care leavers, which provides services and support for those leaving care to ensure they are well looked after. This includes support from the council as well as external organisations.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/children-s-social-care/what-is-the-care-leavers-local-offer>

Community Watercourse Maintenance Grants

Cambridgeshire County Council is offering grants of up to £10,000 to support community-led watercourse maintenance that help reduce local flood risk. These grants are aimed at areas where ownership is unclear or complex, making regular upkeep difficult. Eligible groups include parish councils and community groups with active plans to improve water flow and prevent flooding. Grant funding will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis and will remain open until all the money has gone. Applications should be made as early as possible to avoid disappointment here: <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/business/planning-and-development/flood-and-water/residents-and-householders/community-flood-action-programme/watercourse-maintenance-grant>

News from the District Council

Consultation on SCDC's Corporate Plan

Last month the SCDC launched a six-week public consultation, inviting residents to share their views on the Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030, which sets out a long-term vision for a fairer, kinder, and greener South Cambridgeshire under five key priorities:

- Healthy and supported communities
- Sustainable homes and vibrant places
- Being green to our core
- Helping businesses to thrive
- Financially secure and fit for the future

SCDC is asking for comments on how these priorities should be delivered in the year ahead, through its annual Corporate Action Plan for 2026/27. The consultation will run until the end of the day on Sunday 16 November. To find out more and take part, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/consultations

Draft Local Plan

The draft Local Plan and supporting evidence has just been published ahead of a public consultation which will run between 1 Dec 2025 – 30 Jan 2026. Cambridge City Council and SCDC are working together to create this joint Local Plan for the Greater Cambridge area. The plan sets out the future land use and planning policies for the area for the period 2024-2045. The Local Plan identifies the need for new homes and jobs, the services and infrastructure to support them, and guides where this development should happen. It has been informed by several stages of public engagement and working with stakeholders. There is a useful little video to help people understand what the Local Plan is and its importance here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oa9MrnoELU0>

At the time of writing the draft Local Plan exists only in reports to relevant committees at both SCDC and the City Council. These are public meetings and if you wish to get ahead of the game, you can pick through the meeting papers here:

<https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan-the-20-year-master-plan-for-the-greater-cambridge-area/>

Alternatively, you can wait until a more user-friendly version becomes available in readiness for the consultation.

District and some parish councillors have been briefed on the main points in the Plan, which is broadly based on the current Plan from 2018. In our area, the main impacts will be from the proposed North Cambourne development and potential warehouse/industrial units off the A14.

If you have any questions about the Draft Local Plan, please contact the Planning Policy Team: localplan@greatercambridgeplanning.org

What stage of plan-making are we currently at?

We are currently preparing for the formal Regulation 18 consultation on the draft Local Plan. It is a really important time for people to comment because they can help shape the overall direction of the Plan.

We are working to the agreed timeline set out in the Local Development Scheme:

- Regulation 18 consultation – Autumn/Winter 2025 (proposed 1 December 2025 – 30 January 2026)
- Regulation 19 proposed submission consultation – Summer/Autumn 2026
- Regulation 22 submission Secretary of State for independent Examination – December 2026.

What are the key headlines from the draft Local Plan?

- Our draft Local Plan shows where new homes and workplaces could be built over the next 20 years - and how essential community facilities and public services would support this expected growth.
- The Plan follows significant additional work by the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service on the area's well known infrastructure constraints and builds upon the consultation feedback in 2021 and work we have done on the plan since then.
- We have updated assessments of jobs and housing needs with confirmation of the need for over 50,000 new homes between 2024 and 2045 to meet the forecast increase in jobs. Some 37,000 of these homes are already provided for within planning permissions and sites identified in the adopted local plans from 2018. A number of the major sites will also continue to develop beyond 2045, helping to meet needs in the future.
- The revisions to the plan also take account of the Government's recent decision not to fund the relocation of the Cambridge Waste Water treatment works.
- Sites included in 2021 consultation on the Joint Plan such as Cambridge Airport and the expansion of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus remain. Earlier ambitions for further growth at Cambourne have increased, with a significant enlargement of the existing community which is set to become one of the best connected places in the region as a result of planned or ongoing road, rail and public transport corridor improvements.
- Replacing some of the previously planned for new homes at North East Cambridge, following the cancellation of funding for the Waste Water Treatment works relocation, and building upon planned public transport improvements, a new community of some 6000 homes beyond the green belt is also proposed on land next to the A11 and A1307 near Great Abington, providing new homes near to the growing science campuses south of Cambridge but with direct public transport access to the Biomedical Campus.
- The plan reflects the Government's continued support for growth in innovation across the area by enabling sites like the Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Babraham Research Campus to grow further. In addition, reflecting evidence of a growing need for logistics and new industrial spaces, the plan identifies new sites on the A14 corridor including the expansion of the existing lorry parking at Cambridge Services.

- The report from officers makes clear that there remain unresolved challenges with the plan being put into practice. This includes confirming the identification of solutions to critical infrastructure, including the water supply and treatment issues currently impacting developments across the Greater Cambridge area.

How have we developed the numbers in the Plan?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.

For housing, the need is guided by the government's updated standard method requirement has set for our area, which we have confirmed will meet the likely jobs growth. We have also made sure the plan includes a flexible supply of employment land, that can meet the needs of different sectors and respond to change.

The National Planning Policy Framework requires us to have a deliverable plan and that means accounting for the fact that housebuilding in reality can fluctuate. For example, sites may come forward slower than anticipated, developers may go bust, the construction industry goes up and down. By planning for slightly more homes than our objectively assessed need, we have a buffer that means we will still meet our annual housing requirement even if some sites stall or don't deliver as anticipated.

'How are we doing?' survey

Sorry, yet another survey! SCDC has recently launched a new 'How Are We Doing' Survey to give residents, businesses and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the Council's services – both positive and negative – to ensure that we are delivering the best services possible. The feedback received will be reported to the Leadership Team and the appropriate teams. If you wish to comment, follow this link:
www.scambs.gov.uk/leave-feedback

Official complaints or service requests should still go through the usual channels.

Cambourne Indoor Christmas Market

Just another reminder for South Cambs District Council's indoor Christmas Market which will be on Sunday 7 December, 10.30am - 3pm at Cambourne Village College. Last year, there were almost 100 stall holders, selling crafts and food items, so it's the ideal place for Christmas shopping. Free admission and parking.

Food Waste Collections

Most of you are aware the Government is mandating food waste is collected separately from next year (this was one of Michael Gove's pet projects, which is apparently too far down the road to cancel.) Every house will eventually receive a food waste caddy, which will be in addition to your current three wheelie bins. SCDC is planning a roll-out in four phases in Jan, Apr, Jul, Sept, so

some villages will receive their caddies before others. Around 20 new 12 ton vehicles have been purchased to collect the caddies and the waste will go to a local bio digester. SCDC has not been told what revenue funding it will get from government and the current gap in funding is £900,000. The car park at the Waterbeach depot is being expanded to accommodate the new vehicles and the waste service is launching a recruitment campaign for new staff, including new management roles.

Six Free Trees Scheme Reopens – reminder to apply

South Cambridgeshire District Council is again inviting parish and town councils to take part in its popular Six Free Trees scheme, which has already helped plant 758 trees in communities since its launch. The initiative offers each parish or town council the opportunity to claim either six small trees (whips) or one large pot-grown tree, with a choice of native species. Trees are delivered with stakes, ties, and supports to help them establish – all recipients need do is plant and care for them.

Generally, free trees given out as part of the scheme can be planted on parish land or school grounds, and schools interested in participating are encouraged to contact their parish or town council to apply on their behalf.

The Six Free Trees Scheme has been run by South Cambridgeshire District Council since 2019, making this its fifth year in operation. As a result, some parish or town councils may find they have limited space for more trees. *The District Council will therefore also consider providing free trees for other publicly accessible locations that are not on parish or town council or school land. This is subject to permission from the landowner and the District Council's approval.*

Those wanting to claim free trees should complete the form at www.scambs.gov.uk/six-free-trees

Applications will close on 30 November, but the District Council encourages early applications to ensure timely delivery and planting during the optimal season.

Peter Sandford and Chris Poulton
5 November 2025

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