

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

Parish Council Report March 2025

South Cambs Council

Council budget and Corporate Plan

At a Full Council meeting on 25 February, the council agreed its budget for 2025/26 and approved the new Corporate Plan up to 2030. The council's priorities remain supporting local businesses, fostering strong communities, being green to the core, and providing affordable, sustainable homes. Given the increasingly uncertain financial climate, we have added to the priority list the council's long-standing underlying aim of being financially secure for the future.

New items in the forthcoming year include the construction of a milestone Community Centre in Northstowe, increasingly targeted cost-of-living support, work on the new food waste collection service and more funding to tackle fly-tipping.

The plans for housing include:

- Another 75 new Council homes for rent and shared ownership;
- Over £1 million to improve insulation and heating for existing Council housing;
- More than £500,000 on preventing homelessness.

The council also agreed a 3% increase in the district's allocation from Council Tax (£5.09 per year, less than 10p per week). Note that this is below the state pension increase of 4.1% and the average wage growth in the past year of 5.9%. This is expected to keep the council's position among the lowest 25% of district council charges in the country.

New waste processing contract for more recycling

A new contract to process recycling collected from Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire residents' blue bins comes into effect in March. The new contract has been awarded to Re-Gen, whose materials recycling facility is one of the most advanced in Europe, running on 100% renewable energy. Re-Gen were named both Paper Recycling Business of The Year and Recycling Business of The Year at last year's Awards for Excellence in Recycling and Waste Management. The new facility will be able to sort and recycle around 20% more of the material sourced from blue bins than at present. For example, it will be possible for 95% of glass to be re-melted and used for new bottles and jars, rather than most being used in road construction. There are no changes to the rules governing what waste can be put into blue bins.

Local government reorganisation

There will be an Extraordinary Meeting of the Full Council on 19 March to consider proposals for local government reorganisation, immediately followed by a Cabinet meeting to agree the council's submission to the government. This is to ensure that we meet the government's deadline for submissions of 21 March.

Five-year land supply

In December the government published new planning policies, increasing the housing targets that many local councils are required to achieve, particularly in areas with high
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demand for housing. These new housebuilding targets came into effect immediately with no period to allow councils to adjust. The council had called for a transition period but the government did not agree to this. The target for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District was increased by over 30%. This has the effect of reducing the five-year land supply for the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning area from 6.5 years to just under 5 years. This moving of the goalposts with immediate effect creates some challenges for our planning department, but officers are confident that these can be met to bring the land supply back above 5 years as soon as possible. Before the change, the strategic planning of the council had created a healthy buffer of additional supply. This has meant that the shortfall now is small, and the risk of highly inappropriate development being allowed by this situation is corresponding low. It is still a serious concern, however, and the council will be acting to minimise any potential deviation from policies in the Local Plan.

Four-day working week consultation

The council began a consultation on the four-day working week on 27 January. This is a reminder that the consultation is still open and will close on 23 March. This will be used alongside the other extensive sources of data on the Council's costs and performance to decide the next steps for this working practice.

Local Plan update

Development of the emerging Local Plan for the 2030s has been on hold for over a year due to uncertainties over water supply and transport provision. However, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has just announced that sufficient progress has been made to allow a draft Local Plan to be produced this year, for review by the council and for public consultation. I will provide more information as it becomes available

Cambs County Council

Highways Capital Programme

The plans for capital works in this financial year are being debated March 4th at the Highways Committee. The link to the file is here with South Cambs on pages 34-42.

https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/CCC_live/Document.ashx?czJKcaeAi5tUFL1DTL2UE4zNRBcoShgo=piBueeMW6rw4SIYgmNkcAGaRhNOI1eY1LT53ti0f80pnck8vTA639w%3d%3d&rUzwRPf%2bZ3zd4E7Ikn8Lyw%3d%3d=pwRE6AGJFLDNlh225F5QMaQWCtPHwdhUfCZ%2fLUQzgA2uL5jNRG4jdQ%3d%3d&mCTIbCubSFfXsDGW9IXnlg%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&kCx1AnS9%2fpWZQ40DXFvdEw%3d%3d=hFflUdN3100%3d&uJovDxwdjMPoYv%2bAJvYtyA%3d%3d=ctNJff55vVA%3d&FgPIEJYlotS%2bYGoBi5olA%3d%3d=NHdURQburHA%3d&d9QjjOag1Pd993jsyOJqFvmyB7X0CSQK=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNR9xqBux0r1Q8Za60lavYmz=ctNJff55vVA%3d&WGewmoAfeNQ16B2MHuCpMRKZMwaG1PaO=ctNJff55vVA%3d

Local Cycling & Walking

This plan covers the proposed cycling and walking routes. S Cambs in on pp 21-23

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Domestic Abuse Support

The renewal of a scheme which helps survivors of domestic abuse to feel safer and more secure in their homes has been unanimously approved by Cambridgeshire County Council's Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee.

Target hardening – sometimes known as a 'sanctuary scheme' – enables survivors of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes by providing additional security measures which can delay or prevent a perpetrator from entering a property.

The council currently offers a joint service with Peterborough City Council, but the new three year and three months contract would be for Cambridgeshire only.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, 525 survivors across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough received target hardening measures. Measures offered depend on the level of risk, and may include window alarms, additional bolts, lock changes, security advice, video doorbells, dummy cameras and response lights. The service is available for all types of housing, whether owned, privately rented or social housing.

The service is key to the delivery of Cambridgeshire's Safe Accommodation Strategy, and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy, and is provided in conjunction with working with a domestic abuse specialist. The survivor will be given a bespoke safety and support plan focused on their individual needs.

The contract will be funded via a Safe Accommodation grant from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), enabling the Local Authority to execute its statutory duty.

A joint scheme between Cambridgeshire Shared Lives (part of the county council) and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (DASV) Partnership was recently acknowledged for its work by being shortlisted for the Health and Social Care category of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards.

Peter McDonald March 3rd 2025

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