

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

Babraham Parish Council Report 2026

South Cambridgeshire District Council

This municipal year 2025/26 has been quite a busy one and this report covers the last 12 months of activities by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Councillors.

Governance

South Cambridgeshire District Council is in Liberal Democrats administration. The statutory services provided are: Waste Collection & Recycling, Planning (these two are shared services with Cambridge City but we host them), Housing, Environmental Health, Licensing, Licensing, Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Business Development & Support, and Community Services. We adopted the new corporate plan that has been shaped by feedback from residents in our communities. The priority areas we identified are:

- **Healthy and Supported Communities (HSC)** – We want to create a district where people feel safe, supported, and confident in their communities. Together, we'll focus on what delivers for residents, enabling healthier, more independent lives for everyone.
- **Sustainable Homes and Vibrant Places (SHVP)** – We want to help people live near their work, shops, schools, leisure, and healthcare, with affordable and reliable public transport.
- **Being Green To Our Core (GTOC)** – We will consistently promote a cleaner, greener, zero carbon future for our communities. We aim to safeguard and enhance the natural world for future generations and help our communities do the same as we strive to be among the most sustainable places to live and work in the country.
- **Helping Businesses To Thrive in South Cambridgeshire (HBT)** – We will support local businesses as they start up and grow and as we transition towards a sustainable economy. Working with partners we are helping our residents develop the skills they need to take full advantage of local opportunities.
- **Financially Secure and Fit For The Future (FSFF)** - We will make it easier for residents to engage with our services and democratic processes. We will make smart financial decisions to safeguard our services for the future and invest in our staff to ensure they remain equipped to deliver for our district's needs.

Full details on our new website at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/our-corporate-plan>

Elections.

The District Council elections were held on 7th May. This is the final year of the current District Council Administration, and also the last election of SCDC as we know it, as Local Government Reorganisation is moving to a Unitary Authority style within the next two years.

Zero Carbon Grants

Since its launch in 2019, the Zero Carbon Grants Scheme has funded 82 different projects, awarding over £855,000 to initiatives across the district. This has included energy generation, Contact Details: E mail: cllr.mcdonald@scambs.gov.uk or peter.mcdonald@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
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energy efficiency and conservation measures at community buildings, community cycling events, cycle shelters, food waste reduction initiatives, community allotment and gardening projects and much more.

South Cambridgeshire communities will benefit from further money to cut carbon emissions - after the District Council committed another £152,000 to this popular grant scheme. It was agreed to increase the maximum amount that can be handed out from £15,000 per project in previous years, to £19,500 this year.

The application process will open on Monday 25 May 2026 and close on Friday 24 July 2026. Projects on school sites and by parent / teacher associations will be able to apply – if there is a benefit to the wider community. Sports groups – like bowls clubs – will also be eligible, so long as they provide benefits to the wider community like improving mental health or strengthening community ties.

Groups will also be able to apply for money to pay for electric vehicle charging points under the grant.

Of the total of £152,000 available for the forthcoming financial year, half is set aside for carbon reduction or projects that lock-up carbon, and the other half is earmarked for community engagement and nature projects – reflecting the aspirations of the Council's [new Climate and Nature Strategy](#).

Those interested in applying for a Zero Carbon Communities grant can join a workshop to find out more. Two sessions will be held on Wednesday 20 May. One will run from 12:30pm to 1:30pm and a second will take place from 6pm to 7pm. Potential applicants are encouraged to [register for either](#).

More Grants

South Cambridgeshire District Council has awarded Community Chest grants to projects that make a real difference to people's lives - improving wellbeing, tackling isolation, expanding support services, and creating welcoming spaces for residents of all ages.

Local Government Reorganisation LGR

The council has spent a great deal of time during the last year dealing with government requirements for a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). This is the Government's plan to merge two-level County and District councils across the country into a single layer of unitary councils. In November 2025, the principal authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough submitted their proposals for what those new councils should look like. The Government consultation ended on 26th March 2026 and decisions are expected to be announced latest summer.

SCDC submitted Option B and I recommend watching this video at <https://bit.ly/LGR-OptionB> to find out the reasoning behind this. Elections will take place in May 2027 into the shadow councils, giving them a year to prepare ready to start operating in May 2028.

New Council Homes

We recognise that everyone deserves a high-quality, safe, and affordable place to live. When the current administration came to power in 2018, the council was building about 35 new

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council houses each year. Furthermore, because of 'right to buy' sales its portfolio was shrinking so the period 2013 to 2018 saw a net reduction of 99 council houses. Since 2018 the current administration has nearly quadrupled the rate of council house building. This year, at the time of writing, at least 130 new council homes had been completed across the district and by the end of the financial year, we will have delivered 139 new council homes with a further 160 planned for next year. This is something the administration is very proud of - developing affordable housing in our district, responding to resident requirements as quickly as possible.

Affordable Housing Delivery

Affordable housing is generally delivered by housing associations, often through S106 schemes especially on major sites. The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) recently published by the GC Shared Planning Service shows that 2024-2025 2,265 new homes were completed across Greater Cambridge, the highest since 2011. Of these 1,735 new homes were in South Cambridgeshire, of which 424 were affordable homes.

Work has begun on building out the SCIP development next to South Cambs Hall in Cambourne. SCIP is the South Cambridgeshire Investment Partnership (SCIP) with The Hill Group. The project will build 256 new low-carbon Passivhaus principles homes of which 40% (102) will be affordable comprising 72 for rent and 30 for shared ownership.

We are well into a programme of upgrading the thermal efficiency of our existing council housing stock using grant funding from Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to bring them up to EPC Band C which will result in a significant reduction in energy running costs for tenants.

Bringing Empty Homes Back into Use

A major milestone has been reached in tackling long-term empty homes in South Cambridgeshire, with 75 properties brought back into use in the last three years. This was achieved by appointing an Empty Homes Officer in 2022. To find out more about our work bringing empty homes back into use visit our webpage at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/empty-homes>.

M&Me App—For council tenants to report repairs

The Council has launched M&Me, a new mobile app developed in partnership with Mears, offering council tenants a quicker and more convenient way to report repairs. Using the app, tenants can report a repair at any time, choose an appointment slot that suits them, receive real-time alerts and updates about their repair, see who will be attending their home and when.

Mears will be writing to all council tenants with full details about the new app, including their unique access code.

Multi -award Winning Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS)

South Cambs hosts the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSPS), the joint planning service for both SCDC and Cambridge City. As the Cabinet Member responsible for the Service, it was pleasing to see the focussed transformation work over the years (from

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2018 when we took over administration) result in the service winning three prestigious awards in 2025.

(1) The [Royal Town Planning Institute](#)'s national Local Planning Authority of the Year 2025

(2) The Planning Award for 'Planning for the Natural Environment',

(3) The [TET \(Thornton Education Trust\)](#) Inspire Future Generations Award for 'Best Local Authority in Youth Engagement' 2025.

The service has come a long way and hopefully will continue to provide this level of service when the councils transform to a new unitary authority and if/when the proposed Development Corporation is established.

Emerging Draft Joint Local Plan

Work is much advanced on the joint local plan with Cambridge City that should determine how our district is developed over the period 2025-2045 (DevCo permitting). The recently concluded consultation on the Reg18 stage showed strong community engagement with over 4500 responses gained from over 80 events online and offline. These comments are now being compiled and analysed. The proposals will go through normal process with members to finalise the version to go to final Reg 19 stage. This will then come out for final public consultation in the summer and subsequently submitted to MHCLG by the deadline of December 2026. More information at <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/emerging-plans-and-guidance/greater-cambridge-local-plan/>.

Current Local Plan and Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

The AMR is a requirement by Government and is a report tracking how well Greater Cambridge is delivering its current adopted Local Plans. The report is for the 2024-2025 municipal year and highlights include:

- 7,000+ applications handled
- 9,900 homes approved
- 2,264 homes completed — highest since 2011 – 1735 in South Cambs
- 687 affordable homes - 424 in South Cambs (part of total)
- 62,000 sqm employment space completed - 51,956 in South Cambs
- 408,000 sqm approved

Planning News

The Five-Year Housing Land Supply (with Cambridge City) is 5.6 years for the period 2026-31.

The GCSPS has also won £800,000 of Government Prop Tech funding & Digital Planning Improvement fund for work on our digital transformation in planning to enable residents engage more easily and for continuous improvement in providing the services to business and residents.

A new more accessible website was launched at <https://greatercambridgeplanning.org/>

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Helping Businesses To Thrive in South Cambridgeshire

The Business team is doing a lot of work to support local businesses (specifically SMEs) to grow, which will help local communities thrive, bringing jobs and opportunities into our villages. The team continues to work closely with local businesses, stallholders, traders and event organisers to run markets across the district. It benefits residents and communities by being able to shop locally. The full list available at <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/see-do/markets/>

South Cambs Christmas Market

South Cambridgeshire District Council hosted its indoor Christmas Market for the fourth year running. The festive extravaganza usually has around 100 stalls from local independent small businesses and market stallholders.

Visit South Cambs Website

The [VisitSouthCambs](https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/) website at <https://visitsouthcambs.co.uk/> is increasingly popular with small businesses advertising and used by visitors to the area to see what's available to do in the district.

South Cambs Business Newsletter

The Business Newsletter is available and anyone can sign for business support, news and information. More information at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/business>

Cost of Living Support

With many residents still facing financial pressures, the Council will continue providing its comprehensive cost-of-living support package. A budget of £449,000 is set aside to help residents through the next two years through schemes such as emergency food and energy support, workshops, budgeting and debt advice, white goods and furniture for vulnerable people and laptops with digital training.

Financial Position and Budget

At the Council's budget meeting, members approved its business plan and budget for the coming financial year. The meeting agreed to a £5.24 increase for an average Band D property. This works out to 10p a week and below inflation rise.

The table below shows comparison of the different precepts charged across Cambridgeshire

District	Unitary Precept	District Precept	County Precept	Total
East Cambs		£142.14	£1,785.42	£1,927.56
Huntingdonshire		£170.86	£1,785.42	£1,956.28
South Cambs		£180.64	£1,785.42	£1,966.06

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Cambridge		£239.07	£1,785.42	£2,024.49
Fenland		£253.35	£1,785.42	£2,038.77
Peterborough	£1,836.72			£1,836.72

This doesn't include the police, fire, parish council or Mayor's precepts which are not set by SCDC but are collected by the council. It also doesn't include town and parish precepts (which in an increasing number of cases are now larger than the District Council's). As seen, South Cambridgeshire charges slightly more than Huntingdonshire DC, but significantly less than both Cambridge CC and Fenland DCs.

SCDC is one of the best run councils in the country and is often held up as an exemplar. It continues to deliver high quality services in the face of sustained cuts by central government, including recent reductions to the amount of Business Rates that local authorities can retain. Our core spending power is being cut by over £5 million over the next 3 years, thanks to the Government's "fair funding review 2.0" which is hurting councils in rural areas like ours. That drop is the equivalent to 15% of our core spending power.

As a result of the government's funding changes, we are increasingly reliant on council tax. In this budget - council tax represents 35% of our core spending power. Come 2028/29 - council tax will represent 47% of our core spending power.

We have council tax relief offering up to 100% relief from council tax for those residents who need it most. Even with the rise, South Cambridgeshire would remain among the lowest-taxing district councils in the country.

Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)

Another proud initiative is the LIFT scheme, which was made permanent in the last year. The LIFT software interrogates the council's databases to identify residents living in South Cambridgeshire who are missing out on benefits that they are entitled to claim. A two-year apprentice role has been added to the scheme to make the most of the LIFT programme. It's already done fantastic work for residents – helping over 1,000 residents so far to secure more than £4 million in benefits for local households.

Support Grant funding

South Cambs District Council has committed Service Support Grant funding of £300,000 a year to local community groups to underpin the delivery of services to support people with their mental health, independent living, advice services, and to help residents through the cost-of-living crisis.

The Service Support Grant funding has almost doubled compared to the previous budget, made possible by prudent management of the council's finances and a recognition of the acute need for these services.

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Cambridgeshire County Council

The key thing to update residents is the proposed budget for 2026/27 so I summarise here.

County Council Budget 2026/27

- The business plan and budget paper discussed at Full Council in February and now accepted set out the financial position for the year ahead (2026-27), projecting growth of £31 million in the 2026-27 revenue budget – a 5.4% increase on 2025-26 – enabling the council to continue investing in key services. This will give the council a net budget of just over £600 million in 2026-27, and a gross total of about £1.2 billion once schools and services funded by specific grants from Government are included.
- Demand for council services is growing as people live longer, often with multiple long-term conditions that need support from health and social care, and more children and young people are being identified with special educational needs and mental health needs. Meeting these needs remains a priority, whilst also managing the impact of inflation and the limits on the funding the council receives.
- To develop a legal and balanced budget for 2026-27 and deliver the revised ambitions, the council has had to identify £40 million through a combination of savings or extra income. Proposals set out at the committee meant that a £6.4m gap remained, which was closed in February 2026. The key elements of the business plan and budget proposals for 2026-27 are:
 - Supporting a green and sustainable county
 - To improve day to day journeys for drivers, cyclists and bus users, it has allocated an additional £20m for highway maintenance, on top of Government funding, to provide safer and more reliable roads across Cambridgeshire. The council will also continue to provide leadership and deliver its Climate Change and Environment Strategy.
 - Enabling full and healthy lives for all
 - To support older people, adults with disabilities and families, who rely on care every day, the council is allocating £14.7m of additional funding for adult social care providers. This will help them to manage rising costs and ensure care workers are paid the Real Living Wage, improving stability and quality for those who depend on care workers for their support.
 - Ensuring fairness and opportunity
 - To help families under pressure from the cost-of-living crisis, the council is prioritising £1m to continue holiday meal vouchers for the children most in need, through to the end of summer 2026. As the Government withdraws the Household Support Fund, the council will also use its new £5m Crisis and Resilience Fund to

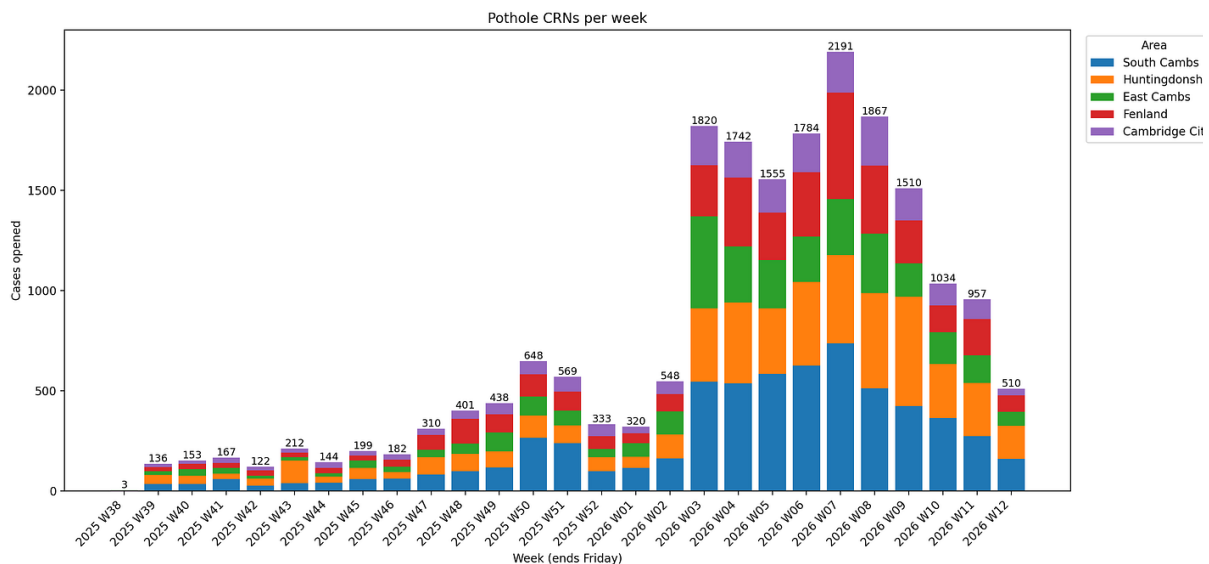
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provide a wider range of anti-poverty measures, offering practical support to households facing financial challenges.

- The plan will create 3,500 new primary school places and invest £72 million over five years to increase secondary school places, including at Alconbury Weald and North-West Cambridge. It also includes £780,000 a year to run a children’s residential home in South Cambridgeshire, as well as continued funding for the Families First programme, an early-intervention project that helps keep more families together and is supported by the £6.7 million Children’s, Families and Youth Grant. In addition, more than £1.2 million will be invested in libraries and archives over the next two years.
- The plans agreed included an increase of council tax by 4.99%, the maximum permitted by Government for county councils, as is the case in nearly all councils across England, and the level assumed by Government in setting its grant allocations. A total 2% of this increase is specifically for adult social care funding. The increase will generate around £21million in additional funding and help the council continue providing the essential services people rely on. This will mean that for a Band D property, the County Council’s share of Council Tax would increase by £84.78 a year, or £1.63 a week.

Potholes & Highways

- As of end March 26, there were 2,200 potholes requiring repair across Cambridgeshire.



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- Since 2023/24, the amount of capital funding spent on highway maintenance has increased by £35m, from £24m to £59m. The Council has allocated more than £73m for highways maintenance in 2026/27.

Pothole facts:

- Over the past five years, we have repaired an average of 55,400 individual potholes each year.
- In general terms, if a pothole is large and deep, we will fix it within five days. If it is smaller and less of a hazard, we will fix it within 21 days
- We mark up the potholes in different ways, those repaired in five days are not marked as our repair is immediate, yellow means we will repair it within 21 days. We always aim to fix potholes within five and 21 days depending on their level of priority
- We aim to fix emergency faults as soon as possible, always within five days
- We always aim to repair potholes with a permanent fix first time. However, this depends on the weather – if it's wet or has been raining we sometimes have to make temporary fixes to keep people safe and moving as the road conditions are too wet for permanent repairs. Permanent fixes will then be programmed in and delivered when the weather allows
- A pothole repair costs around £50
- The dragon patcher is a specialist machine, nicknamed the 'dragon' because it fires out flames to dry out the road surface, it is then cleaned with compressed air and sealed with a stone mix and hot bitumen. It is much quicker and simpler compared to traditional methods.

Babraham Highways

I have worked with the County Councillors to secure repairs to the speed humps

A505 & Duxford IWM AvTech

A study was commissioned to look at the A505 and connectivity. Plans are being prepared to signalise Flint Cross. The planning application for the new AvTech development will come forward in autumn 26 and I will be closely working with Highways Officers to evaluate the impact on the A505.

Peter McDonald May 2026