

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report – South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council – November 2024

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

Your Councillors are always ready to help. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA or District Councillor for The Mordens Heather Williams: cllr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk / 07885 774 775.

Full Council

Cambridgeshire County Council met On October 22nd. The council debated four motions proposed by councillors, and agreed them all unanimously. 1. A call for fairer police funding and awareness of domestic abuse. Cambridgeshire is the fourth lowest funded police force in the country, and local taxpayers fund around half of Cambridgeshire's policing budget. 2. A proposal seeking changes to planning processes in cases where schemes are delivered over many years yet planning designs and decisions are not able to be changed to accommodate new situations. 3. A proposal about safety risks from lithium-ion batteries in items such as e-bikes and e-scooters, for householders and for waste collection and disposal crews. It endorses the work being done by Lord Foster and the charity Electrical Safety First to seek to ensure third party independent approval testing for these items entering the UK market, regulations for safe disposal of used lithium-ion batteries, and controls to address specific fire concerns such as charging points. 4. A proposal for a review of the aftermath of National Highways' project on the A14 so that issues are clear and documented, and calling for National Highways to be more responsive and to resolve outstanding matters.

The council also agreed: to apply to Government for a Transport & Works Act Order to progress the Cambridge South East Transport project for a busway between a new travel hub near the A1307 / A11 and the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, connecting with Granta Park, and the villages in between.

Budget

The council's current position forecasts an overspend of £9.6M for the current financial year—that's 2 per cent of its budget. The county council's estimated budget gap for next year (2025/26) has increased from £23.5M to more than £39M, largely due to a combination of increasing demand for services, inflationary pressures, and uncertainty over future funding from Government. Over the last ten years, the council's core government funding has reduced by 70 per cent in real terms. Combined with more steep rises in inflation and a surge in demand for services supporting some of our most vulnerable residents, this has added further cost pressures to the council.

National Highways – Call for new applications

Do you have an initiative that could benefit from our legacy funds? All non-profit groups or organisations in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire can apply, including but not limited to local schools, charities, community groups, and environment groups. Grants for the Social Value Fund are from £15,000 to £200,000, for smaller scale projects, the Community Fund offers grants of up to £15,000. We have three more applications windows for the two funds - November 2024 to January 2025, May 2025 to July 2025 and November 2025 to January 2026.

For details on funding criteria and how to apply, visit our [Social Value Fund and Community Fund](#) page.

Electric scooters as Christmas presents? Please be aware

Please be aware, as it may not be common knowledge, that while privately purchased e-scooters can be used on private property, they are not legal to use on the 'public highway' – our roads and pavements. The exception, which makes things confusing, is the County Council run E-scooter rental scheme in Cambridge city.

We do get a fair share of complaints and concerns about e-scooters, mainly because of concerns about the safety of riders and those who may come into contact with them. We're aware that Cambs Police will be doing a publicity campaign about this issue as Christmas approaches.

East West Rail

East West Rail (EWR) have announced that their Non-Statutory Consultation will begin on 14 November 2024, closing on 24 January 2025. More information, including details of consultation events, can be found at <https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation2024>

Recycling Cables

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service is working with Recycle Your Electricals to encourage Cambridgeshire residents to participate in The Great Cable Challenge – a nationwide campaign aimed at tackling the millions of cables sitting idle across UK households. The initiative is part of this year's International E-Waste Day.

The challenge aims to give a second life to the valuable materials contained in cables, such as copper. Copper can be recycled into new items such as wind turbines and new tech such as mobile phones, laptops, tablets or smart watches.

With millions of cables cluttering up UK homes, Recycle Your Electricals have published a handy Cable Guide. With 35 of the most used cables, the guide provides easy to use visuals to match cables to their original electricals. If the electricals or the cables are no longer working or they aren't needed anymore, simply bag up your cables and recycle them!

Rights of Way support

Our new Rights of Way Officer is Oliver Ayto, whose job includes maintenance of footpaths and bridleways. Work is prioritized according to public safety, clear daily use access, and convenience. He's already been out to inspect a number of local issues.

Green Infrastructure Team: who cuts which verges?

The new County 'Green Infrastructure Team' is working across all parishes to clarify any ambiguity relating to County versus Parish responsibilities on grass cutting, and improving the 'Maps' function on the County Council website (home page at the top) - which provides public access to detailed maps which help to identify public property ownership and responsibilities. Thanks to questions from residents about specific locations which have helped prompt getting things clarified.

20 MPH schemes – nearby villages

In this year's round, 91 scheme were submitted for consideration. Limited funding meant that only eight schemes could be approved for this coming year.

South Cambs Connect

Regional businesses, entrepreneurs, community groups and charities are being invited to Cambourne to try a new collaborative working space - free of charge until the new year! SCDC has redesigned its head office ground floor with a vibrant, collaborative workspace for use by business professionals. Called South Cambs Connect the space has comfortable workstations, high-speed Wi-Fi, meeting pods and bookable meeting rooms which offer a productive spot to work, a meeting venue, and a chance to network with other local professionals. There is plenty of free car parking available including EV charging. For more details email: southcambsconnect@scambs.gov.uk

Impact Assessment Supplementary Planning Document

SCDC will be making decisions soon on whether to adopt planning guidance that embeds Health and Wellbeing into all new developments. New town and new housing developments can, if well designed, really make a positive difference to people's health and wellbeing. Northstowe New Town, for example, includes out door fitness equipment, lots of cycle and walks ways and really beautifully designed green and blue spaces.

Empty Properties

SCDC will soon agree a new policy on Council Tax Changes for empty properties. This is to encourage owners to get empty homes back into use. Homes empty up to 2 years will pay 100% Council Tax; empty up to 5 years it result in a 200% levy and up to and over 10 years it will be 300%. One

year's notice will be given of an increase. SCDC currently has about 300 empty properties; 84 of which have been empty for over 10 years.

Adult Social Care Front Door telephone number:

Any questions, including if you're not sure what to ask! Please ring Cambridgeshire County Council on 0345 0455202

Care Microenterprise Directory

Cambridgeshire County Council has been supporting small new care businesses to take root. Services tend to be less costly than those provided by big care agencies. The directory is growing - please take look if you or someone you know might benefit: [The Care Micro-Enterprise directory \(CME\) | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The same website has information on how to set up a care microenterprise – including for people new to caring professions.

Climate and Environment Discussions in Schools

Young people were encouraged to find solutions for local climate and environment action when SCDC held a meeting in a school for the first time. Comberton Village College hosted the event with around 40 students taking part in morning workshops on five themes of water resources, circular economy and fast fashion, sustainable food, biodiversity, nature and green spaces, and air quality.

Peer Review of South Cambs District Council

A follow-up report by the Local Government Association has praised South Cambridgeshire District Council's 'strong ambition', 'good leadership' and 'innovative approaches' following a recent visit.

The return visit comes after a Corporate Peer Challenge Review by the LGA last year described the Council as being in a positive financial position – with a comprehensive and innovative response to the cost-of-living crisis. Typically, all councils have one of these reviews every five years and they always contain recommendations to help councils improve.

A total of 12 recommendations were made by the peer team last year. A return visit last month and update report, a usual part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process, shows how 10 of those recommendations are completed or well underway and two are progressing.

In Finance, peers had recommended the Council accelerates the closure of its outstanding accounts. Since their visit in late 2023, the draft accounts for each and every year up to 2023/24 have been published – meaning they are as up to date as possible. Meanwhile, a scheme to uncover further savings by close working between members of the Council's Leadership

Team and service areas has identified a further £1.5 million to help meet a £3 million savings target over the next five years.

Peers had also suggested the need to better convey a vision for South Cambridgeshire. To address this, the Council is now part-way through a consultation to develop a new Corporate Plan, outlining that vision, priorities, and long-term goals for South Cambridgeshire in the years ahead. The Council's business team have visited local businesses to discuss matters impacting them - obtaining 100 completed surveys that are feeding into the consultation.

Peers have highlighted how communications have improved to parish and town councils following discussions with parish clerks, whilst the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service with Cambridge City Council hosted an event titled 'Unlocking the Potential of Your Parish'. This was aimed at equipping Parish and Town Clerks with the tools, knowledge, and resources needed to navigate planning processes and effectively support their communities. The feedback report also notes that an informal reference group has been established for parishes along the proposed East West Rail route, to ensure their concerns are identified and incorporated into the planning consultation process.

Royal Mail deliveries

We're aware that postal deliveries have been somewhat sporadic in parts of the Division such as Litlington. Thanks to those who written to us to make us aware that they have outlined their concerns to customer.service@royalmail.com and to our MP, Pippa Heylings.

Advance Warning: Foxton Level Crossing closure

Network Rail will be doing engineering work at Foxton level crossing from 25 December -1 January. The level crossing will be completely closed to vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

The Community Rail Partnership and Barrington PC are amongst those who raised concerns that this will be problematic for cyclists using the A10 path for commuting purposes, especially to the Addenbrooke's site, during this period when train services will not be running either and in particular causing significant rat-running through Barrington. A free shuttle bus will take pedestrians round to the other side; that journey will be 15 minutes.

New Mobile Warden Scheme Funding

A total of £345,000 has been pledged to Mobile Warden Schemes in South Cambridgeshire for the next three years to help more elderly people stay living in their own homes for longer. The pledge comes after the District Council partnered with Rose Regeneration to undertake an in-depth review of local schemes to understand more about how much it costs to run them and help them become more sustainable in the future.

The District Council has traditionally had an annual budget of £21,000 to support schemes but invested around £300,000 to try and increase the coverage of the service in South Cambridgeshire communities by supporting new schemes to develop.

The review is important as it has taken into consideration predicted high growth in over 65-year-olds over the next 20 years and recognises that with age comes increased risk of deteriorating health, loneliness, and feelings of isolation.

Councillors have backed a new three-year funding scheme that starts from April 2025. The funding was approved in the District Council's recent Cabinet meeting.

It ensures funding is in place for existing schemes as well as providing funding for new or expanding schemes so that more residents can be reached. The review and ongoing work has also set out a longer term 10-year plan so schemes will not need to rely so heavily on District Council funding.

Improving the High Street

A new £200,000 grant scheme is available to support projects that boost the heart of communities across South Cambridgeshire. The Improving the High Street Grants of between £5,000 to £20,000 per project are available to rural businesses, community groups and Parish Councils and the scheme aims to improve the look of local high streets, promote rejuvenation, encourage residents to shop locally and attract more local businesses to the area. The grant can cover a wide range of projects such as renovating shop fronts, street art, new benches, hanging baskets, interactive family fun trails, street cleaning, local maps or new signs.

Ending Period Poverty

SCDC is joining the fight to end period poverty by providing free menstrual products for up to 700 residents. Councillors have agreed to champion the cause, to ensure dignity for all, by offering free sanitary products which are also kind to the environment. A funding pot of £12,000 has been agreed for the year-long innovative project, which will offer residents a choice of one of three period product packs - either washable pads, period pants or reusable period cups. Hey Girls, a UK-wide social enterprise, will be distributing the packs. Residents can apply using this link. The scheme will run on a 'first come, first served' basis.

Business Support Grants

Seven community and business projects are set to share grants of more than £360,000 to help boost rural life in South Cambridgeshire. The projects include creating activity space at a community centre, improved accessibility at an arts centre and refurbishment of local tennis courts. The latest round of grants takes it to a total of 26 projects in the district to

South Cambs Climate Conference

Creating a cleaner district for South Cambridgeshire residents is on the agenda at a climate conference in Cambourne celebrating net zero action locally. The District Council is holding its second Local Climate Action Conference in November to tie in with the global COP29 event – 12 days of worldwide talks to determine ambition and responsibilities in addressing climate issues.

The local event is being held on Tuesday 19 November from 11-3 at The Hub in High Street, Cambourne. Refreshments and a plant-based lunch will be provided. Please complete this form to RSVP for the event, by Tuesday 5 November. It will be followed by a pop-up inspiration evening at the same venue, called the Local Climate Action Fair, running from 5.30-8pm. Various community groups and organisations will be available to chat and share ideas about climate action. All welcome.

Your Councillors are here to help you. Please do feel free to contact us with comments, questions, problems or complaints. We hope we can help but if we can't we are likely to know someone who can!
