

Cllr Heather Williams

District Councillor's annual report 2025–2026 – The Mordens Ward

This report provides an overview of the main issues affecting The Mordens and South Cambridgeshire District Council over the past year.

It has been a year of significant change, with a number of major decisions that will shape how our area is governed and how services are delivered for years to come. In particular, the council's financial position, the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, proposals for a Development Corporation, Local Government Reorganisation, and the four-day working week have all been key areas of focus.

As always, my priority has been to represent residents, raise concerns where needed, and ensure that decisions are properly scrutinised.

Finance and budget

At the February 2026 Full Council meeting, the council agreed its budget for the coming year.

I voted against the administration's budget, raising concerns about both the scale of borrowing and the growing budget gap, which is now around £8.5 million, with total borrowing projected to reach over £394 million. These are significant figures, particularly given the current economic climate.

I have also raised concerns about the reliability of some of the financial projections, especially where figures have changed considerably in a short space of time. It is important that decisions of this scale are based on robust and consistent information.

I voted against the proposal to increase council tax again by the legal maximum amount, and I voted against the proposal to increase affordable housing rents. I felt this was wrong given that many residents are struggling with the cost of living, especially when council staff are being paid 37 hours to work 32 hours – I think it is incredibly unfair.

As in previous years, I put forward alternative budget proposals. These were fully costed and aimed at reducing pressure on residents while maintaining financial stability. My proposals included freezing council tax, in addition to removing the second special allowance for councillors, ending the four-day week and installing AI cameras on to our bin lorries to detect and report road defects and potholes.

While these were not adopted, I believe it is important to demonstrate that different choices are possible.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan

The Greater Cambridge Local Plan continues to progress and will shape how our area grows over the next 20 years.

The plan sets out where new homes and jobs could be located, alongside the infrastructure and services needed to support that growth. Given the scale and long-term impact of the Local Plan, it is important that it reflects the needs and priorities of our local communities.

I have encouraged residents to take part in the consultation process, as this is a key opportunity to influence how our area develops. Planning decisions made through the Local Plan will affect housing, transport, green spaces, and community infrastructure for many years to come.

Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

Alongside the Local Plan, proposals have been brought forward to establish a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation.

These proposals would transfer significant planning powers to a new body responsible for major development decisions across the area. My concern is that this risks taking decisions away from locally elected councillors and the communities they represent.

At the extraordinary council meeting held in March, there was broad agreement that while growth is necessary, it must not come at the expense of local accountability.

South Cambridgeshire is already planning for significant growth. The key issue is not planning permission, but ensuring that infrastructure such as water, transport, and energy keeps pace. Any approach to growth must be properly resourced and retain a strong element of local decision-making.

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Local Government Reorganisation has been a major issue this year and will determine how our area is governed for decades to come.

Consultation has taken place, and views have been sought from residents, councils, and local organisations.

One of my main concerns is the potential impact on local representation. Larger authorities and bigger wards could make it more difficult for councillors to represent residents effectively, particularly in rural areas where communities are spread out and have different priorities.

It is important that any new structure maintains a strong connection between residents and decision-makers, and that rural communities are not overlooked.

The four-day working week

One of the most significant decisions this year has been to make the council's four-day working week permanent.

From the outset, I have raised concerns about this policy, particularly around cost, fairness, and its impact on services.

During the year, a number of issues have come to light:

- Questions around the reliability of the data used to assess the trial
- Increased staffing levels and use of agency staff
- Ongoing concerns about transparency and access to information
- Consultation results showed that only 4% of people in South Cambridgeshire strongly agreed that they trusted their council to make decisions in the best interests of the community, and 9% of people in the district strongly agreed that they were satisfied by the quality of services provided by the local council

I do not believe residents should be paying more while receiving less, and I remain concerned that the full costs and implications of this policy have not been clearly presented.

Now that the policy has been made permanent, it is important that its impact is properly monitored and that there is full transparency around performance and costs.

Food waste caddies

This year has also seen the introduction of weekly food waste collections, including the rollout of food waste caddies. These changes are part of national requirements aimed at improving recycling and reducing waste.

The rollout has been phased across the district. Some areas have already begun receiving weekly food waste collections, with caddies delivered and services now in operation, while other areas will be included in the next phases in the coming months. As the rollout continues, it is important that residents are kept informed about when the service will begin in their area and how to use it effectively.

Support for local businesses and farming

Supporting local businesses, particularly pubs, shops, and the wider hospitality sector, has been an ongoing focus for me throughout the year.

At Full Council, I brought forward a motion calling for greater support for these sectors, including action on business rates. While this was not initially agreed, I continued to work on the issue and was pleased that a revised motion later received cross-party support.

Pubs and local businesses are a vital part of our communities - both economically and socially, and it is important that the council does what it can to support them in a challenging environment.

I have also consistently raised the importance of supporting rural communities, including farmers and landowners. This has included taking action on rural crime and unauthorised activity, working with the police and partners to ensure issues are addressed. I have previously put in a motion to Full Council against the Family Farm Tax and have continued to campaign against it this year.

Farming and the rural economy are central to our area, and it is important they are properly reflected in decision-making. This remains an area I will continue to prioritise.

Roads and potholes

The condition of our roads remains one of the most frequent and frustrating issues raised by residents, particularly when it comes to potholes.

While responsibility for highways sits with the County Council, I have continued to take an active role in reporting issues, liaising directly with Highways, and pushing for action on behalf of residents. This has included raising wider road safety concerns, particularly along the A505, where I have been pressing for improvements.

Across our villages, I have run regular “Pothole Patrol” sessions to identify and report defects, as well as encouraging residents to report issues directly so they are formally logged and prioritised. And where issues have not been addressed, I have followed them up with Highways to ensure they are not overlooked.

In addition, I have put forward practical proposals to improve how potholes are identified, which involves using cameras on bin lorries to automatically detect road defects. While this has not yet been taken forward, I continue to press for it as a sensible and cost-effective solution.

Despite these efforts, it is clear that the current system is not delivering the standard residents expect, and I will continue to push for improvements so that roads across our villages are properly maintained and kept safe.

Fly-tipping

Fly-tipping remains a persistent issue across our rural areas and is something I have continued to raise and act on throughout the year. This has included supporting residents in reporting incidents across villages and raising cases with the council to ensure they are dealt with promptly.

I have also backed measures to strengthen enforcement and improve how incidents are followed up. However, it is clear that more needs to be done. Too often, fly-

tipping in rural laybys and on isolated roads is left for too long or dealt with reactively rather than proactively.

This is not just an environmental issue - it affects the appearance of our villages, undermines community pride, and can quickly escalate if not addressed.

I will continue to push for stronger enforcement, quicker responses, and a more consistent approach so that our rural areas are kept clean and respected.

I do appreciate that the changes to our recycling centres brought in, it is harder to get rid of rubbish for some. I did raise this at the time, but we are where we are. A reminder that you can pay for a bulky waste collection through the council. It costs £40 for up to 3 items, and then £6.50 for additional items. To book a bulky waste and for the details, you can click here: [Request a bulky waste collection - Greater Cambridge Shared Waste](#)

You can also register for a free yearly permit for the recycling centre: [Recycling centre permits for Cambridgeshire and Essex residents | Hertfordshire County Council](#)

As your councillor

As your District Councillor, I am on the following committees:

- Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
- Civic Affairs Committee
- Climate and Environment Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Full Council
- Employment & Staffing Committee
- Grants Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Housing Engagement Board
- Joint Planning Advisory Group
- Licensing Committee (substitute)
- Planning Committee
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee (substitute)

In addition to the above, I have additional responsibilities as the Opposition Group Leader. I am also a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly, and I am regularly in attendance at Cabinet and Scrutiny and Overview meetings.

Political balance of South Cambridgeshire District Council

- Liberal Democrats: 35
- Conservatives: 9
- Independents: 1

This has been a year of significant change, with a number of major decisions that will have long-term implications for our area.

As these issues continue to develop, I will continue to:

- Represent residents and raise concerns where needed
- Push for transparency and accountability
- Support practical, deliverable solutions
- Ensure that rural communities are properly considered

Finally, I would like to thank all residents, parish councillors, and community groups across The Mordens for your continued engagement and support over the past year.

It is always helpful to hear directly from residents about the issues that matter most to you, and I am grateful to everyone who has taken the time to get in touch, attend meetings, or share their views.

I would also like to thank parish councils and those that support the parish meetings for the work they do on behalf of our communities, often behind the scenes, and for the constructive way we continue to work together.

It remains a privilege to represent all the villages in The Mordens ward, and I will continue to do my best to support residents and ensure your voices are heard for as long as you will have me.

If you have any questions or need assistance with any local issues, please do get in touch.

Cllr Heather Williams

SCDC The Mordens Ward

Tel: 07885 774 775

Email: cllr.williamsh@scambs.gov.uk

Twitter: @Cllr_H_Williams

Facebook Page: Cllr Heather Williams

Website: www.cllrheatherwilliams.co.uk