

Melbourn Parish Council May 2022 District and County Councillors' Report

The May elections brought a change to the makeup of the council which is now comprised of 37 Lib Dems and 8 Conservatives. The annual meeting of the council takes place on 26 May, and key committees and appointments will be formalized then.

South Cambs District Council finance

The council has put its finances in very good order and is one of the most effective councils nationally at collecting its council tax. It has made property investments which have provided good returns for public finances.

As you know SCDC administers a wide range of community, local business and household grants, which are constantly updated on its website – www.scambs.gov.uk. We highlight some of them here.

a. Community Chest

The Community Chest is grant funding available to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies wishing to further improve quality of life in South Cambridgeshire, available on a rolling basis. Again, check out www.scambs.gov.uk under the home page portal for 'Community, Safety and Health'. You'll find a 'Grant Grabber' link there too which will alert you to further opportunities.

b. Business support

You can sign up for the Business Support and Development e-newsletter, including notification of new grant opportunities, at scambs.gov.uk.

c. Action on Energy scheme

Run in partnership with neighbouring councils, SCDC is providing grants to help low-income households install energy efficiency improvements and low carbon heating. The grants are available for homeowners and private landlords that meet both of the following criteria:

- Homeowners or tenants on certain means-tested benefits (see 'eligible benefits' below) or with a total household income of less than £30,000 before tax or other deductions
- The property's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating is E, F or G ([Check your EPC rating](#) – contact SCDC if you don't have one)

For homeowners the grant will cover 100% of the cost of improvements. For landlords the grant will cover two-thirds of the cost of the improvements, with the landlord expected to cover the outstanding amount.

The maximum amount of grant available depends on the way the property is heated and its current EPC rating. The maximum ranges from £10,000 to £25,000 for homeowners, and £5,000 to £16,666 for landlords.

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature/energy-saving/action-on-energy/>

Household Support Fund update

During 2021/22 the Council administered the Household Support Fund scheme to support those most in need over the winter months, primarily with food and fuel costs. This used £2,457,158 of Government funding. The Joint Administration's budget in February set aside £1M for a new Household Support Fund wider scheme for 2022/23.

In March the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced further funding for the Household Support Fund nationally. We do not yet know how much of that is allocated to Cambridgeshire. The £1M provided from Council funding will enable the 2022/23 offer to be more flexible, as it will not be limited by the Government rules that applied to last year's funding. Information is here:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/coronavirus/household-support-fund>

Local Highways Initiative

The parish council can expect to hear back from the LHI team in the next couple of weeks as to time-frames and any pertinent details for delivery of the project, for which Melbourn's application was successful. There is a minor administrative point to note on the CCC side, which has no bearing on the delivery of the project or the PC contribution: that is simply that the 20MPH element will be funded from a new dedicated 20MPH scheme pot.

A review of the LHI scheme is taking place and will take account of the council's new policy on facilitating 20 MPH schemes. Subject to the review group's proposals, the provisional application window for next year's round will be October-November 2022, with approval of schemes in June 2023 and pricing and construction March-June 2024.

Cambridgeshire Green Spaces map

The County Council has launched a #LetsGetOutdoors campaign which is encouraging people to make use of Cambridgeshire's parks and green spaces. The campaign is highlighting a new online map: <https://www.cambsopenspace.co.uk/>

This lists all the main green spaces across Cambridgeshire including village recreation grounds and small parks.

Combined Authority

Bus Improvement Programme – no funding

The Combined Authority's Bus Improvement Programme has been snubbed by Government, with no funding at all being awarded to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough at all for better bus provision. This is crucially important as bus ridership does not always provide sufficient revenue to make a service viable, and extra support funding needs to come from somewhere – certainly that is the case for the 17 service running between the Mordens, Litlington, Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth, Whaddon, Meldreth, Melbourn and Royston. The Meldreth and Melbourn link is still run on a subsidy.

Local Transport Plan

When the Combined Authority was created it assumed statutory responsibility for transport, including creating the Local Transport Plan, which is an important strategic plan – please take a look and respond.

[Home - Phase 2 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority \(yourltcp.co.uk\)](http://yourltcp.co.uk)

Trains and the station

The Meldreth Shepreth and Foxton Rail User Group met last week, when weekday train services were brought back to half-hourly all day. This is fantastic news as we'd not been expecting quite this level of improvement, so soon. We were also given sight of performance data which indicates that service reliability is steadily improving, as workforce builds back. It's essential, if we're to retain the service into the future, that ridership continues to grow. Please, if you've gone out of the habit of using the train during the pandemic, do opt to try it out!

Meldreth Station's cycle park is now protected by CCTV.

A big thank you as always to all who've been working to make the station garden look good – this vibrant group includes residents of Melbourn and Meldreth, and now has connections with the Timebank group too.