

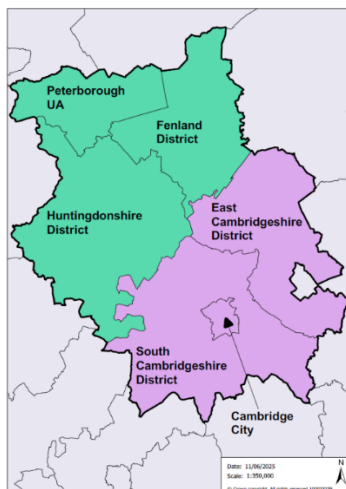
Melbourn Parish Council - Report 30 July 2025

Following the County Council elections, your new team of local councillors has changed, with Sally Ann Hart and Jose Hales on South Cambridgeshire District Council and Adam Bostanci on the County Council. The new County Council administration is led by the Liberal Democrat Group with Lucy Nethsingha as leader and Lorna Dupre as Deputy Leader. Adam has joined the Environment & Green Investment Committee for which he serves as vice chair, and Assets and Procurement Committee.

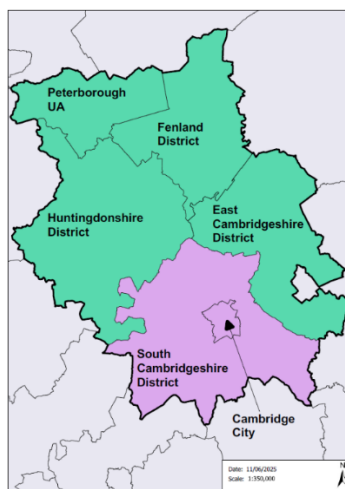
County Council

Local Government Reorganisation

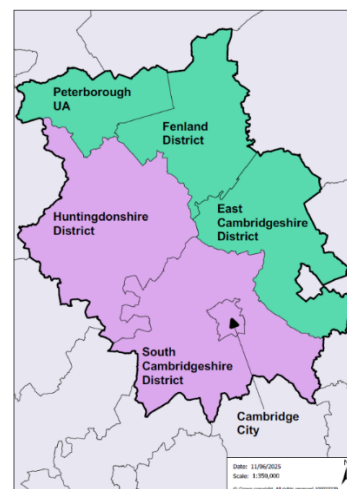
This will be a recurrent theme in coming months, bringing major changes to the delivery of local services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The government's intention is that the long-standing two-tier system of county and district councils will be replaced by new unitary councils from April 2028. This means residents will deal with just one council for all local services. Council leaders have announced a shortlist of 3 options for creating the new unitary councils in our area. A survey for residents and communities to have their say has recently closed, but it is likely that there will be further engagement activities as the three business cases are being worked up.



Proposal A



Proposal B



Proposal C

From: <https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/news/2025/06/11/three-options-announced-for-council-reorganisation-plans>

In June, South Cambs District Council held two briefings for town and parish councils, about local government reorganisation. Part of the sessions – the short presentation – was recorded, covering the latest on the LGR timeline which went through the upcoming public engagement work which is due to begin now. If you didn't make it to the briefings, you can [watch the presentation here](#).

Highways, Footways, Transport

During the summer more maintenance is being undertaken, and we are liaising with officers to expedite things where we can. More fundamentally, the reorganisation of Highways at County is now in swing – we won't say "full swing" because it has seemed several times before that it was about to get underway. Under the new structure, there won't be any more Local Highways Officers. Instead, there will be maintenance focused structure, with Highway Maintenance Managers and Officers as likely contact points. We will share more information as it becomes available. The Highways Faults reporting portal has also been upgraded. Please give it a try if you see anything that needs reporting.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

Thank you to everyone from Melbourn PC and otherwise who came to the opening of the new shared use Meldreth Link path.

<https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/pedestrian-cycle-path-opens-offering-32081546>

Thank you also for posting the new bus timetables on the PC website.

<https://melbournparishcouncil.gov.uk/news/new-bus-timetable-no-17-and-26/>

Schools

We have worked with Melbourn Village College around the discontinuation of their bus service from Royston. Students now have the option of using the public/commercial no. 26 bus from and to Royston, or they can go by train and use the new shared use Meldreth Link path, part of the Melbourn Greenway, to walk from and to the railway station. The popular Tiger Bus Pass for young people costs £1 per journey, while the cost of a return ticket by train is currently £1.85. We can share more details from the Collage if helpful. Melbourn families are also affected by the withdrawal of the bus to Bassingbourn Village College by Central Connect. Parents have organised the previous operator Cozy's to step into the

breach and offer this service next year. Looking to the future, we are liaising with the Combined Authority about the needs of the village colleges as bus franchising is taken forward by the Combined Authority over the coming years.

The Get Activated 2025

The Council's Get Activated summer activity campaign is back – promoting hundreds of free or low-cost activities for children, young people, and families.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/parenting-and-family-support/child-and-family-centres/get-activated-campaign-2025>

Consultations

Combined Authority Local Nature Recovery Strategy

A key component of the Environment Act 2021, the aim of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is to set priorities for nature recovery. The Combined Authority's Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy will now be subject to a public consultation until 11 September, and local nature and conservation groups are taking a keen interest.

The link to the draft strategy and consultation materials is here:

<https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/what-we-deliver/environment/lnrs/>

Help shape the future of pharmacy services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing Board would like to hear from pharmacy users about the services they receive in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The answers will help to define areas where communities are well served and where there may be gaps. Every Health and Wellbeing Board in England has a statutory duty to publish an up-to-date statement that assesses the need for services in its area, otherwise referred to as a Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA). The consultation is running from today (Tuesday, 22 July) to Saturday, 20 September for people to have their say on the quality and accessibility of pharmacies in the local area. Visit <https://www.peterborough.gov.uk/pna> to read the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) and give your feedback - it should only take 10-15 minutes to complete and is fully confidential.

South Cambs District Council

Expiry of postal votes

Following a change to the law as part of the Elections Act, postal votes now expire after a period of three years. Due to the timing of the reapplication legislation, around 15,000 postal votes in South Cambs are due to expire at the end of January 2026. The SCDC Elections Team has just started the process of contacting affected residents to explain that they will need to make a fresh application via email, post or text message (or a combination). This is to ensure voters have sufficient time to make a new application before next year's elections. An article will also appear in the autumn edition of the South Cambs Magazine. Anything the parish council can do to raise awareness will be appreciated. Please put any questions to the elections team on elections@scambs.gov.uk.

4-day week update:

A few people have written to us about the four-day week trial having received flyers from a group calling itself the Taxpayers Alliance (you may be interested to Google where they get their funding from - it's a bit of a mystery!). One of the reasons SCDC decided to adopt a four-day working week is that it actually saves the taxpayer money - £400,000 net per year on agency staff and recruitment costs alone. More important than even this is it has shown that when staff have a work/life balance and therefore good mental and physical health, they are highly motivated and committed to working for SCDC. And this has not only allowed SCDC to maintain the quality of services but has also actually improved in very many areas. This includes the speed with which calls are answered, the speed benefit claims and planning applications are processed and the speed with which emergency repairs to council houses are undertaken. The council is still open 5 days a week and the contact centre is open longer hours than before the trial. Emergency services remain available 24/7. If you are interested in understanding more about the facts of this trail-blazing initiative in local government all results and data are available on the SCDC website: www.scambs.gov.uk/news/reports-showcase-four-day-week-performance Cambridge City Council voted to make the change permanent for its shared workers at a full council meeting on 24th July, 2025.

Plaudits for SCDC's Contact Centre

A mystery shopper exercise at SCDC's Customer Contact Centre was recently carried out by an independent team of researchers by external provider Insight6. The exercise involved 400 undisclosed calls made at various times during the Council's busiest time of year

(during the release of Council Tax bills). The calls tested the Contact Centre's responsiveness, professionalism, and knowledge across a wide range of services. The results showed that 98% of the council's advisors answered enquiries to a high standard with an average customer satisfaction score of 81% across all service areas compared to a benchmark score of 68% amongst other councils. An explanation of the mystery shopper process and more details of the findings can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/vvyk5kfb> Meanwhile, SCDC is now using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to ensure that telephone callers are efficiently routed either to the most appropriate advisor or to provide an immediate answer if the caller prefers. This helps to free up time for call handlers to deal with more complicated inquiries where knowledge and experience (and the human touch) is important.

Developing AI to improve efficiency during the planning consultation process

In the most recent Local Plan consultation, the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) received over 9,500 responses. These submissions ranged from professionally prepared documents by commercial organisations to handwritten notes from residents, each of which is valuable and contributes to shaping our community's future. To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of processing these submissions, the GCSP secured funding from central government to set up a partnership with the University of Liverpool with the aim of developing a cutting-edge AI tool, known as a Large Language Model (LLM) which is specifically designed to process and summarise the thousands of comments received during planning consultations. The bespoke 'training' of the AI model ensured that the tool is finely tuned to both planning policy and the unique context of the Greater Cambridge area and involved the consumption of over 100,000 submissions received by GCSP between 2012 and 2024, covering 164 draft planning documents. Earlier this year, the AI tool was tested on 3 live public consultations, generating summaries of each submission, which were then compared to those manually created by planning officers. The results showed no significant differences in quality, with the AI tool providing accurate and comprehensive summaries and demonstrating remarkable efficiency, summarising each submission in just 16 minutes compared to the 18.5 hours required by the human planners. This significant time saving exceeded initial expectations and highlights the potential for AI to streamline the planning process. It is important to note that planners will continue to read each individual submission, and the AI tool will serve as an administrative support, not a decision-maker. Planners will retain the responsibility for making informed decisions based on the comprehensive review of all submissions. You can read more about this work here: <https://tinyurl.com/2sz8a3c6>

Funding

Rural England Prosperity Fund grants

Funding of £350,376 is available for business and community projects in South Cambridgeshire thanks to a grant scheme launched on 24th July, 2025. The Rural England Prosperity Fund is into its second year and can provide grants for capital projects. Funds will be split between business and community schemes.

For businesses it can provide support with funding for small scale micro and small enterprises for diversification, entrepreneurs looking to start up or scale up, and growing the local social economy by supporting innovation.

For communities, it will support projects related to digital infrastructure, green spaces, heritage, active travel, rural circular economy, volunteering and capacity building.

Last year's scheme saw 26 local projects receive financial support for a diverse range of projects ranging from developing Over skate park, refurbishment of the Impington Sports Centre tennis and netball courts, a new website for the Denny Abbey and Farmland Museum, and a new kitchen for Harston village hall.

Applicants can apply from between £10,000 up to £50,000 each for local businesses to diversify or create jobs. Funds can also support a range of community initiatives such as rural travel, volunteering opportunities, digital projects or schemes that create a sense of local pride. Find out more [here](#).

Applicants must either be micro to medium sized businesses, social enterprises, sole traders, charities, farmers, rural community groups and higher or further education institutions.

Grants available for active lifestyle initiatives

A new grant scheme from South Cambs District Council offers grants of up to £500 to create or expand physical activity sessions, sports clubs or fitness classes in rural settings with limited existing provision. The scheme builds on last year's similar scheme. The scheme will close once the funding is spent or by 31 March 2026.

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/lets-get-south-cambridgeshire-active-grant>