

Joint Cambs County Council (CCC) & South Cambs District Council (SCDC) Report

February 2026

County Council Budget

The nearly £1.3 billion Business and Budget Plan approved earlier this month included the following headline figures:

- £20m for highway maintenance, on top of Government funding, for a total of £73m to be invested directly by county into managing and maintaining our highways.
- £14.7m 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.
- £1m to continue holiday meal vouchers for the children most in need, through to the end of summer 2026. Government is withdrawing over £2m for this scheme and significantly extending the eligibility without providing clarity about the finances.
- The Household Support Fund, will be replaced by its new £5m Crisis and Resilience Fund to provide a wider range of anti-poverty measures, offering practical support to households facing financial challenges.
- 3,500 new primary school places and £72 million over five years to increase secondary school places, including at Alconbury Weald and North-West Cambridge.
- £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.
- More than £1.2 million invested in libraries and archives over the next two years.
- Last year the council fined utility companies and developers £480,000 for over-running and non-compliant roadworks and will be extending this approach next financial year.

Rising pressures especially in children's and adults' care meant it was a budget process of finding savings after savings. Growth in the economy is sorely needed for public services to improve. We approved a council tax rise of 4.99 percent. Several press releases on committee decisions to feed into the budget process are available on the council website.

Update on highway condition and potholes

In the last three years, the County Council has more than doubled the annual amount spent on highway maintenance to £73 million. This is in the context of very tight local authority budgets and other statutory funding obligations such as social care. And yet, we are still working through the consequences of decades of underinvestment, which has left us with incredibly poor road surfaces with an estimated £800m repair bill across the county. We need significant long-term funding from government to deal with road maintenance.

Right now, as the wet and cold are taking their toll, the council is significantly increasing resource to help tackle the repairs needed. Normally there are eight crews and two dragon patchers available across the county, now there are 32 crews and three dragon patchers working to repair potholes. Currently, around 1500 potholes are being repaired each week. Our Highways Maintenance Officer has spent significant time in Melbourn and Meldreth in January and ordered extensive repairs. When I am (made) aware, I am also reporting particularly bad potholes for urgent repair.

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

In addition, work is under way to strengthen maintenance contracts and the internal processes to respond to the most urgent defects reported by residents. We will report any decisions made at the Highways and Transport Committee.

It should be said that the long-term picture is improving. Last summer, after the introduction of a new asset management system, significant areas of deterioration were tackled with large patches, and I hope we will see more of this when spring arrives.

Cam Vale Bus User Group

We have had another meeting with the responsible director for public transport services at the Mayoral Combined Authority to provide feedback and discuss the performance of the local 17 and 26 bus services. These bus services are a lifeline for many in the community. A Bus User Group meeting will be held on 5 March 12-1 at Bassingbourn Old School Community Centre in order to share some updates, in particular about an upcoming consultation about the future shape of services in our area. Please let us know if you want to be added to the email list.

Melbourn Greenway

Last year, several Traffic Regulation Orders (nos. 1106, 1107, 1111) were advertised for public consultation for improvements and traffic calming measures in Melbourn and Meldreth as part of the Melbourn Greenway. The TROs have now made their way through the pipeline to approval, and the approval report will be published shortly. Construction is expected early next year.

Keep an eye on Facebook for updates, and residents near the works will be alerted with fliers.

Signal box visit

Adam joined the Community Rail Partnership's visit to Foxton and Cambridge signal boxes in early February, to better understand new level crossing management in our area since the full barriers were introduced at Meldreth Road crossing.

Local Government Reorganisation

The government has now launched its own consultation to seek views on the options for local government reorganisation developed by local councils.

In our area, two main options are in play for a future unitary authority. Very likely, South Cambridgeshire District will either merge with Cambridge City Council to form a "Greater Cambridge" unitary authority (known as Option B put forward by South Cambs and City), or merge with Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire to form a "South-East Cambridgeshire" unitary authority (known as Option A put forward by the County Council). While most other parts of Cambridgeshire would prefer to merge with the City of Cambridge, our area will very likely do so whatever happens.

Some arguments in favour of Option A:

- The size of the two future authorities will more balanced meaning more balanced votes at the Combined Authority, the strategic authority which makes significant funding decisions for the entire area. Expect the City plus South Cambs area favoured by Option B to lose out if it is half the size of its northern counterpart.
- Compared to Option B this would spread out some of the growth pressure our area is under (see item below).

The consultation, with the opportunity to comment on all the options – A, B, C, D and E – for Local Government Reorganisation, closes 26 March 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-cambridgeshire-and-peterborough>

Greater Cambridge Development Corporation

Wishing to build on Cambridge's success, the government is proposing to create a centrally led Greater Cambridge Development Corporation. If established, this would extend the remit of the existing Cambridge Growth Company. Initially, the DevCo would focus on delivery of the housing development identified in the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, with planning powers to determine large developments. The ambition is that development would be infrastructure-led, and the DevCo would have the ear of government in addressing challenges relating to transport and water. With economic growth, it may also be possible to address wider transport challenges in our area.

At a recent information event, representatives from parish and town council stressed the need to adopt a strategic and long-term approach to development and be mindful of the needs of younger people and of business, including in villages. Transport challenges were mentioned several times.

The consultation questions are surprisingly short, closing on 1 April 2026.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/establishing-a-development-corporation-in-greater-cambridge/establishing-a-development-corporation-in-greater-cambridge>.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan

As Vice Chair of the Environment and Green Investment Committee, Adam has given feedback on the Greater Cambridge Plan, out for consultation by South Cambs and City. While the Plan often talks about "growth" in our area, it is really a plan for the scale and distribution of future "(housing) development", which is an important part of generating growth in the economy. The "development hierarchy" and the resulting concentration of new housing development in Cambridge, in towns with good transport links such as Cambourn, and at other large developments near employment clusters makes sense from a (environmental) sustainability perspective. But at the same time the hierarchy raises questions about the future development of smaller villages. Similarly, in terms of planning terminology Melbourn is described as a "rural" centre, which poorly reflects its economy. It is hard to see how better transport and other services can be realised without some development, without broader economic growth, and without fair sharing of the benefits these bring. The Plan also mentioned the importance of Royston as a local centre, which together with Melbourn provides significant employment, not least in science and technology, but no details were given.

Battery Disposal

The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) is urging residents to safely recycle batteries and battery-powered electricals, following an increase in fires caused by incorrectly disposed lithium-ion batteries. Recent incidents include a fire at Thalia's Alconbury waste transfer station at New Year, as well as 13 bin lorry fires across Cambridgeshire in the last 12 months.

All types of batteries can be recycled free of charge at Household Recycling Centres, supermarkets and DIY stores. This includes loose household batteries, lithium-ion and rechargeable batteries, and batteries found inside small electrical items.

To help prevent fires, residents are urged **never** to place batteries in the household rubbish bin, but to use designated recycling points and tape over damaged terminals and check for local collection schemes.

South Cambridgeshire District Council accepts batteries if put in clear plastic bags on top of bin lids (more information about this on their website).

Over 1.1 billion lithium-ion batteries are thrown away each year hidden inside everyday household items such as phones, tablets, e-cigarettes, toothbrushes and power tools. When these items end up in general waste or mixed recycling, batteries can ignite or explode during collection, transport or sorting.

Cambridge Biomedical Campus

After over five hours of democratic scrutiny, the Assets & Procurement Committee on which Adam sits approved the following deal, opening the door to up to £3 billion of investment in Cambridgeshire through the expansion of the Biomedical Campus. The deal includes upfront delivery of the Southern Access Road and other transport infrastructure.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/news/3-billion-investment-to-support-future-expansion-of-cambridge-biomedical-campus>

South Cambs District Council

There's quite a bit to report this month from SCDC in terms of planning and economic development in the Greater Cambridge area and all that goes with it. It is clear that the government is determined to press ahead with an agenda for significant growth and to tackle, head-on, the obstacles to it such as water shortages and transportation issues. They have set up the Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) and possibly a "DevCo" to facilitate the growth agenda and we have commented below on a meeting held by SCDC's Scrutiny Committee with the senior staff of CGC. Parish Councils had the opportunity to speak with the CGC's boss, Peter Freeman on 4th February.

SCDC breaks record for new Council houses

SCDC has just confirmed that the council has completed 113 new Council homes since 1 April 2025 - the highest annual number achieved surpassing the previous year's record of 91 homes and with over two months of the financial year still to go. Many of these new homes feature renewable energy systems and electric vehicle (EV) charging points.

Low Income Dashboard

SCDC has released a new dashboard which will give a better understanding of the demographics of low-income households in South Cambridgeshire. The dashboard has been built by SCDC officers using *anonymised* data from the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software platform which uses benefits data held by the Council. The main aim of the LIFT software is to identify low-income households and to encourage them to claim benefits to which they are entitled, something it has been doing very successfully for some months. It is hoped that the information contained within this new publicly available dashboard will provide insights and support decision-making across the district. You are invited to try the system and it can be found here: [Low-Income Family Tracker \(LIFT\) Data Dashboard - South Cambs District Council](#). You will see that you can select data by district or by specific wards. If you have questions or comments, please contact data@scambs.gov.uk

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Consultation

The government continues to press ahead with its policy of abolishing county and district councils and combining their functions within larger unitary authorities. A seven week public consultation has been promised for February (though no details yet) and in advance of that, South Cambs District, Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire District councils have published a video and a news release which set out the position of the three councils, which is to support option B, i.e. two unitary councils, one for North and East Cambs/Peterborough and another for Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire. The intention of this content is to engage local people with information about why the three councils believe this is the best option for the area but the public and stakeholders will be reminded that there are other options on the table.

You can watch the video [here](#) and read the news release [here](#). SCDC's [website section on LGR](#) will be updated when we receive new information from Government.

Cambridge Growth Company (CGC)

SCDC's Scrutiny and Overview Committee recently had a (very long) meeting with Peter Freeman and the staff of the Cambridge Growth Company. It is clear that there are very big plans for our area and we came away unclear as to how the various bodies (CPCA, GCP, councils and planners) will get with the CGC. We note that parish councils are soon to have a similar meeting and sent out a reminder via Parish Clerks in the hope our ward is represented.

Local Plan update - Growth in South Cambs

The councils' annual look at how well its 2018 Local Plans are being delivered – through an Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge Shared Planning - confirms that despite challenges around water and other infrastructure, in the period from April 2024 to March 2025, permission for over 10,000 new homes was granted. 2,265 new homes - of which 700 were affordable homes - and over 60,000 square metres of new employment space - were constructed across Greater Cambridge. We feel sure that Mr Freeman will read this with interest.

Community Infrastructure Levy Plans

SCDC and Cambridge City Councils are currently considering proposals for the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) strategy for securing contributions from developers for improvements to transport and other infrastructure to accommodate growth. A CIL would also see a proportion of the funds collected - up to 25% where a Neighbourhood Plan is in place - being made available to local communities. Alongside these the councils are also considering the adoption of updated guidance on Section 106 Planning Obligations that accompany major planning application decisions.

Local Authority Elections May 2026

Following no request to postpone elections by SCDC we can now confirm elections for SCDC seats will be going ahead as normal on 7th May 2026. Both Sally Ann & Jose will be seeking re-election for our ward.

Feedback on SCDC services

A reminder that SCDC has a new mechanism designed to enable general feedback on its services from residents, businesses, Parish Councils and any other clients.

Please use this link: <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/feedback-and-complaints>

Zoom cuppa

We hold regular "Zoom cuppa" sessions. Please drop us a line if you have any questions or concerns.

Adam, Jose & Sally Ann