

District Councillor Report to Annual Parish Meetings 2026 by District Councillors Jose Hales & Sally Ann Hart

This year’s report could also be called ‘Consultation, Consultation, Consultation’ for reasons that will become obvious upon reading. 😊

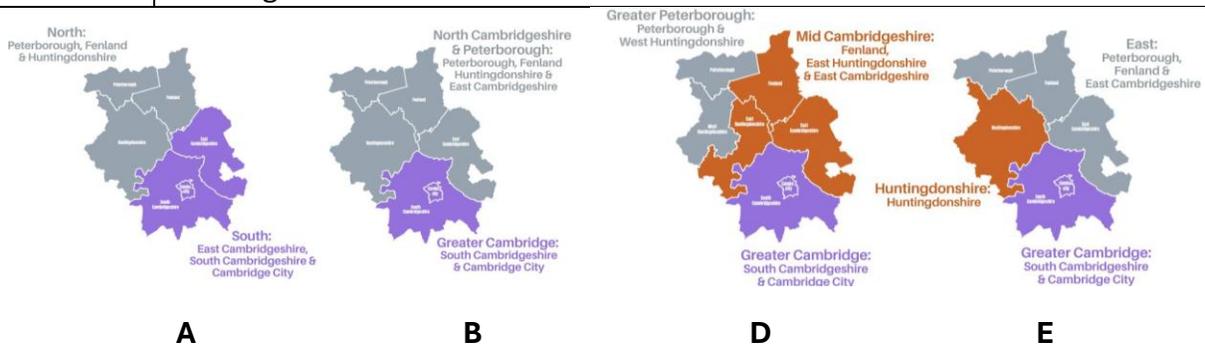
Local Government Reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation is a process in which the Government is seeking to replace existing district and county councils with a single layer of “unitary councils”. In November 2025, the various principal authorities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough submitted different proposals for what those new councils should look like.

The Government is currently consulting on those proposals and is expected to make its final decision in the summer. You can read all four business cases and respond to the consultation here: [Proposals for local government reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - GOV.UK](#) (Deadline 26th March)

The four proposals on the table are as follows:

Option	Submitted by
A	Cambridgeshire CC
B	South Cambs DC, East Cambs DC, Cambridge CC
D	Peterborough CC, Fenland DC
E	Huntingdonshire DC



There was option C, which would have included South Cambs, Cambridge and Huntingdonshire in the same council, but this was not taken forwards by any council.

We expect the Government to decide which option they want in the summer, for elections to the “shadow councils” to take place in May 2027, and for the new councils to take over in

April 2028. Therefore, the upcoming district council elections are likely to be the last ones ever.

We will of course keep you updated as more news comes forwards.

Development Corporation Consultation

The Government is also consulting on an Urban Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge. This would take planning powers (both determining applications above a certain size and making the local plan) away from local councils and give it to a Dev. Co. made up of a majority of members appointed by the Secretary of State (rather than elected locally). This is as part of the Government's ambitions to "turbocharge" growth in and around Cambridge.

You can read the full proposals here, as well as respond to the consultation: [Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge - GOV.UK](#) (Deadline 1st April)

Planning

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service has won the award for Planning Authority of the Year 2025. This is a massive achievement and something we're all very proud of.

The Youth Engagement Service (YES!) within the GCSPS has also been recognised nationally for its work getting young people involved in planning and design – pupils from Melbourn Primary School and Melbourn Village College have previously been involved with these projects.

We've recently consulted on our Draft Local Plan (reg 18). You can learn more about this here, as well as next steps: [Greater Cambridge Local Plan](#)

You can also view our Authority Monitoring Report here: [Authority Monitoring Report](#). This document sets out how we are progressing towards targets in our existing Local Plan, as well as to Government Housing Targets.

Mobile Wardens scheme

SCDC continues to support the Mobile Wardens Scheme, which offers support and assistance for older people to allow them to continue to live independently at home by providing daily contact (Monday to Friday) either by a personal visit or by a telephone call, to ensure a sense of security and wellbeing. SCDC has set out a funding programme which will enable mobile warden schemes to transition to being more financially independent, hopefully securing their long-term viability across the district. Melbourn Parish Council also provides financial support for this vital service.

A record number of new council houses

This year has been a record-breaking year for South Cambridgeshire when it comes to building new council houses. When the administration came to power in 2018, the council was only building a maximum of 35 new council houses each year – what this meant was, due to right to buy sales, over the period 2013 to 2018, the Council actually lost 99 council houses.

We have nearly quadrupled the rate of council house building since then. This year, as of writing, we have delivered at least 120 new council homes across South Cambridgeshire and should (by the end of the financial year) have delivered 139 new council homes. This represents the highest number of new council houses on record.

Being green to our core

Plans for the next 12 months will see major progress on the Council's Being Green to Our Core priority, including the ongoing roll-out of [weekly food waste collections](#) to help reduce the amount of food waste being sent to landfill.

There will also be the continued construction of [a solar energy park](#) to help power the Council's growing fleet of electric bin lorries.

If you're not already signed up, please sign up to the Council's Zero Carbon Communities (ZCC) newsletter, which goes out quarterly and contains information about all the council's various environmental projects: [Zero Carbon Communities Newsletter - South Cambs District Council](#)

The Council has also just adopted a new unified Climate and Nature Strategy – which brings together all of our climate change and nature recovery work. It's a really exciting document and well worth a read:

<https://scambsmodern.gov.co.uk/documents/s142386/Appendix%20B%20Full%20Council.pdf>

Cost of living crisis mitigation and Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)

We're making the LIFT scheme permanent. We're also adding a 2 year apprentice role to help make the most of the LIFT programme. It's already done fantastic work for residents - so far we've helped over 1,000 residents claim benefits they're entitled to but were missing out on (mostly Pension Credit, Winter Fuel Allowance and Household Support Fund, but also Healthy Start Vouchers, Free School Meals, Attendance Allowance and reduced water tariffs).

We've supported over 200 older people who struggle to engage online using LIFT - identifying those most at risk of social isolation and on low incomes. In year 1 - this programme delivered over £514,000 in additional income for South Cambs residents with a lifetime estimated value of over £3.9 million. We feel extremely proud to continue this scheme and invest more resource into making it work even better!

With many residents still facing financial pressures, the Council will continue providing its comprehensive [cost-of-living support package](#). A budget of £449,000 is set aside to help residents through the next two years through schemes such as emergency food and energy support, workshops, budgeting and debt advice, white goods and furniture for vulnerable people and laptops with digital training.

Homes for Ukraine scheme

Sadly, it's now been four years since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and many Ukrainians are still unable to safely return home. South Cambridgeshire continues to support Ukrainian guests. As of writing, there are 104 Ukrainian guests being hosted in South Cambridgeshire, being hosted by 75 households. Many have moved on to private rented accommodation in the UK. In total 1,009 people have arrived in South Cambridgeshire under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Community Chest Grants

The Council continues to provide Community Chest funding, and this reflects the Council's commitment to sustaining grassroots initiatives and supporting a stronger, more connected community. By investing in these organisations, the district ensures that local people continue to benefit from essential services, social opportunities, and support networks. Community Chest grant funding is available to voluntary and community sector groups, charities and public sector bodies wishing to further improve quality of life in South Cambridgeshire. During this year Mix Music DJ, Melbourn Mobile Warden Scheme, St George's Allotment & Leisure Garden Association, Melbourn Timebank, Melbourn Fete Committee and Melbourn, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Interest Company have all received grants ranging from £750 to £10,000.

Budget and Council Tax Setting

At the Council's budget meeting, councillors agreed to a £5.24 increase for a Band D property. This works out to 10p a week.

We've included below a comparison of the different precepts charged across Cambridgeshire. This doesn't include police and fire precepts or the Mayor's precept. It also doesn't include town and parish precepts (which in an increasing number of cases are now larger than the District Council's). As you can see, South Cambridgeshire charges

slightly more than Huntingdonshire DC, but significantly less than both Cambridge CC and Fenland DCs.

District	Unitary Precept	District Precept	County Precept	Total
East Cambs		£142.14	£1,785.42	£1,927.56
Huntingdonshire		£170.86	£1,785.42	£1,956.28
South Cambs		£180.64	£1,785.42	£1,966.06
Cambridge		£239.07	£1,785.42	£2,024.49
Fenland		£253.35	£1,785.42	£2,038.77
Peterborough	£1,836.72			£1,836.72

This is in the context of significant cuts to our funding from central government. Our core spending power is being cut by over £5 million over the next 3 years, thanks to the Government’s “fair funding review 2.0” which is hurting councils in rural areas like ours. That drop is the equivalent to 15% of our core spending power.

This is largely because we’re losing 40% of our retained business rates, and whilst the government is providing some transition funding, that will be removed over the next 3 years.

As a result of the government’s funding changes, we are increasingly reliant on council tax. In this budget - council tax represents 35% of our core spending power. Come 2028/29 - council tax will represent 47% of our core spending power.

Town and Parish Council Liaison Officer

The council continues to employ a Town and Parish Council Liaison Officer – Jack Bullimore – who has acted as a point of contact for parish councils over the last year. Alongside your district councillors, please look out for contacts from him.

Elections

Obviously, the district elections are fast approaching, and it’ll perhaps come as no surprise that both of us are re-standing. Parish elections will also be taking place.

Please see a summary of the timetable for the elections:

Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 30 March 2026
Receipt of Nominations	4:00 pm Thursday 9 April 2026
Last Date for Registration	Monday 20 April 2026
Receipt of Postal Vote Applications	5:00 pm Tuesday 21 April 2026
Last day for Voter Authority Certificates	5:00 pm Tuesday 28 April 2026
Receipt of Proxy Vote Applications	5:00 pm Tuesday 28 April 2026
Receipt of Emergency Proxy Vote Applications	5:00 pm Thursday 7 May 2026
Day of Poll	7:00 am to 10:00 pm Thursday 7 May 2026

For all the information, please see the district council's website: [Elections 2026 - South Cambs District Council](#)

As ever, please encourage people to register to vote and to go to the polls!

Thank you,

Jose Hales & Sally Ann Hart