Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

Parish Council Report June 2025

South Cambs Council

Home Accessibility

Disabled residents and people with long-term health conditions can now access more support to live independently at home. Increased funding is available from the District Council through the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency, a shared service operated with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.

Low-income Family Tracker update

The Council's innovative Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) software identifies households likely to be eligible for benefits but not claiming them. They are then sent a letter or text encouraging them to apply – with follow-up phone calls also made.
A report to be discussed at the upcoming Scrutiny and Overview Committee outlines how hundreds of South Cambridgeshire residents are now getting extra money as a direct result of the Council's support and advice.
For example, the Council has helped over 110 households who were eligible for Pension Credit but weren't claiming it. Pension Credit is a benefit for people over State Pension age (currently 66) with low incomes. It provides extra money for living costs and can lead to other support. If they remain eligible for the rest of their lives, these households will receive up to £3.2 million in Pension Credit between them.
Households that applied for Pension Credit before last Christmas were also eligible for the Winter Fuel Payment following a change in eligibility criteria last year. This is a payment of either £200 or £300, depending on a person's age. The projected extra income this Winter Fuel Payment will bring new claimants across South Cambridgeshire, as long as they remain eligible for it, is just over £229,000.
In addition, the programme has been used to promote the availability of the Household Support Fund. This is a one-off hardship payment of £110 administered by Cambridgeshire County Council. Just under 250 South Cambridgeshire households went on to claim it during the past 12 months – with a total claim value of £26,400.
The Council also identified nearly 70 households that only just missed out on being eligible for Pension Credit – and therefore the Winter Fuel Payment. They were all contacted and offered a free electric blanket and financial advice through 'Income Maximisation' appointments with Council officers. These appointments identified unclaimed benefits – that could be worth a total of more than £500,000 shared between just five households, as long as they remain eligible. Two of those claims have already been approved.

Meanwhile, South Cambridgeshire has seen the biggest increase in NHS Healthy Start claims in the country, following a similarly targeted approach by the Council using LIFT. This scheme provides eligible parents with free food and milk. The Council's recent intervention is projected to distribute nearly £60,000 of previously unclaimed funds to people eligible but not claiming.
As a result of LIFT, in total at least 246 South Cambridgeshire residents have seen their incomes increase.

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The LIFT software brings together different sets of data, which the Council already holds, to identify currently unclaimed benefits that may be available to approximately 6,500 low-income households across South Cambridgeshire.
LIFT is also being used to support those at risk of homelessness, help disabled residents find work and support an initiative to reduce loneliness. During May and June, several information and advice events are taking place across the district aimed at those aged 70 and over. The events will take place in Bassingbourn, Melbourn, and Willingham where LIFT has identified some of the highest numbers of low-income residents aged 70 and over that live alone. Invites will be sent direct to residents most likely to benefit.
The next areas of focus for the Council's Data Team – using the LIFT software – will include encouraging more eligible residents to claim grants to retrofit their home with energy efficiency measures. There will also be a campaign to raise awareness of Cambridge Water's 'Assure Tariff' – which offers discounts on water bills for those eligible.

Although there have been no reported incidents of scams purporting to be part of this programme, the Council is reminding residents that if they are ever in any doubt about the authenticity of a letter or a phone call – they can call the Council direct on 01954 713 000. For more information on how to spot a scam, visit support is available.

Cambridgeshire County Council

County Adults Services OFSTED Report

Learners and apprentices studying through Cambridgeshire County Council's adult learning services thrive due to the warm, nurturing and inclusive learning environment and substantial new knowledge and skills they learn, according to an Ofsted report published May 29th.

Cambridgeshire Skills offers education and training for adult learners in the county, the largest programmes of which are tailored learning, adult skills and family learning. Courses are run by sub-contractors and are offered online and in around 87 community venues across Cambridgeshire, including community centres, libraries and schools. The service works closely with the county council's Learning and Development team to provide apprenticeship opportunities.

The Ofsted inspection of the two teams, which took place in late April and early May, found the overall effectiveness of the service to be 'Good.' It judged the behaviour and attitude of learners to be 'Outstanding', with a rating of 'Good' awarded in every other category.

Also recognised by inspectors is the support for learners and apprentices with SEND:
'Leaders have suitable arrangements to identify and support learners and apprentices with SEND. Tutors provide a range of appropriate support mechanisms, such as in-class support and individualised learning resources. As a result, learners and apprentices with SEND progress well on their courses.'

The report includes three areas where the service needs to improve. Due to the self-assessment element of the Ofsted inspection process, the teams were already aware of these and had put steps in place to address them:

- Increase the proportion of learners who achieve their functional skills mathematics qualification at levels 1 and 2.
- Help tutors teaching accredited courses to provide learners with useful feedback on how they can improve their work and skills further.
- Provide effective career information, advice and guidance for learners on accredited courses.

You can read the report in full at 50278231.
Find out more about Cambridgeshire Skills at Cambridgeshire Skills - adult learning | Cambridgeshire County Council

King's Award for Enterprise

Applications for the 2026 King's Awards for Enterprise are now officially open.
The King's Awards for Enterprise, previously known as the Queen's Awards, have been recognising and encouraging excellence in business since 1966.
This year Costello Medical Consulting Ltd, a Cambridge-based independent global consultancy specialising in scientific support for the analysis, interpretation, and communication of clinical and health economic data, were winners in the International Trade category. Global Graphics Software Ltd, a Cambourne-based company known for its digital printing and document technology and Data Conversion Systems Ltd, a leading provider of data and software solutions won in the Innovation category. There were 17 other East of England recipients in 2025.
Recognised globally as a mark of excellence, the King's Awards for Enterprise offer recipients a unique Royal endorsement that sets them apart in both domestic and international markets.
The Awards honour outstanding UK businesses across four key categories:

- Innovation
- International Trade
- Sustainable Development
- Promoting Opportunity (through social mobility)

Applications are welcomed from businesses of all sizes. In 2025, 88% of the 197 award recipients were small and medium-sized enterprises, including 27 micro-businesses with ten or fewer employees, highlighting the accessibility and inclusivity of the programme.
Organisations may also apply for more than one award category.

You can check if your business is eligible on the gov.uk website.

Award recipients are granted the right to use the esteemed Royal Emblem for five years, which may be displayed on websites, marketing materials, uniforms, and company vehicles. Recipients are also invited to a Royal Reception in the summer.

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Past awardees have reported significant benefits, including enhanced brand recognition, increased press coverage and improved access to investment.

Applications for The Kings Awards for Enterprise must be submitted by 9 September 2025, with the winners being announced on 6 May 2026.

To apply please visit The King's Awards for Enterprise: Apply - GOV.UK
Or email kingsawards@businessandtrade.gov.uk

Peter McDonald June 1st 2025

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