

Councillor Peter McDonald

District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.

County Councillor for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow & Heathfield, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

Parish Council Report February 2026

South Cambs Council

Cambridge Growth Company

The Cambridge Growth Company (CGC) was established by the government in 2024 to foster additional economic growth in the Cambridge area by delivering housing, transport, water, and wider infrastructure. The council invited the CGC Chair, Peter Freeman, to attend a Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting on 29 January, where he and his team were questioned for three hours on the company's objectives, progress and its proposed relationship with local councils. You can view the meeting here. I asked questions about how the CGC's aims might differ from our Local Plan and about their proposals to facilitate improvement in our bus services.

The CGC gave firm reassurance that their aim was to support the delivery of the new Local Plan by helping to solve water and transport problems, rather than to rewrite it. However, they are proposing to have the power to intervene anywhere in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire rather than restricting their involvement to specific high-impact development sites. They also emphasised their role in long-term planning for growth, beyond the end of the new Local plan period in 2045. <https://thecgc.org.uk/>

Planning Service Awards

After recently being awarded the title of Planning Authority of the Year by the Royal Town Planning Institute, the council's Planning service has received another award, this time for its Youth Engagement Service, which has won the Inspire Future Generations Award for Best Local Authority in Youth Engagement from the Thornton Education Trust. This recognises their work in engaging thousands of children in the planning process, providing work experience placements, and supporting youth engagement in public art projects.

Food waste collections

In line with changing government requirements for food waste collection, weekly food waste collections are now taking place in some parts of the district. They are scheduled to begin in our ward in April. Everyone should receive a letter in March with details of the change and information on how we will receive our food waste caddy. More information is available on the council's web site. <https://www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste>

Street cleaning schedule

The next scheduled period for street cleaning in our ward is 9–20 March. If Parish Councils have specific areas that they would like dealt with by the road sweeper crew, please contact the street cleaning team using this form.

<https://www.greatercambridgewaste.org/litter-in-public-spaces/street-care-and-cleaning-south-cambs>

Civil Parking Enforcement survey

A survey on Civil Parking Enforcement has been sent to Town and Parish Councils in the

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council's regular e-bulletin to help gather feedback on the scheme since its introduction two years ago. A previous survey generated only received limited feedback so I would encourage Parish Councils to give their views. The survey will close at the end of March.

Record level of council house rebuilding

The council has completed building 113 new council homes since 1 April 2025, which represents a significant increase in the rate of replenishing our council house stock in the district. The previous yearly record (from last year) was 91 homes. This is bringing real improvements in our ability to meet the growing housing need in this area.

New powers to keep pavements clear

The Department for Transport announced on 8 January that they will be introducing new local government powers to keep pavements clear and accessible, while allowing exemptions where required. This will streamline the present lengthy process for taking action on parking that blocks pavements. Guidance will be released later in the year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-local-powers-to-keep-pavements-clear-for-those-who-rely-on-them-most>

Feedback on council services

A reminder that the District Council has a new mechanism to allow general feedback on the council's services from residents, businesses, Parish Councils, or any other clients.

Please use the link www.scambs.gov.uk/leave-fee

Cambs County Council

Budget for 2027/27

The draft Business Plan and Budget includes a number of proposed investments aligned with the Council's three new ambitions:

- Supporting a green and sustainable county through continued delivery of the Council's Climate Change and Environment Strategy, and an extra £20m of investment in road maintenance on top of Government funding for Cambridgeshire highways.
- Enabling full and healthy lives for all, an additional £14.7m of funding to help providers of adult social care in the county to meet ongoing costs, including inflation and to enable them to pay the Real Living Wage to care workers.
- Ensuring fairness and opportunity, to help further tackle poverty and support families under pressure, the Council is proposing to invest £1m to sustain holiday meal vouchers for those most in need through to the end of the summer holidays 2026. This will support families as changes linked to the Government's withdrawal of the Household Support Fund are implemented and use of the new £5m Crisis and Resilience Fund to support a broader range of anti-poverty measures is implemented.

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- In addition, the draft budget sets out major investment across key services, including £11m to upgrade the Milton and March Household Waste Recycling Centres. Residents will also see major investment in the services families rely on day to day, more school places, stronger support for vulnerable children, and well-resourced local libraries.
- The proposals include 3,500 new primary school places and £72m over five years to support secondary schools in Alconbury Weald and North West Cambridge. They also provide £780k a year for the re-opened children's home in South Cambridgeshire, continued funding for the Families First programme backed by the £6.7m Children's, Families and Youth Grant, and more than £1.2m for libraries and archives over the next two years.
- The council's reported £6.4m budget gap in December has been fully closed following the announcement of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2026–29 by Government.
- In our pre-budget engagement exercise, just over 50% of respondents supported an increase in council tax of up to 4.99% to maintain or improve essential services, recognising the current financial pressures faced by the Council.
- In a second round of consultation, from December 25 to January 26, residents were asked to share their views on key spending and saving proposals. The majority supported the suggested ways of saving money and reducing costs to children's services, adults and public health and 71% supported prioritised spending for highways and community services.
- Proposals discussed included an increase of council tax by 4.99%, the maximum permitted by Government for county councils. A total 2% of this increase is specifically for adult social care funding. This increase, if approved, would generate around £21million in additional funding and help the Council continue providing the essential services people rely on.
- This would mean that for a Band D property, the County Council's share of Council Tax would increase by £84.78 a year, or £1.63 a week. Today's draft Business Plan and Budget proposals are available to view on our website, and the committee meeting was streamed live on the Council's YouTube channel.
https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/MeetingsCalendar/tabcid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2478/Committee/71/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx

Highways Maintenance Update

- Currently, there are 5,400 potholes requiring repair across Cambridgeshire. In the past week, (last week January) the council has repaired over 1,000 potholes.
- There will be a dramatic increase in the number of work crews dealing with both temporary and permanent fixes – normally there are eight crews and two dragon patchers available across the county, now there are 30 crews and two dragon patchers

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working hard to repair potholes. This will significantly increase the level of pothole repairs attended to each week.

- Since 2023/24, the amount of capital funding spent on highway maintenance has increased by £35m, from £24m to £59m. The Council has allocated more than £73m for highways maintenance in 2025/26.
- The Highways and Transport Committee have recently supported budget proposals that could see an additional £20m of investment into road maintenance in 2026/27. Read more on our website.

Pothole facts:

- Over the past five years, we have repaired an average of 55,400 individual potholes each year.
- In general terms, if a pothole is large and deep, we will fix it within five days. If it is smaller and less of a hazard, we will fix it within 21 days
- We mark up the potholes in different ways, those repaired in five days are not marked as our repair is immediate, yellow means we will repair it within 21 days. We always aim to fix potholes within five and 21 days depending on their level of priority
- We aim to fix emergency faults as soon as possible, always within five days
- We always aim to repair potholes with a permanent fix first time. However, this depends on the weather – if it's wet or has been raining we sometimes have to make temporary fixes to keep people safe and moving as the road conditions are too wet for permanent repairs. Permanent fixes will then be programmed in and delivered when the weather allows
- A pothole repair costs around £50
- The dragon patcher is a specialist machine, nicknamed the 'dragon' because it fires out flames to dry out the road surface, it is then cleaned with compressed air and sealed with a stone mix and hot bitumen. It is much quicker and simpler compared to traditional methods.

Peter McDonald Feb 2nd 2026