

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 County Report October 2025

South Cambs Council

Greater Cambridge Local Plan update

The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan has been in development since 2020, when the First Conversation consultation took place. A major consultation on the First Proposals took place in 2021, and the results from this were published in 2022. Progress since then has been slowed by uncertainty in the planning of water supply and transport funding. A draft Local Plan has been in preparation during 2025 and a public consultation on the draft is expected to run from 1 December 2025 to 30 January 2026. More detail on the timetable and the many considerations involved in preparing the Local Plan is available here.

[JPAG Meeting1 Report Sept 2025.pdf](#)

Planning Application queries

The Greater Cambridge Planning authority processes well over 3000 planning applications every year. Most of these applications run smoothly, and the average time to determine applications has fallen significantly over the past two years. However, occasionally there are problems with the handling of planning applications. Concerns about the planning application process should initially be referred to the application case officer, whose name is listed on the application and whose contact details can be found here [Development management area teams](#) (we are in Area Team West). Any concerns that have not been dealt with satisfactorily by the case officer should be referred to the Area Team Leader (Michael Hammond). If there is still a problem at this stage then please contact either Cllr Hawkins (the Cabinet Member for Planning) or myself and we will investigate. In the event of any problems it is much better to follow this process while the application is still being considered. Once an application has been decided, the mechanisms available to revisit the decision are very limited.

Harston Neighbourhood Plan adopted

The Neighbourhood Plan for Harston was adopted at the Full Council meeting on 2 October. It sets out planning policies that apply within the parish and covers the period to 2041. The Neighbourhood Plan is used alongside the Local Plan when determining planning applications in the parish. Residents of Harston voted in favour of the Neighbourhood Plan on 4 September.

Six Free Trees

The council's annual Six Free Trees scheme for Parish Councils is open again, running until 30 November. [South Cambs District Council: Parish councils invited to claim six free trees – with more than 750 already planted and counting](#)

Local Climate Action Conference

The Council is hosting its third annual Local Climate Action Conference on Friday 17 October from 12pm to 5pm at Storey's Field Centre, Eddington. This event is open to parish councils, community groups, charities and anyone interested in tackling climate change and enhancing biodiversity. [SCDC Local Climate Action Conference 2025 - RSVP Form](#)

Mental health support for the community

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There is a new partnership between the council and Cambridgebased charity Cogwheel Counselling to offer free counselling support sessions to council tenants. Cogwheel Counselling also offers support more broadly within the community, including free counselling sessions for people on very low income. There is a broader need for counselling and mental health support in our area. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have worked together on a web site called KeepYourHead which provides comprehensive information on the support services available.

Service Support Grants

Increased Funding of £300k is available for community projects in the coming year in Service Support Grants, increased from £167k last year, to help address the growing pressure faced by the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The grant is aimed at mental health support, advice services, community transport and other community services. Its aim is to empower local groups that deliver vital services to South Cambridgeshire residents, reaching those most in need and to help build inclusive, resilient communities. The application window is open until 5pm on Friday 31 October.

[South Cambs District Council: £300,000 available to support community services in South Cambridgeshire](#)

Consultation on Climate and Nature Strategy

A consultation is open on the District Council's Climate and Nature Strategy for 2026– 2030. We have set out a transformative vision for a region where nature thrives, the air and rivers are clean, communities are resilient to the changing climate, and future generations can flourish. The consultation closes on 5 November.

[Project: Climate and Nature Strategies | South Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

Consultation on Local Council Tax Support scheme

The council's working age Local Council Tax Support scheme is a means-tested banded discount scheme providing up to 100% support for working-age residents in need of Council Tax relief. Several changes are proposed to help focus support on those most in need. There is a public consultation on these changes, which is open until Wednesday 15 October

Cambs County Council

For those hearing about the Community Gritting Scheme for the first time, this is a scheme where Local volunteers can help to keep their community moving in freezing weather. Under this scheme, the parish or town council decides on specific routes in their area which are important to the local community and agrees them with the county council.

If you are a parish or town council looking to join the scheme, please send your completed form by 31st October 2025. The end of October deadline is to ensure we can order any equipment your volunteers will need. We will need a form for each of your volunteers, including those who have volunteered before. The form is required annually ensure our

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health and safety standards are being met. See below for a link to the Community Gritting registration form:

http://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Community_gritting_registration_form

For further information please see our web page:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/help-with-gritting-and-clearing-snow/>

If you spot a grit bin that is empty or running low, please let us know through our [online reporting tool](#).

HAF Fund

The Holiday Activities and Food programme is set to continue until 2029, providing thousands of children in Cambridgeshire with food and fun during school holidays. The Government has announced it will continue to fund the programme across England for a further three financial years, meaning that families in Cambridgeshire will continue to benefit from the scheme until March 2029.

Through the programme, local holiday schemes offer free access to fun, enriching activities and nutritious meals for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Running during the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays, HAF helps reduce pressure on families by providing safe, engaging environments where children receive a meal while having fun.

Holiday scheme experiences include sports, creative arts, Forest School, playschemes, and outdoor adventures. The programme also supports families by reducing childcare costs, promoting social inclusion, and connecting them with local support services.

Cambridgeshire County Council ran 132 schemes over the summer holiday period, with an estimated 3,300 children participating. (*figures based on 2024 attendance*).

The highest number of children attending a scheme this summer was at 'Come and Play' in Whittlesey, where 135 children attended.

To find out more about HAF, head to our website: [Cambridgeshire Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Alcohol Vapes, Tobacco Campaign

Police cadets aged between 14 and 16, have taken part in a series of Trading Standards exercises where they attempted to buy age restricted items such as alcohol, vapes and tobacco from 20 different shops in Cambridgeshire. On every occasion the teenage volunteers were challenged over their age and were refused sales when no proof could be provided.

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The exercises took place over the summer as part of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards continued crackdown on the sale of alcohol, vapes and tobacco to children. Advice and guidance for businesses is available on the [Business Companion](#) website.

If you have concerns about young people accessing alcohol in your local area, please report these to Cambridgeshire Police online. Information about shops selling vapes or tobacco products to children under the age of 18 can be reported to Trading Standards advice partner, Citizens Advice Consumer Service, on 0808 223 1133 Monday to Friday or via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service online form over the weekend. You can remain anonymous if you wish.

Schools Appeals Panels

We are looking for people to join our independent School Appeal Panels, as volunteers are urgently needed to hear appeals when children are not offered a place at their preferred school.

All parents or carers have the right to appeal to an independent panel. As a panel member you will hear cases where parents or carers wish to appeal a decision made by Cambridgeshire County Council or a school. You will listen carefully to all sides, ask questions to fully understand the facts, and work with other panel members to reach a fair and lawful decision.

The appeal panel is independent of the local authority, and its decisions are binding on all parties, unless overturned by the courts.

What are we looking for

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds. You do not need to have worked in education – full training will be provided, and you will be fully supported by the Appeals Service.

Key skills and qualities:

- Be committed to treating everyone equally
- Communicate effectively with a wide range of people
- Ask questions to obtain information and clarify points being made
- Analyse information and use it to form opinions and conclusions
- Obtain and weigh up evidence to reach a decision
- Work as part of a team, take advice and develop skills
- Computer literacy is preferred but not essential as training will be offered.

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There is no minimum time commitment required; volunteers decide how much time they can give. Appeals are held throughout the year, with peak months being April to July. They can be either half days or full days. Hearings are currently held online using Microsoft TEAMS.

Anyone interested in applying or who would like an informal chat about the role should contact Clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or visit our webpage at [School admission appeals panel volunteering | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Peter McDonald Oct 4th 2025

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