

South Cambridgeshire District Council – Harston & Comberton Ward

Comprising Barton, Coton, Comberton, Grantchester, Harlton,
Harston, Haslingfield, Hauxton, and South Trumpington

District Councillors' Monthly Report – December 2023

District Councillor Contact Details

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the details below.

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Deck the stalls with boughs of holly!

An indoor market of 70 stalls is set to bring festive cheer to South Cambridgeshire, offering visitors the chance to snap up gifts and get into the Christmas spirit.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will be hosting a Christmas Market on Sunday 10 December which will be held across Cambourne Village College Performance Hall and the neighbouring gymnasium. Visitor entry to the market is free.

Between **11am** and **3pm**, a variety of stalls will be offering locally crafted gifts, delicious holiday treats, and festive decor. There will also be a selection of mobile caterers found just outside of the venue who will be serving up street food as well as both hot and cold festive refreshments.

This follows on from the successful indoor Christmas market held last year, which saw around 1700 visitors.

To prevent and avoid congestion on the day of the event, parking is prohibited along Sheepfold Lane or on the approach to Cambourne Village College. Visitors are being encouraged to walk or cycle, however, if visitors must drive, parking is available at Cambourne Village College or at designated overflow parking at Cambourne Business Park, next to South Cambridgeshire Hall.

Visit [South Cambridgeshire Christmas Market](#) for more details.

Four-day week trial update

As you know, an Extraordinary Council Meeting was held on Monday evening, for Members to discuss the Best Value Notice issued to the Council by the Government. Members voted to note the report and agree that the Council engage with DLUHC to provide the data requested. The first weekly report to DLUHC has been sent and Officers are continuing to gather the data requested for the weekly and retrospective returns.

Homes for Ukraine update

We have recently procured a contract with Refugee Host Support to provide additional wellbeing and welfare support to both Homes for Ukraine guests and hosts. This service will provide support on a level that we cannot, such as online cognitive behavioural therapy, 24/7 advice lines with Ukrainian speakers, training podcasts and more. More information on the services offered can be found via this [link](#).

So far, we have supported 160 groups of guests into both private accommodation and social housing. There has been just under £53,000 spent on furniture packages, and a total of £18,000 from both rent deposits and rent in advance payments. There are currently 263 guests living with hosts in South Cambs, whom we will be liaising with to help support into their own accommodation. We are grateful for the continued support from colleagues, members, and members of the community. Their ongoing and unwavering support for this scheme is brilliant to see.

Funding available to set up new Community Hubs

There is capacity for up to eight extra Community Hubs (formerly Warm Hubs) in South Cambridgeshire, and we are currently taking expressions of interest for this.

Please share with any groups that you think may be interested in this offer. These hubs will be in addition to the 12 existing hubs across the district, [listed here](#).

Nature-based groups: Annual report

Since 2020, the Council has continued to invest in an outdoor nature-based programme to support young people struggling with their mental health. We have continued to deliver the programme over the past three years, and with the help of a clinical psychologist, we can now share the most recent evaluation of the programme and its outcomes. This report is attached. If you'd like to speak to an officer about the programme, please contact Development Officer, Health Specialist Lesley McFarlane on Lesley.mcfarlane@scambs.gov.uk.

Homes for Ukraine: Appeal for support with Landlord Incentive scheme

You may remember that we recently launched the 'Homes for Ukraine Landlord Incentive Scheme'. Landlords who provide properties in South Cambridgeshire to Homes for Ukraine guests who are resident in South Cambridgeshire qualify for a financial incentive. These incentives differ depending on the size of the property, and if provided at market rent, or at local housing allowance. The landlord must also provide a minimum tenancy of 6 months from the outset. If a landlord wanted to offer 12 months initially, then they would receive double the amount they would qualify for offering a 6-month tenancy. Please see the below table that details initial payments:

Number of bedrooms	Market rent incentive	LHA rate incentive
1 Bedroom	£1,140	£2,280
2 Bedroom	£1,300	£2,600
3 Bedroom	£1,350	£2,750
4 Bedroom	£1,410	£2,820

After the initial term expires, landlords can receive a further payment if they offer a renewal of the tenancy and these additional payments will again vary, depending on the length of tenancy offered. **If are aware of any landlord who may be interested joining this scheme, please urge them to contact us on HFULiaison@Scams.gov.uk or 01954 713411. Thank you.**

Healthy You Virtual Festival

Building on the success of 2021, 2022 and 2023 Healthy You Virtual Festival events, Healthy You are excited to announce plans for 2024, and we'd love to invite you to be a part of it! The aim is to go bigger and better with a month-long programme from 1st – 31st January 2024. The Virtual Festival will provide a myriad of FREE virtual opportunities to support Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents to get active and explore different ways to improve their health and wellbeing throughout January 2024. The January programme will act as a 'kickstart' for healthier habits that will last into the new year. The month-long programme of classes, workshops, talks and events will focus on the three areas of physical activity, healthy eating and mental wellbeing. To pre-register, use the weblink [Healthy You Virtual Festival 2024 - Living Sport](#)

National Highways legacy funding for communities – A428

National Highways has launched a £2 million legacy fund to support not-for-profit groups in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire as part of the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme. National Highways is now calling on all local not-for-profit groups to apply for the grants, including local schools, charities, community groups and environment and heritage groups. Two funds available for applicants are:

- A **£1.7 million** Social Value Fund to maximise the wider benefits of the scheme available for all not-for-profit organisations – grants between **£15,000 and £200,000**
- A **£250,000** Community Fund to support the local community and provide social value available for non-for-profit groups or small voluntary and community organisations – grants of up to **£15,000**

- This is the first of five funding windows and is open to application until **1 February 2024**. To find out more about the application process and submit an application, applicants should visit: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/a428-black-cat-to-caxton-gibbet/leaving-a-positive-legacy/

Updates from DLUHC

Cold-Health Alerts issued, StreetLink and Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

On the 28th November, [the UK Health Security Agency \(UKHSA\) and the Met Office issued an amber Cold-Health Alert \(CHA\)](#) for the North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber regions of England. A yellow CHA has also been issued for the East Midlands and West Midlands. The alert is currently in place until midday on 5 December. [StreetLink](#) is a website which enables members of the public in England and Wales to send an alert when they see someone sleeping rough. Alerts are referred to the relevant outreach team who can connect the person to local support services. As of October 2023, StreetLink has been delivered by a new provider, Home Connections. If you have any questions or feedback on the new platform, please contact: vicky.sterrett@levellingup.gov.uk or frances.taylor@levellingup.gov.uk

[Homeless Link's SWEP \(Severe Weather Emergency Protocol\) and winter provision toolkit](#) is designed to support councils to provide SWEP responses and support people sleeping rough during the winter. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Guidance for extreme weather:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adverse-weather-and-health-plan>

Cold weather plan: action cards for cold weather alert service and summary posters – reminder

Last month (20 October), the UK Health Security Agency [updated the action cards on how different organisations need to respond in the event of cold weather](#). The card summarises suggested actions to be taken by different professional bodies and organisations, including:

- commissioners and councils
- provider organisations

- frontline health and social care staff
- GPs and practice staff
- individuals
- the voluntary and community sector

The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

On the 29th November, DLUHC has published [draft regulations that exempt certain developments from meeting the biodiversity gain requirement that would otherwise be imposed as a general condition of planning permission](#). The regulations form part of the implementation of mandatory biodiversity net gain (a strategy to develop land and contribute to the recovery of nature) introduced by the Environment Act 2021. [Biodiversity net gain](#) will be mandatory for some planning permissions that are granted, subject to transitional arrangements and specified exemptions. For more information, read the [draft planning practice guidance on biodiversity net gain](#).

Date set for eligible working parents to apply for free childcare

On the 29th November, the Department for Education has announced that [applications for free childcare for working parents will open on 2 January 2024](#). From January, eligible working parents of two-year-olds will be able to register to access 15 hours free childcare per week from April 2024. The recommended time to register is between mid-January and the end of February. From 30th November, funding will also be available for new childminders who join the profession or who completed their registration on or after 15 March 2023, or those re-registering at least 12 months after the cancellation of a previous registration. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Third phase of 'ENOUGH' campaign to tackle violence against women and girls

On 25th November the government launched [the third phase of the 'ENOUGH' campaign to tackle violence and sexual harassment against women and girls](#). This phase will see a wider rollout of the STOP prompt: Say something, Tell someone, Offer support, Provide a diversion, which provides the public with multiple options for intervening if they witness abuse taking place. Councils are encouraged to share this announcement and [to make use of the 'ENOUGH' campaign resources](#). For any questions on the 'ENOUGH' campaign, please contact adam.mazrani@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Resources:

<https://we.tl/t-oD9ZsRFVEc>

<https://enough.campaign.gov.uk/campaign-resources>

Warm spaces in England: toolkit for organisations

On 23rd November, the UK Health Security Agency [published Warm spaces in England: an evidence review and toolkit for organisations](#). The toolkit provides a framework for organisations seeking to develop or evaluate a warm space for their local population during the winter. The toolkit has been developed to help increase the effectiveness of warm spaces and includes examples of good practice as well as signposting to resources that support organisations to develop a warm space offer.

Updates from the Communications and Communities team

Cost of living support campaign

South Cambridgeshire residents are being encouraged to ensure they take advantage of all the [cost-of-living support they are entitled to this winter](#).

With the weather getting colder and communities spending more on heating, we have begun a new campaign to urge residents to make full use of assistance available.

Please share the below social media posts within your local networks.

- [X](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Wellbeing walks

Join one of our [free group walks](#) in a safe, friendly environment. Our group walks are led by specially trained leaders who are on hand to provide encouragement and support, and make sure no one gets left behind. Our walks are short and over easy terrain. They are open to everyone but are especially aimed at those who are least active. We have walks in Bar Hill, Comberton, Wandlebury, Melbourn, Hardwick and Northstowe. If you would like to start a walk in your area, please contact Ben.Truett@scambs.gov.uk for training and further advice.

Community Chest Grant update

We would like to encourage more applications through the [Community Chest Grant scheme](#). If you know of any community groups that are in need of funding, please can you pass on our offer of support. Funding of up to £2,000 (which also applies to funds ringfenced for Biodiversity, Community Led Plans and Cost of Living projects) is available for projects that meet our eligibility criteria. Total funds are shown in the below table:

Funding	Total funds
Community Chest	£21,027.45
Biodiversity	£8,000.00
Community-Led Plans	£43,780.00
Cost- Of Living	£17,324.12

If you have any questions, please email community.chest@scambs.gov.uk

Community Safety resources webpage launched

We have published a page on our website to make available [resources covering a variety of subjects relating to community safety](#).

These include a flyer about inconsiderate parking, posters to raise awareness of Domestic Abuse support available, a guide to online safety for parents, posters to combat Hate Crime, and much more. This page will be updated with new resources as they become available, and if there are other subjects you would like to see covered, please email communitysafety@scambs.gov.uk.

Police want to hear from you and your residents

Each quarter you can complete an online [Community Policing Survey](#) so that police can build up a picture of what is happening in your area and what is concerning you most. Survey responses feed into online public engagement events which involve a report from the officers policing your area about recent activity and the results of the survey, as well as an opportunity to ask questions. The last event of 2023 has just passed, but more details of both the engagement event, and survey, can be found on the [Cambridgeshire Constabulary website](#). We continue to appreciate your help advertising these opportunities to residents.

ATM Watch launches – how you can help police to tackle Ram Raids on ATM cash machines.

Police and Neighbourhood Watch have together launched ATM Watch to raise awareness of what you can look out for to help police anticipate and stop ATM cash machines being ram raided by vehicles and money stolen. The public are being asked to:

- Ensure your vehicles have working trackers installed - particularly owners of high-performance cars and heavy vehicles, such as Transits and flat beds, which could be used to ram an ATM cash machine

- Raise concerns about anything that doesn't feel quite right, such as plant vehicles travelling during the hours of darkness
- Report high-performance or plant vehicles that are not usually in the area and appear to have been left parked for a few days
- Consider installing video doorbells or CCTV on your home, as they might just capture something vital
- Report anything suspicious, for example, people scoping houses or tampering with number plates
- Report any instances of unauthorised people paying close attention to ATMs, including taking photos or attaching 'out of order' signs to give an impression the machine is not working properly

Concerns or information can be reported online or by calling 101, quoting Op ATMosphere. Always call 999 in an emergency. For more information on joining an ATM Watch, please see the [Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Association website](#).

South Cambs Magazine

The winter 2023 edition of South Cambs Magazine is currently being delivered to all households in the district. If any residents have not received a copy by Saturday 2 December, they can email Smart Distribution on scdc@smartdistribution.co.uk or call them on 0800 6444 011 to report this. You can also read the current edition [on our website](#).

Update from Climate and Environment: Six Free Trees for all parish councils – request yours now!

Once again this year, we're offering six free trees (or one larger potted tree) to all parish councils in partnership with English Woodlands. If your parish has suitable sites and you can commit to planting and upkeep, express your [interest in the scheme](#) (website link: <https://forms.scambs.gov.uk/APPLYFORTHREEFREETREESVOUCHER/launch>) and the Climate team will be in touch to arrange your order. All trees must be ordered by 22 December 2023.

Update from Rural Services Network: November bulletin

The monthly bulletin featuring RSN Rural Funding Digest & Government Consultations is now out. The Funding Digest includes many sources of grant funding that they may not be aware of. The Government Consultation section may include a draft response to relevant rural consultations and also highlights other consultations relevant to rural areas which you may be interested in responding to.

Read the [November 2023 edition of the Rural Funding Digest](#) or the [November 2023 edition of current Government Consultations](#).

Update from Elections: Elections in 2024 – New Voter ID Requirement

As of May this year, electors now need to show photo ID when voting in a polling station. 2024 will be the first year that South Cambridgeshire residents will head to the polls with the new requirement in place. Please help us to spread the message about voter ID with any work that you can do locally to let residents know about the new rules. Visit the [Electoral Commission website](#) for more information and resources.

An election for the Police and Crime Commissioner will take place in South Cambs on Thursday 2 May 2024, and a general election must also take place sometime before January 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact elections@scambs.gov.uk.

National Highways legacy funding for communities

National Highways has launched a £2 million legacy fund to support not-for-profit groups in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme aims to leave a positive legacy in the region long after construction is finished. They are asking for expressions of interests in the legacy-focused funds.

National Highways is calling on all local not-for-profit groups to apply for the grants, including local schools, charities, community groups and environment and heritage groups. Two funds available for applicants are:

- A **£1.7 million** Social Value Fund to maximise the wider benefits of the scheme available for all not-for-profit organisations – grants between **£15,000 and £200,000**.
- A **£250,000** Community Fund to support the local community and provide social value available for non-for-profit groups or small voluntary and community organisations – grants of up to **£15,000**.

This is the first of five funding windows and is open to application until 1 February 2024. To find out more about the application process and submit an application, applicants should visit the [National Highways website](#).

This week:

Christmas Holiday Activities and Food Programme

Cambridgeshire County Council are once again running a [Christmas Holiday Activities and Food Programme \(HAF\)](#) programme, funded by the Department for Education. Children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals can access a holiday scheme for up to 16 hours over the Christmas period. Participating schemes are offering enriching experiences, a daily meal and physical activity eligible children and young people. Recently arrived refugee families are also eligible to book as well as families struggling financially. Full details are on the County Council website. We are supporting this by sharing the County Council's messages on social media and a poster is attached if you are able to help spread the word in your wards. Thank you.

Combined Authority: Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Mayoral Precept Consultation

The Combined Authority has [recently launched a consultation](#) on their Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Mayoral Precept. The consultation will run for six weeks until 1pm on Thursday 11 January and the online consultation form, and supporting information can be found at <https://cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/yoursayyourfuture/>

Residents, Elected Members and Stakeholders can also email views and comments on our proposals to comms@cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk

Updates from DLUHC

Community Ownership Fund – reminder

On 27 September, DLUHC confirmed that [the next application window for the Community Ownership Fund \(round three window three\) will open 6 December and will close on 31 January 2024](#). The government is providing funding over four years to support community groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost, such as community centres, parks, pubs and post office buildings.

Webinar and slides: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-round-3-webinar-slides-and-recording>

Prospectus:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus--3>

Parents encouraged to apply for support with childcare costs

The Department for Education is [reminding eligible working parents of two-year-olds that they will be able to register to access 15 hours free childcare per week from April 2024](#). The recommended time to register is between mid-January and the end of February. More information on the childcare support available to parents can be found on the [Childcare Choices website](#), where parents can explore the early education entitlements and other government help with childcare costs. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Radiation emergencies: information for the public updated

On 30 November, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) [updated the radiation protection guidance to inform members of the public on actions that they can take to protect themselves in the case of a radiation emergency](#). This is practical guidance for the public and professionals. The core advice remains the same and is universal worldwide, to 'Go in, Stay in and Tune in' as it has been for many years. Based on learnings from developing COVID-19 guidance, UKHSA have added more scientific explanations for how radiation affects the body and why these actions reduce potential health risks, providing the public with the rationale for the benefits of taking action. Councils have a legal duty under Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPiR) to provide public health guidance in the event of an incident. The guidance documents enable councils to plan and prepare effectively for incidents. Councils are encouraged to share this information as appropriate.

Evaluation of the Elections Act 2022 published

On 30 November the government published the [first report of the evaluation of the Elections Act, examining the impact and implementation of voter identification in Great Britain and enhanced support for disabled voters in polling stations](#). Alongside the Evaluation Report by IFF Research, the government has also published [the data tables from the public opinion research carried out by IPSOS](#), evidence from which forms part of this evaluation. In parallel to these publications, the government has also [responded to the Electoral Commission's report on the May 2023 polls](#). These publications were accompanied by a [Written Ministerial Statement](#). Further evaluation of the impact and implementation of voter identification – and the wider Elections Act – will take place at the next two UK Parliamentary General Elections.

Dashboards on statutory homelessness data

On 30 November, DLUHC [updated the dashboard on statutory homelessness to reflect the official statistics on statutory homelessness applications, duties, and outcomes for councils in England for April to June 2023](#).

DLUHC also [published management information \(not official statistics\) about ending rough sleeping, preventing it wherever possible, and where it does occur ensuring it is rare, brief, and non-recurring.](#)

Statistics:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statutory-homelessness-in-england-april-to-june-2023>

Make Things Right: campaign toolkit updated

Earlier this year (6 March), the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, launched the government's '[Make Things Right](#)' campaign which urges social housing tenants to complain about substandard housing. DLUHC has, on the 4th December, updated the [Make Things Right: campaign toolkit to help councils and other partners to spread the word in their communities to support residents](#). Councils are encouraged to share this information with social housing landlords and residents in their area.

Guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/make-things-right-introduction-and-how-to-help>

Announcement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-tenants-empowered-to-make-complaints-with-flagship-government-campaign-launch>