

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 March 2026**

### **South Cambs Council**

#### **2026/27 Budget and Corporate Plan**

The budget for 2026/27 was agreed at a Full Council meeting on 24 February, along with the Corporate Action Plan for the year, the budget and plan for housing, and key policies such as the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme that provides support for Council Tax payments for those in greatest need. At the same meeting, the Climate and Nature Strategy for 2026–30 was agreed to provide leadership in climate action, resilience and sustainable growth. Support for the voluntary and community sector is boosted to £300k per year, £225k per year is allocated for cost-of-living support, and ongoing support for Mobile Warden Schemes was agreed.

The Council Tax precept for the District Council will increase by 2.99% or £5.24 per year for a Band D property. This compares with a CPI inflation rate of 3.4%, wage growth of 4.2% (both from December 2025), and a state pension increase of 4.7% this year. The Council is expected to remain among the lowest-taxing 25% of district councils in the country.

The budget accounts for the fact that the government has recently reduced the amount of Business Rates that local authorities can retain, further reducing our funding.

#### **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 questioned the CGC Chair, Peter Freeman, at a Scrutiny & Overview Committee meeting on 29 January where 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. The government is currently consulting on their plan to further the work of the CGC by forming a Development Corporation. The consultation closes on 1 April and I encourage Parish Councils and interested residents to respond. The council is holding an Extraordinary Meeting on 17 March to discuss its response.

#### **Food waste collections**

In line with changing government requirements for food waste collection, weekly food waste collections are now already taking place in some parts of the district, including in Heydon and The Chishills. Residents 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>

#### **Council tenant satisfaction survey**

The Housing Service has appointed M·E·L Research to carry out the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Survey with all our council tenants. Tenants should recently have received letters inviting them to complete the survey either on paper using the Freepost

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envelope included or online. I encourage all council tenants to respond to help the Housing Service deliver a high-quality service. The survey closes on 28 March.

### **Councils awarded over £5million for water saving measures**

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning – the shared planning service for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District councils – has received Government funding of over £5million to deliver part of the Greater Cambridge Water Efficiency Programme and help address water scarcity locally. The councils will use this funding to drive down demand for water in the area and offset new development by installing water saving devices in existing Council-owned buildings through a programme of retrofit work across partner councils.

### **Cambs County Council**

Record spending on roads, thousands of extra school places and support for vulnerable residents underpin Cambridgeshire County Council’s ambitious budget, approved by a majority of Councillors in Feb. By approving the 2026–29 Business Plan and Budget, Councillors have approved a legal, balanced budget that also drives investment for vital services that communities say matter most to them. The nearly £1.3 billion Business and Budget Plan includes a number of investments aligned with the council’s three new ambitions:

#### **Supporting a green and sustainable county**

To improve day to day journeys for drivers, cyclists and bus users, it has allocated an additional £20m for highway maintenance, on top of Government funding, to provide safer and more reliable roads across Cambridgeshire.

The council will also continue to provide leadership and deliver its Climate Change and Environment Strategy.

#### **Enabling full and healthy lives for all**

To support older people, adults with disabilities and families, who rely on care every day, the council is allocating £14.7m of additional funding for adult social care providers. This will help them to manage rising costs and ensure care workers are paid the Real Living Wage, improving stability and quality for those who depend on care workers for their support.

#### **Ensuring fairness and opportunity**

To help families under pressure from the cost-of-living crisis, the council is prioritising £1m to continue holiday meal vouchers for the children most in need, through to the end of summer 2026. As the Government withdraws the Household Support Fund, the council will also use its new £5m Crisis and Resilience Fund to provide a wider range of anti-poverty measures, offering practical support to households facing financial challenges.

The plan will create 3,500 new primary school places and invest £72 million over five years to increase secondary school places, including at Alconbury Weald and North-West Cambridge. It also includes £780,000 a year to run a children’s residential home in South Cambridgeshire, as well as continued funding for the Families First programme, an

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early-intervention project that helps keep more families together and is supported by the £6.7 million Children's, Families and Youth Grant. In addition, more than £1.2 million will be invested in libraries and archives over the next two years.

The plans discussed included an increase of council tax by 4.99%, the maximum permitted by Government for county councils, as is the case in nearly all councils across England, and the level assumed by Government in setting its grant allocations. A total 2% of this increase is specifically for adult social care funding. The increase will generate around £21million in additional funding and help the council continue providing the essential services people rely on. This will 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.

### **Low Income Family Tracker**

Councillors at the Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee approved procurement of a data-led system that will allow more targeted support for low-income families in order to address and prevent poverty.

The new data-led system will be delivered in collaboration with the district and city councils across Cambridgeshire and is expected to help:

- Identify missed benefits– such as those that should be claiming national benefits like Pension Credit, but are not doing so
- Increase access to Free School Meals by notifying eligible families not currently receiving this support, with the knock-on effect of also securing additional pupil premium funding for schools
- Identify geographic pockets of need at a hyper-local level to support the planning and delivery of other council services
- South Cambridgeshire District Council have already adopted such a system, and in the last 12 months has secured nearly 1,000 additional claims for residents which are worth over £500k to residents in their first year alone, with a lifetime value of nearly £4 million based on average claim lengths.

The committee unanimously approved procurement of the new system for an annual cost of between £200-£220k, for a 3-year period (for a total contract value of £600k-£660k).

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has confirmed that the full cost can be paid for using funding provided to the council by the Government's new Crisis and Resilience Fund.

Data-led systems used in other areas have shown a return on investment of over £400 for each £1 spent. This new platform will enable the council to focus on preventing residents from falling into poverty by building their financial resilience, reducing their future vulnerability and the need for subsequent more costly crisis interventions.

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Following the approval of the Business Plan and Budget for 2026-27 earlier this month, the council has committed to ensuring fairness and opportunity wherever we can by investing in targeted interventions that help move people out of poverty and build long-term financial stability and independence. Procurement of this new system is a key milestone in delivering on this ambition for the people of Cambridgeshire.

### **Highways**

728 potholes were filled in S Cambs in week 8. There are 513 out standing. We are trying to set up a highways call for Parishes March 9<sup>th</sup> 6pm. The Highways Committee agenda is here: <https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccclive/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2567/Committee/62/Default.aspx>

Peter McDonald March 2nd 2026