

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

## **Parish Council Report – October 24.**

### **South Cambs District Council**

#### **Peer Review**

A follow-up report by the Local Government Association has praised South Cambridgeshire District Council's 'strong ambition', 'good leadership' and 'innovative approaches' following a recent visit.

The return visit comes after a Corporate Peer Challenge Review by the LGA last year described the Council as being in a positive financial position – with a comprehensive and innovative response to the cost-of-living crisis. Typically, all councils have one of these reviews every five years and they always contain recommendations to help councils improve.

A total of 12 recommendations were made by the peer team last year. A return visit last month and update report, a usual part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process, shows how 10 of those recommendations are completed or well underway and two are progressing.

In Finance, peers had recommended the Council accelerates the closure of its outstanding accounts. Since their visit in late 2023, the draft accounts for each and every year up to 2023/24 have been published – meaning they are as up to date as possible. Meanwhile, a scheme to uncover further savings by close working between members of the Council's Leadership Team and service areas has identified a further £1.5 million to help meet a £3 million savings target over the next five years.

#### **Mobile Warden Scheme**

A total of £345,000 has been pledged to Mobile Warden Schemes in South Cambridgeshire for the next three years to help more elderly people stay living in their own homes for longer.

The pledge comes after the District Council partnered with Rose Regeneration to undertake an in-depth review of local schemes to understand more about how much it costs to run them and help them become more sustainable in the future.

The review is important as it has taken into consideration predicted high growth in over 65-year-olds over the next 20 years and recognises that with age comes increased risk of deteriorating health, loneliness, and feelings of isolation.

Councillors have backed a new three-year funding scheme that starts from April 2025. The funding was approved in the District Council's recent Cabinet meeting.

It ensures funding is in place for existing schemes as well as providing funding for new or expanding schemes so that more residents can be reached. The review and ongoing work has also set out a longer term 10-year plan so schemes will not need to rely so heavily on District Council funding.

There are currently 16 active Mobile Warden schemes in 49 Parishes funded by South Cambridgeshire District Council. AGE UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough run 11 of

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them, while five are run by local groups.

In addition, there's also a scheme in Girton funded by the Girton Town Charity.

Mobile Warden schemes provide a vital community-based service with significant benefits – including helping those aged over 65 remain at home instead of going into a care home and supporting them as they return home after a spell in hospital. They provide reassurance to families who live away from their older relatives, and to the clients themselves who often wouldn't otherwise get out of the house or talk to anyone for long periods of time.

Find out more about how to apply for Mobile Warden Scheme grant funding by visiting our webpage. [https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/mobilecommunity-warden-scheme#:~:text=Mobile%20and%20Community%20Warden%20Schemes%20\(sometimes](https://www.scambs.gov.uk/community-safety-and-health/health-and-wellbeing/mobilecommunity-warden-scheme#:~:text=Mobile%20and%20Community%20Warden%20Schemes%20(sometimes)

### **Cost of Living Support Update**

This has included providing 500 more people with a **free electric blanket** during the winter – to add to the 400 South Cambridgeshire residents who received either a blanket or slow cooker the winter before. The electrical products were targeted at people claiming Attendance Allowance or a certain level of Personal Independence Payment who are also receiving Council Tax Support. 90% of recipients who responded to a Council survey said they had noticed at least some difference to their energy bills – with the Council estimating that every resident who received one saved more than £33 a week. Additionally, almost all respondents said they'd noticed a difference in how warm they felt at home.

Meanwhile **Warm Hubs** – established in late 2022 to provide warm community spaces in South Cambridgeshire – evolved into Community Hubs. Run by Cambridgeshire ACRE, they have been funded largely by a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System grant. The 16 Community Hubs operate in communities across South Cambridgeshire – with three additional Hubs due to open this Autumn. They are a place where residents can receive debt advice, food aid, housing, and health services. Between February and July this year, more than 5,470 people visited these hubs.

Elsewhere a **Mobile Food Hub** – run in partnership with not-for-profit organisation Hope CIC – visits eight locations across the district on a rolling basis. The Mobile Food Hub is stocked with fresh fruit and vegetables, essential items such as canned foods, pasta, rice, cereal, and long-life milk. Personal hygiene, period, and infant products are also available, plus household cleaning items such as laundry detergent. All items are sold at below retail price, with some offered for free to help people with rising grocery prices. The initiative – which recently purchased an electric vehicle thanks to funding from the District Council's Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme – has received more than 2,000 visits from residents since it launched last summer.

Elsewhere, three local groups covering Girton, Barton and Melbourn have successfully applied to the District Council's Community Growing Grant scheme. The £500 grants support communities to grow their own food sustainably. A South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Food Network has also been established, linking together all the foodbanks in the

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district. The network is now working to share surplus food to reduce waste.

A marketing campaign to encourage residents to claim benefits they are entitled ran between November last year and the end of January this year – helping to treble the number of visits to the Council’s cost-of-living support website pages.

The report also covers other updates from recent months. This includes the supply of 263 emergency food parcels to residents as an emergency last resort and cost-of-living support sessions for community groups and professionals and volunteers working with vulnerable people.

### **New Software**

Cabinet members also heard about the next steps as part of the response. This will include the purchase of innovative software to better target support and advice to residents on a low income in more of a preventative way, and the upcoming roll-out of free period products to those who may not be able to afford them.

### **Cambs County Council**

#### **Highways Committee Oct 1<sup>st</sup>**

The LHI results were published with Oct 1<sup>st</sup> papers.

[https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc\\_live/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2347/Committee/62/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx](https://cambridgeshire.cmis.uk.com/ccc_live/MeetingsCalendar/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/2347/Committee/62/SelectedTab/Documents/Default.aspx)

Im afraid we didnt secure many schemes this time around. There is the possibility to take some forward as PFHI (Private Funded Initiatives). However several 20 mph are being taken forward e.g. in Whittlesford and GCP Greenway schemes in Shepreth.

### **Cambridgeshire Net Zero**

Cambridgeshire County Council is on track to reach its organisational net zero goal for its direct emissions by 2030, councillors on the Environment & Green Investment Committee heard (Thursday, 3 October) as the organisation reported its annual carbon footprint.

This year’s report shows that direct emissions from the county council’s own assets are down 42 per cent compared to 2018-19 figures. This marks the sixth time the organisation’s carbon impact has been outlined to politicians.

Over the last financial year, the county council as an organisation has been directly responsible for less than 1000 tonnes of tCO<sub>2</sub>e. ‘tCO<sub>2</sub>e’ means ‘tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent’ and is the formal measure for greenhouse gases (GHGs) which make up environmentally harmful emissions.

The carbon footprint report also estimates the Council’s indirect carbon emissions created through its supply chain and operations. The county council provides a range of essential services like education, road maintenance and waste disposal which involve a wide range of businesses and suppliers. It is estimated that indirect emissions, excluding the rural estate, were around 111,000 tCO<sub>2</sub>e – 39 per cent lower over the last financial year than in the

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baseline year of 2018-19.

The ongoing reduction in direct emissions is due to a programme of retrofitting works and low carbon heating projects which has involved new insulation, LED lighting and other measures introduced in many of our buildings. As well as fossil fuel-based heating systems (like gas or oil boilers) replaced with low-carbon air source heat pumps. Retrofit works have taken place over the last year at council buildings including March Community Centre, Tennyson Lodge and St Neots library bringing the total number of buildings retrofitted up to 25.

The council buys electricity through a zero-carbon tariff for all its buildings and street-lighting. The authority also generates clean electricity on some buildings from on-site solar panels.

### **Quality of Life Survey**

The County Council has published the results of this year's Quality of Life survey, which is commissioned from national independent market research agency Think Insights. This year the council has carried out this work in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge Ahead. The results will provide valuable feedback for our partners to use.

In addition to this survey this year we have also engaged with some specific groups from our communities, including those with lived experience of homelessness, the criminal justice system and drug or alcohol dependency as well as those under the age of 18. A general public online survey, allowing any resident to take part, ran alongside this other work so we have a really rich picture of how people feel across Cambridgeshire.

A snapshot of results

- 72% of residents have high or very high levels of happiness. The average happiness score this year was 7.21, higher than the national average at 7.0.
- Residents continue to feel positively about their local community; 85% feel safe and 75% feel they belong.
- Fewer residents report struggling with mental health this year (37% down to 29%) and a lower proportion report issues with physical health (40% down to 31%).
- Significant numbers of young people (43% of 25–34-year-olds and 40% of 18–24-year-olds) continue to be more likely to report mental health struggles.
- The proportion of residents reporting that they often feel lonely remains higher than national data, at 31% of residents.
- Younger residents are again more likely to report loneliness (53% of 18-24 year olds).
- Cost of living remains residents' highest concern, with 87% of residents concerned this year.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/quality-of-life-survey-2024>

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Peter McDonald Oct 6th 2024