

District Councillors' Report: March 2025

New Corporate Plan for South Cambs District Council:

Full Council meeting on 25th February agreed the District Council's [new Corporate Plan up to 2030](#), which sets out the Council's vision for the next five years and its priorities for achieving that vision.

The new priorities, as agreed by Council taking account of hundreds of responses during last year's consultation, are:

- **Healthy and supported communities** - Supporting and engaging with our communities is key to tackling the challenges we face as a district. Our diversity is our strength and helping everyone live freely and independently is essential to promoting healthy and supported communities.
- **Sustainable homes and vibrant places** - A home is more than a roof over your head, it is the foundation on which people build their lives. An affordable home is essential for people to live happy, fulfilling lives. In light of the housing crisis, we are committed to strengthening our communities by delivering sustainable, affordable homes and vibrant places to live.
- **Being green to our core** - Being green is at the heart of everything we do. We're tackling the climate and ecological crises head-on, ensuring our district is ready for the challenges of climate change.
- **Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire** - Already recognised as a nationally significant area for development, helping local businesses thrive is key to the development of our district - bringing new jobs and opportunities into people's communities.
- **Financially secure and fit for the future** - We have a duty to provide high quality cost-efficient services. Being open, transparent, and inclusive and letting evidence guide our decisions is critical to putting residents first.

The full plan can be found [here](#)

The next 12 months

A Corporate Action Plan for the coming year was also agreed. The Action Plan outlines what specific actions the Council will take in order to achieve its aspirations set out in the Corporate Plan.

One major project will be the beginning of construction work, next month, of the Northstowe Phase One Community Centre - named the "Unity Centre" by the local community. This is one of several community buildings the Council is constructing at Northstowe, and is expected to open in early 2026. It will be equipped with solar panels, ground source heat pump and a sustainable super-insulated timber frame. New websites are being launched this month for the Council, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning and Greater Cambridge Shared Waste, following the successful introduction of the Council's first public-facing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on its website last year.

The Council will continue with its cost-of-living support for residents, and will be [rolling out targeted initiatives](#) aimed at supporting single-parent households, pensioners, and families affected by benefit caps.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Waste service is planning for the roll out of a new food waste collection service to residents in 2026.

There have also been additions to the Council's plans for the year ahead following recent discussions between Councillors. This includes purchasing an extra vehicle and employing another member of staff to support the Council's Enviro-Crime team

as it tackles fly-tipping. There will also be additional resource to combat and raise awareness of fraud, plus further support to strengthen ties with parish and town councils.

Balancing the budget

The South Cambridgeshire District Council budget for 2025/26 was approved by Councillors at the February meeting. The Council continues as one of the lowest taxing authorities in the country, with a below inflation increase of 2.99% or less than 10p a week for a band D home, bringing the charge for this band to £175.40 for the SCDC part of your Council Tax bill. The total cost of running the council in 2025/26 is £84 million, the net cost of providing services is £28 million and we will need £33.5 million from taxation; these figures are broadly the same as this financial year despite the increase in costs. This neutral position has been accomplished by productivity improvements including the use of AI, while improving or maintaining service delivery.

Less than half (£12m) of the District Council's annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. Other sources to make up the difference being £18 million from Business Rates and £3 million in grants from the Government. In addition, the council is expecting to receive nearly £8 million in commercial rent and interest from loans and fees and charges mainly from large scale planning applications. £3.5 million will be transferred into the council's reserves to meet a predicted deficit in coming years.

South Cambridgeshire District Council's Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr John Williams, said: "Balancing the books in local government today continues to be incredibly challenging but we are proud to be a financially-sound Council. This is a huge achievement given that costs continue to rise due to inflation, demand for services is increasing, and central funding is shrinking. We aim to make the very best use of every pound we receive or generate ourselves."

Somewhere to live - housing

The Budget process at SCDC includes the Housing Revenue Account, which covers the cost of repairing, improving, and building new council homes.

SCDC has over 2,000 families on the housing waiting list so building more council homes for rent is a priority. We have 5,815 existing council homes, up from 5,705 last year and the Council has a target to deliver at least 75 new homes a year. We also want to improve the standard of our existing homes, particularly their energy efficiency.

These ongoing and new build housing costs cannot by law be subsidised by Council Tax or Business Rates. They are met (apart from Right to Buy receipts, S106 funding from housing developers and Government grants) by our council tenants through their rents, or the rent received from other housing assets such as council garages. Council house rents will rise by 2.7% bringing the average rent to £129.98 a week, closely aligned with the overall 2024 rate of inflation.

Draft local plan timetable:

In December, Government confirmed the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and also the transitional date for plans under the current plan-

making system to be submitted. The Deputy Prime Minister (and Secretary of State for Housing), Angela Rayner, sent a letter to all Local Planning Authorities requiring them to review and update their timetables for getting an up to date plan in place. Cabinet has proposed that the draft revised Local Plan timetable agreed in November be confirmed as the formal Local Development Scheme. Formal stages of GCLP timetable will be Draft Plan Consultation (Reg 18) in Autumn/Winter 2025; Proposed Submission Plan Consultation (Reg 19) during 2026 and submission to Secretary of State for independent Examination (Reg 22) by December 2026. More about changes to the NPPF and the revised house building targets can be found at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/news/councils-provide-update-on-planning-targets-for-housebuilding-in-greater-cambridge>

Grant Funding Opportunity - Funding for public EV chargers

One in five new cars is now an electric vehicle and the demand for good access to public charging points is growing. Funding available from the Council's Electric Vehicle charging grant has increased significantly from £5,000, to up to £12,000 per project. This grant is open to parish councils, community groups and charities for public EV chargers in car parks associated with community buildings and village halls. Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis and is open for the remainder of the 2024/25 financial year. We cannot guarantee the funding will be available into next financial year, so those interested in applying need to get in touch soon. For more information about this grant, please visit the website. If you would like to know about community EV charging more generally, please visit Electric vehicle charging - South Cambs District Council, where you can find a video by Steeple Morden Parish Council, explaining how they installed their EVCP. You can also contact the Council on evcp.grant@scambs.gov.uk

Waste Service Update - Blue bin recycling contract

Following a thorough public sector procurement process, Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service (GCSWS) is finalising a new contract for blue bin recycling processing. From March 3rd, a new provider - Re-Gen Waste Management Ltd - takes over the processing of our recyclable materials.

Importantly, residents will experience no changes to their recycling service. The same items can continue to be placed in blue bins, and collections will remain unchanged. While the materials will now be processed at Re-Gen's facility in Northern Ireland rather than locally at Waterbeach, this decision was made after careful evaluation of all options, with Re-Gen offering the best combination of cost-effectiveness, processing quality, and environmental compliance. Materials will initially be consolidated at a Waterbeach transfer station before transport in bulk to Northern Ireland, where they will be sorted and sold to established UK-based processors and manufacturers. Most recyclable materials will continue to be processed within the UK - currently 82% overall and 100% for plastics – maintaining SCDC's commitment to domestic recycling.

The new arrangement includes several positive features. Re-Gen's state-of-the-art facility uses advanced robotics technology that can achieve a 99% recycling rate, which is higher than current levels. The company has committed to sustainable practices, including plans to use more environmentally friendly fuels and establish a new facility in the Midlands during the contract term. To minimise environmental

impact, Re-Gen will coordinate transport with their existing operations, using return journeys of vehicles already delivering materials across the UK.

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March 2025