

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 Report February 2025

South Cambs Council

Local government reorganisation

On 16 December the government published a White Paper called English Devolution which included a push towards conversion to unitary councils in two-tier authority areas such as Cambridgeshire. In this region our two tiers are Cambridgeshire County Council and the district councils. The White Paper included a requirement for local authorities to submit proposals for reorganisation at the end of March. A letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has been promised to define the expectations from government in more detail. In the meantime there have of course been many conversations between the various branches of local government. The government has indicated that it will be adopting a phased approach to this reorganisation with an initial focus on areas where the current system is clearly failing. On this basis, and given the focus on delivering local growth, it seems unlikely that Cambridgeshire will be selected for early reorganisation. However, little is known for certain at this stage.

Increased funding for electric vehicle chargers

The funding available from the Council's electric vehicle (EV) charging grant has increased from £5,000 to £12,000 per project. The grant is open to parish councils, community groups and charities and can be used to fund the installation of EV chargers in car parks associated with community buildings. <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/climate-emergency-and-nature/grants-funding-and-community-support/electric-vehicle-charge-point-grant/>

Green bin collection

The green bins will be collected once in February (on 4 February) alongside the blue recycling bins, with a blue-bin-only collection taking place on 18 February. From the beginning of March, they will be emptied fortnightly again.

Council housing and its allocation

South Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for around 5600 Council houses across the district. The Council is building new housing stock at a rate of around 75 houses per year to help rebuild the social housing supply that has historically been in decline. This year, over £1 million is being spent on improving the insulation and heating for existing Council houses. You can read more about the Council's work on improving and managing Council houses in the Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders.

The allocation of Council houses is managed by Home-Link, a shared service that covers Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk. The allocation policies are designed to allow people seeking social housing to exercise choice in deciding where they wish to live and in the type of property they prefer, while prioritising by housing need and making the best use of the housing available. They aim to assist applicants with the highest assessed need, to be fair and transparent, to support vulnerable applicants, to promote social inclusion and to foster sustainable communities. They must also comply with all relevant legislation. Anyone can apply for Council housing at www.home-link.org.uk

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or via a paper form. The Council will then write to applicants to inform them whether or not they have been accepted onto the housing register. Due to the high demand for housing in this area, acceptance depends on having a connection to the local area. Once accepted, people are assigned to a band (A–D) according to their assessed housing need. Anyone on the register can then bid for homes through the Home-Link scheme. Housing is allocated based on the band of the applicants and the time they have been on the register. The lettings policy can be read [here](#).

Four-day working week consultation

The Council began a consultation on the four-day working week on 27 January which runs for eight weeks until 23 March. The aim is to gather data from residents and businesses on how the quality of the Council's services has changed since January 2023, when the trial of the new working practices began. This will be used alongside the other extensive sources of data on the Council's costs and performance to decide the next steps for this working practice. The aim of the trial was to improve value for money in the light of the difficulties in recruiting and retaining permanent staff, especially in the Planning service.

<https://engage.scams.gov.uk/en-GB/folders/four-day-week>

Cambs County Council

Bus Franchising

Bus franchising took the next step with the report to the Transport & Infrastructure Committee. Item 7.

<https://democracy.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=138&Mid=126&Ver=4>

A505 Study

As previously circulated there is a new report on the next steps for the A505. Item 12.

OxCam Corridor and Super-Cluster

The Chancellor announced a re-hash of the OxCam corridor which is to be Chaired by Lord Vallance and I attach a link to the report.

<https://oxcamsupercluster.publicfirst.co.uk/Oxford%20-%20Cambridge%20Scenario%20Modelling-2.pdf>

LED Street Lighting

Work started in earnest in the New Year to replace the majority of our existing streetlighting with newer, more efficient LED (light emitting diode) lights – this can cut energy consumption from street lighting by more than half.

Cambridgeshire County Council is responsible for more than 53,500 streetlights across the county, approximately 47,500 of which will be replaced by LED replacements under this scheme.

Reducing the existing carbon usage of streetlights is vital to achieving our goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and in addition to the environmental benefit, the installation of

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energy-saving LED lighting will help to significantly reduce future spending on streetlighting.

It will take around two years to replace all 47,500 streetlights with LEDs; we're expecting the work to be finished by May 2026.

Electricity for the county's streetlighting is purchased through the supplier 'EDF Energy' and it's purchased on a tariff which guarantees that it's from 100% renewable sources such as solar, wind and hydro.

LED technology is extremely reliable and there should be very few instances of streetlights failing or not coming on at night. The new streetlights are designed for 20 years of continuous life, with no maintenance (other than cleaning) required.

The LED streetlights have been rigorously tested to ensure they provide a similar level of brightness on the road to that provided by the older, less energy efficient streetlights. In rural areas, a 'softer' white light will be used, which is slightly less energy-efficient but is better for wildlife, including bats.

The LED streetlights emit light in a more concentrated way directly towards the road. This means that in a residential area, whilst the road is lit, other places such as verges and driveways, which were previously incidentally lit by the old streetlights, will now likely appear darker. Ensuring that the new streetlights do not significantly illuminate areas beyond the street itself will reduce light pollution and is one way that energy efficiency has been improved.

You can find out more about our streetlight replacement programme [on our website](#).

Information on how to report a street lighting fault, and likely repair times are on our website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/streetlighting

Frequent A & E Patients

A new specialist team is helping to reduce avoidable visits to Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Known as the High Impact Use team (HIU), the service is a partnership between NHS Cambridgeshire & Peterborough and Cambridgeshire County Council (who host the service) on behalf of the Integrated Care System (ICS). This service helps those who often attend A&E for reasons that extend beyond medical interventions and for needs which would be better met by other professionals.

Since its launch in October 2024, the HIU team found that many of the frequent visitors to A&E at Peterborough City, Hinchingsbrooke, and Addenbrooke's Hospitals were experiencing issues such as loneliness, financial problems, and poor physical and mental health, rather than medical emergencies that require urgent hospital care.

The HIU team works alongside partners to build a trusted relationship with each person identified as requiring non-clinical support through their frequent attendances at A&E, creating an open, person-centred approach to help meet the individuals' needs.

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The service is provided to people aged 18 and over and who are registered with a GP within
Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Royston.

Peter McDonald Feb 5th 2025