

# South Cambridgeshire District Council – Caldecote Ward

(comprises the Parishes of Caldecote, Childerley, Kingston, Bourn, Longstowe & Little Gransden)

## Councillor's Monthly Report – November 2023

This report of previous month events is for all the Ward, so please be aware that some of the content may not be relevant to your particular Parish.

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### General

Please contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints to do with SCDC services. These are housing need, housing repairs for council tenants, planning, benefits, council tax, bin collection, environmental health issues etc. Don't fight on your own. I am available to help you to get the best outcome possible for your situation.

Check out articles on my facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/itsCouncillorTumi> and my blog <http://www.TumiHawkins.org.uk>. What I post on there is my view and not LibDem or South Cambs official policy unless I state that it is.

### Weather Issues - Flooding advice and sandbags

Following the heavy rain in October, the Council is reminding residents about the importance of being prepared for possible flooding in advance, before further significant rainfall occurs as we go into the winter months. This is especially the case for residents whose properties have flooded before. **The most effective time to act is in advance of rainfall – rather than during or after it.**

- The flooding page of SCDC website at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/flooding> has a useful list of things residents can do in advance of rainfall under the 'Be prepared for flooding' section. This includes signing-up for Flood Warnings, using the Government's Flood Information Service to check if a property is at risk of flooding and preparing a flood plan.
- It also has a list to ascertain what would need to be reported where in the event of a flood.

As a reminder, **the Council does not provide a sandbag service to residents.** Generally, it is the responsibility of residents to protect their own properties from flooding. **This is why it is important that any residents who think they may need sandbags source them in advance of bad weather.** However, we do have a limited supply of sandbags that can be delivered to domestic properties that are at imminent risk of flooding only, aimed at our most vulnerable residents and only intended for people who have no friends, family or neighbours who can assist them fast enough or in advance. Those residents can call on 01954 713 000 or email [streets@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:streets@scambs.gov.uk) during normal work hours. Outside of normal office hours and an emergency they can contact the SCDC out of hours number for Environmental Health Emergencies on 01253 501 055. In this type of case, the council can only provide a maximum of 5 per household to ensure fairness of provision.

### Planning Updates

#### Reminder: Statement of Community Involvement – Consultation 18October – 29 November 2023

As I stated last month, South Cambs wants everyone in our communities to understand and get involved in how our area is developed. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) of 2019 <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/about-us/statement-of-community-involvement/> sets out the process. The SCI has been reviewed and updated and the Planning service is keen to find out from communities if all the types of engagements reasonably possible have been captured, and is

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carrying out a consultation on the updated SCI from 18 October to 29 November <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/about-us/news/tell-us-how-you-want-to-be-involved-in-the-planning-process-across-greater-cambridge/>. Two public events have already taken place. Anyone who wants printed copies of the consultation can call 01954 713000 or 01223 457000 to request one. I encourage everyone to read the updated SCI and give your feedback. Feel free to contact me and ask questions or clarifications.

### **Cambridge 2040**

This is the Michael Gove grand plan to build 200,000 houses in the Cambridge area between now and 2040. Mr Peter Freeman (Homes England Chief Exec) whom he has selected to head the Cambridge Delivery (super)Group has started to have meetings with the main stakeholders in Greater Cambridge to understand the area better and the work that is already being done here.

A Water Group has also been set up to look at the solution to the water challenge that the area faces. The Cambridge 2040 plan is going nowhere if the water issue is not resolved.

## **Governance/HR**

### **4-Day Week (4DW) Trial Updates**

The Minister Lee Rowley continues to make decisions without hearing the real facts of the 4DW trial. He has refused to accept the invitation of the Council Leader for a face-to-face meeting with the Council to hear himself directly just how things are being run and the benefits that have accrued since the original trial. He has also written to the Leader of Cambridge City council to stop the trial (through the Waste Service) and he has responded to say no, that the City supports the ongoing trial.

So Mr Rowley MP has forced Whitehall to issue “Government guidance” instructing councils not to take up 4DW because he “thinks” it will not be value for money. No evidence, just the misrepresentations by the Conservative donor funded campaign group that calls itself the taxpayers alliance. Go figure.

I remind residents that this is a **trial project** that has not involved change of terms & conditions or required budget change, so no consultation required. As has already been made public, the results will be collated at the end, and presented to councillors at full council to debate before a decision is made on the future step to take.

Ironically, the HM Revenue & Customs service, a Government Department is introducing 3-day week for its staff for part of the year, with a 1% pay increase, in order to improve its customer service levels. Go figure.

The South Cambs offices remains open 5 days a week, and the Contact centre is open longer hours than before the trial. The out of hours emergency response officers are available 24/7 for issues such as homelessness and dangerous structures. Our target of answering calls is within 100 seconds, it is a stretch but the call centre performs well compared to industry standards. A new webchat service has also just been launched which residents will find useful. You can find more information on the trial on the webpage <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/four-day-working-week-trial>

The performance across the council continues to be good, some are maintained and others improving. The Q1 2023-24 period (April – June) was presented and discussed at the Cabinet in October. Check them out yourself:

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- Main paper is at <https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s132787/2023-24%20Quarter%20One%20Performance%20Report.pdf>
  - Appendix A-Key Performance report is at <https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s132788/Appendix%20A%20-%20Key%20Performance%20Indicator%20Report.pdf>
  - Appendix B Business Plan progress report is at <https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s132788/Appendix%20A%20-%20Key%20Performance%20Indicator%20Report.pdf>

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like further clarification.

## **Infrastructure – Cheaper Reliable Broadband**

Earlier this month, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) published information on what it calls social tariffs. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/low-cost-broadband-and-mobile-phone-tariffs> . These are cheaper discounted broadband and mobile deals for people claiming Universal Credit, Pension Credit and some other benefits. Ofcom has more details on its website at <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/social-tariffs> of those eligible for the social tariffs. DSIT are supporting the latest Help for Households campaign starting 16 October 2023, and the next cost-of-living payment window of 31 October to 19 November 2023. The Help for Households campaign homepage at <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk/> brings together over 40 support schemes that the public may be able to access depending on their eligibility. Please check out these sites to see what help you can access to support you through this difficult cost of living crisis time.

## **Housing**

### **Draft Homeless Strategy out to consultation**

The Council will be consulting on its new draft Homeless Strategy (2023-2028) between now and the 5th of January. A review of homelessness within the district has been completed, which looks at the numbers and trends relating to homelessness within the district as well as the factors affecting this. This helps to inform the Homeless Strategy, which sets out how the Council plans to respond to and tackle homelessness within the district over the next five year period, with the priorities coming under two main headings:

- Homeless prevention, early intervention and support and,
- To provide suitable housing options.

The Homeless Review and Homeless Strategy consultation documents can be found on our website <https://www.scams.gov.uk/homeless-strategy>. Feedback can be provided through the website or alternatively please feel free to send any comments to Sue Carter at [susan.carter@scams.gov.uk](mailto:susan.carter@scams.gov.uk)

## **Environmental Services**

### **Bin Collection on New Routes**

The new bin collection rota started on 18 September 2023 and continues to go well. The Waste Service continues to consistently collect over 99% of the bins due. Nothing new there then! I remind you that if your bin is missed for any reason, please report at 3.30pm on the website at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/recycling-and-bins/report-a-missed-household-collection/> and leave it out as arrangements will be made to return to collect as soon as possible.

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## Community and Wellbeing

### Action for Happiness

The Action for Happiness theme for November at <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendar> is **New Ways November**. This month's focus is "Try Something New". It uses the Ten Keys to Happier Living at <https://actionforhappiness.org/10-keys>. Have a look at the daily calendar which has some really good ideas for action – so far so good.

### SCDC Help for residents through the cost-of-living crisis

Last month, I reported on the SCDC initiative to help with the cost-of-living crisis by offering a free electric blanket / electric throw, which cost a fraction to run than central heating. Four other areas of support are Benefits, Household Support Fund, Food support and Saving energy and money. Please go to the website at to [www.scams.gov.uk/cost-of-living](http://www.scams.gov.uk/cost-of-living) to see what is on offer and how to claim. If you have questions or need help applying then email [duty.communities@scams.gov.uk](mailto:duty.communities@scams.gov.uk) .

### Community Chest Grant funding

There is still funding available for community projects through the [Community Chest Grant](#). As we approach winter, there is available funding for cost-of-living related projects, of which over £17,000 remains! The fund can be used for start-up and capital costs and if any community group would like assistance in completing an application, they can email [community.chest@scams.gov.uk](mailto:community.chest@scams.gov.uk)

### Community Hubs – Village Agents job advert

SCDC has renewed our contract with Cambridgeshire ACRE to continue the delivery of Community Hubs (previously called Warm Hubs) until October 2025, with funding from the Integrated Care Board.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is now advertising for three 'Village Agent' job roles as part of this project. The Village Agents team will provide help, support and solutions for the health and social care needs of members of the community, by engaging with local neighbourhood volunteers, health and care sector, statutory and voluntary organisations.

It is hoped that the successful applicants will already be members of the community that they serve as part of the role, so if you know anyone that you think would be suitable to apply, pass this on and encourage them to apply. Call Cambridgeshire Acre on 01353 860850 or email [enquiries@camsacre.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@camsacre.org.uk)

### Local Climate Action Conference

Reminder that South Cambridgeshire District Council is holding its first **Local Climate Action Conference** on **Tuesday November 28** to tie in with COP28. It is taking place at Cottenham Village Hall, is free to attend and everyone is welcome. We have speakers from parish, district and county councils as well as from local nature action groups. We hope as many local people as possible are able to attend to see how we can work together to help the district become net zero by 2050.

- Find out more by reading our news article at <https://www.scams.gov.uk/cottenham-conference-celebrates-local-climate-action/>
- Or visit the Eventbrite link to book your free place <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/south-cambridgeshire-district-council-local-climate-action-conference-tickets-731064271917>

### Tax-Free Childcare account

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is reminding families today to open a Tax-Free Childcare account to save on their yearly childcare bills. Families can use their Tax-Free Childcare account to

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pay for any approved childcare including holiday clubs, breakfast and after school clubs, child minders and nurseries.

The scheme provides working families, with children up to the age of 11, or 16 if their child has a disability, up to £2,000 a year per child or £4,000 a year if their child is disabled. For every £8 paid into a Tax-Free Childcare account, families automatically receive the government top up of £2. Families can save up to £500 every three months for each child or £1,000 if their child is disabled. You can find more details at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/save-up-to-2000-a-year-on-childcare-costs-for-your-little-pumpkins>

Parents are encouraged to go to <https://www.gov.uk/tax-free-childcare> to register and start saving today. Very helpfully, HMRC has produced a Tax-Free Childcare guide for parents at <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/providers/guidance-and-resources/guidance-zone/parent-guide-to-tax-free-childcare/> which explains the reasons and benefits for signing up to the scheme. I encourage parents to check it out and take advantage of this scheme especially in these tough times.

## Diary Dates

Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023: SCDC Christmas Market at Cambourne Village College.

## Casework

Please do feel free to contact me with comments, questions, problems, reports, suggestions or complaints to do with SCDC services. I will help as best I can

You will find the current and past reports on my blog at <https://tumihawkins.org.uk/caldecote-ward/reports/monthly-reports/2022-23-monthly-reports/>. Feel free to read, share and/or download.

*Tumi*

Tumi Hawkins  
1 November 2023

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