

District Councillors' Report to Dry Drayton Parish Council, March 2025

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This month we would like to comment on South Cambridgeshire District Council's (SCDC's) new Corporate Plan that was discussed at the Full Council meeting on 25th February 2025. Council also discussed the 2025-2026 budget. We have some news about LIFT (low income family tracker) that identifies where benefits are not being claimed and where needs are greatest. We would also like to remind Councillors and residents of the SCDC consultation on the four day working week.

A new corporate plan

SCDC has been setting out the future aims of the Council and the Budget with the aspiration to 'create a better district to the benefit of everyone in our communities' whilst recognising 'the many challenges that face the district and will continue to work to address them'.

The new priorities presented at the Council meeting:

- **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.

Council Leader, Cllr Bridget Smith, said: "This plan sets out our vision for South Cambridgeshire and the five key priorities that will drive us forward. These priorities will underpin everything we do as a Council and represent our commitment to action, to partnership, and to delivering real, positive change for everyone who lives and works here. As we embark on this next chapter in our district's history, we do so with renewed ambition and energy. By working together - with our residents, businesses, and partners - we will continue to make South Cambridgeshire a fantastic place for all residents to live, work, and grow."

The next 12 months

A Corporate Action Plan was also agreed that outlines what specific actions the Council will take in order to achieve its aspirations. For example, one major project for the forthcoming year will be the beginning of construction work, next month, of the Northstowe Phase One Community Centre - named the "Unity Centre" by the local community.

The Unity Centre is one of several community buildings the Council is constructing at Northstowe. It is expected to open in early 2026 - featuring a spacious multi-use hall, a playtime messy room, meeting rooms, provision for a cafe and a landscape courtyard with bespoke artwork inspired by Northstowe's history. The Centre will be equipped with solar panels, ground source heat pump and sustainable super-insulated timber frame.

The Council will also 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.

Balancing the budget

The Council's budget – which sets out how all the work the Council does will be funded – was also approved by Councillors at the Council meeting on 25th February 2025.

Most of the Council Tax that SCDC collects is on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, parish and town councils and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, to support the bus service. Less than half of SCDC's annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. Other funding sources include some outside of the Council's control, such as Business Rates and grants, whilst funding is also generated from investments.

An increase in Council Tax for the average band D home was agreed as £5.09. This will help ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered effectively. It means the average Band D home charge for SCDC will be £175.40 per year from April, keeping SCDC in the bottom quartile of District Councils for Council Tax charges.

Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)

The Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT) is software that layers multiple datasets held within the Council, alongside some external datasets, and applies modelling to provide insights down to a household level. Over seventy Local Authorities in England, including Cambridge City Council, have already purchased a license and have used it to effectively support low-income residents in a more proactive and preventative manner, likely saving the Council money later through reduced crisis support. SCDC has purchased a licence and appointed an officer to oversee its application. There is a work programme for 2025 proposed and the team is open to requests for assistance from officers, members and external partners including Parish Councils and Village Charities.

We are seeing significant results with more precise targeting of initiatives and financial benefits to families that may not have been drawing down their benefits.

Four-day week consultation

Until 23rd March 2025, people can share their views on the quality of SCDC's services during its trial of the four-day working week. It can be accessed here: <https://www.scams.gov.uk/4DW> . Any who prefer a paper copy can request one here: communications@scams.gov.uk or by calling 01954 713000. The consultation is designed to allow residents to comment on the service they received during the trial and the information gathered during the consultation will help SCDC councillors to decide on the next steps.

Local Plan: Site submission update

In February, SCDC and Cambridge City Council asked landowners, developers and site promoters for an update on site submissions as part of the preparation of the [Greater Cambridge Local Plan](#). Since 2019, the councils have received details of about 700 sites through the 'Call for Sites' process, where interested parties have submitted sites for potential allocation in the new Local Plan. Officers have assessed these sites, and more, but have not been registering any further sites or additional

information on existing sites since May 2022 in order to complete assessments and manage the flow of information.

Ahead of the proposed consultation on the draft Local Plan this autumn, the councils have launched a three-week update exercise where promoters can submit new sites or updated information, so planning colleagues will have the most up to date information. This latest part of the process was launched on Friday 14th February and will close on Friday 7th March 2025

This process will help speed up Plan making and is a normal feature of the process. The planning service will publish any new sites or information received during the summer, with any assessments published in the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment alongside the draft Local Plan.

*Corinne Garvie
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2nd March 2025*