

# Joint South Cambs District & County Council Report – October 25

## Local Government Reorganisation

### **What is it?**

The government wants to reorganise local government and has set out the rules for the process, such as the desired size of the new unitary authorities that will replace district and county councils. One element of the rules is that the new unitary authorities should follow the boundaries of existing districts.

### **Why are there three options?**

That creates a few options of “reshuffling” the existing district and city councils into new unitary authorities. Different administrations within Cambridgeshire have different views of what will work best, and therefore several business cases are being prepared to be put forward to the government.

From the perspective of someone living in South Cambridgeshire, the options are:

Option A: Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire form the new unitary authority.

Option B: Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire.

Option C: Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.

The County Council is working on Option A, while South Cambs District Council is working on Option B.

### **What is happening now?**

A new survey focused on Option B has now been launched by South Cambs. The previous engagement survey focused on Option A has now closed.

### **Why should I take part?**

Importantly, the different options have different strengths and weaknesses, and in the end, it'll be for government to decide which option will be implemented. However, for a chance of a good decision, it is important that all business cases are as well-founded as possible. For that reason, it's important that residents consider sharing their views with those who are preparing the business cases:

SCDC survey: <https://engage.scambs.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/future-councils>

## Police meeting

We had the chance to meet the local police constable and PCSO. They have looked after our local neighbourhoods for many years, but the team for South Cambridgeshire has shrunk from over 20 to less than 10, looking after 135 villages and towns. At the same time, pressure on response policing means that many neighbourhood shifts are lost when the officers are called on to assist with response policing.

## Highways

The reorganisation of Highways has now taken effect, with a Highways Maintenance Manager and Officer now responsible for highways in Whaddon. Aurora, the new highways asset management system with improved public interface, has also been launched.

We've had an introduction to the new system, and we hope that this will improve highways management and maintenance as well as communication with those who report highway faults.

We are able to request reports of outstanding issues for each Parish. We would like to support officers by decluttering Aurora so they can focus where it matters most. Clerk and councillors, please drop us a line by email if you notice faults that can be cleared from the system, and please continue to use Report It to report new issues:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/roadworks-and-faults>

## Opening up the Ivy Farm Bridge route over the A505 – Can you help? (letter writing instructions)

Efforts are underway to bring into use an existing bridge over the A505, between Bassingbourn and Royston.

Ivy Farm Bridge – which lands in Royston between Aldi and McDonalds – is an agricultural bridge owned by Hertfordshire County Council. HCC would like to make it available for public active travel use; to do so would require creating a new right of way over agricultural land in Bassingbourn, connecting footpaths along the Ashwell Stret to the bridge. The idea is to create bridleway status which would permit cycle use.

Opening the bridge would mean that people in Bassingbourn and nearby villages could access the many local facilities in Royston without needing to drive, while those in Royston could safely access more of the countryside. The project is currently stalled due to a lack engagement by representatives of the Bassingbourn landowner, Mr Anders Holch Povlsen, a major UK landowner with local connections.

**We believe that a constructive letter-writing campaign to Mr Povlsen highlighting opportunities for children and young people, could help persuade him to permit access to/from the bridge. Schools in Bassingbourn and Royston are supporting this initiative – and your help is needed too!**

If you would be willing to write a letter, please email it to [adam.bostanci@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:adam.bostanci@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or let us know if you like to provide anything on paper, for example children's drawings. Your letter could start with **“Dear Mr Povlsen, I'd love to be able to use the Ivy Farm Bridge so that...”**

We have included key points below, but please include your own reasons – feel free to get creative too!

- There is currently no safe active travel route between Bassingbourn and Royston.
- The current footpath takes pedestrians onto the A505 itself, where people tend to run across.

- There is a bridge over the A505, the Ivy Farm Bridge, but it's against the law to access it.
- Hertfordshire County Council, who own the bridge, are trying to open this route.
- To do this, they need your permission to cross a small section of land.
- We would be so grateful for your support to help make this happen.

Any emails received will be gathered together and posted to Mr Polvsen at the end of October.

If you have any questions, please let us know. Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Adam Bostanci (County Councillor for Bassingbourn)

Susan van de Ven (District Councillor for Bassingbourn)

## Flags

Most (or all) of the flags have now been removed from Melbourn and Kneesworth.

In response to numerous emails received from members of the public, expressing concern and asking questions about what is permitted and how the situation would be managed, we have posted the following on Facebook. It is worth repeating that *“While some have found the flags a source of pride, others have strongly complained to us that they find them intimidating.”*

The County Council has stated in the press: *“Our highways team follow a standard process when things are placed on our highways. They are considered as damage or could be a safety issue so will be removed. We’ll continue to monitor the situation along with our partners.”*

Flags attached to lamp posts contravene S. 132 of the Highways Act 1980, but the police are leaving enforcement to the county council. Anyone interested in the dos and don'ts of flag flying should consult the government's *Flying Flags: A Plain English Guide*.

*‘All flag flying is subject to some standard conditions’ according to the UK government Flying Flags: A Plain English Guide. This includes how and where flags may be displayed – invariably on fixed flag poles, and then with various specifications. Local Planning and Highways Authorities are the local bodies responsible for compliance.*

*Displaying flags on Highways property is not permitted on grounds of safety and must be removed by the Local Authority.*

*The Cambridgeshire Report It website is the place to log any concerns about unauthorized signs, flags or other items attached to Highways land or street furniture.*

*The Guide describes the emotive power of flags and their potential to strengthen community cohesion.*

*The widespread display of national flags in recent weeks, including in Bassingbourn-cum-Kneesworth, has certainly been emotive; but from the correspondence we've received it cannot be described as cohesive. While some have found the flags a source of pride, others have strongly complained to us that they find them intimidating.*

*Thanks to those who have been in touch with suggestions for creative new means of expressing patriotism and pride in the community. This debate is an integral part of our democratic society – how lucky we are to live in a free and open society.*

*The most powerful force in our community is the desire to make it a good place to live, and the multitude of social groups and clubs providing practical support and friendship, learning or enjoyment, are testament to this. Local government exists to support our communities, whether helping to solve problems or to support new ventures that will make life better.*

## Greater Cambridge Local Plan update

The emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan has been in development since 2020, when the First Conversation consultation took place. A major consultation on the First Proposals took place in 2021, and the results from this were published in 2022. Progress since then has been slowed by uncertainty in the planning of water supply and transport funding. A draft Local Plan has been in preparation during 2025 and a public consultation on the draft is expected to run from 1 December 2025 to 30 January 2026. More detail on the timetable and the many considerations involved in preparing the Local Plan is available here.

[JPAG Meeting1 Report Sept 2025.pdf](#)

## Planning Application queries

The Greater Cambridge Planning authority processes well over 3000 planning applications every year. Most of these applications run smoothly, and the average time to determine applications has fallen significantly over the past two years. However, occasionally there are problems with the handling of planning applications. Concerns about the planning application process should initially be referred to the application case officer, whose name is listed on the application and whose contact details can be found here [Development management area teams](#)

(We are in Area Team West). Any concerns that have not been dealt with satisfactorily by the case officer should be referred to the Area Team Leader (Michael Hammond). If there is still a problem at this stage then please contact either Cllr Hawkins (the Cabinet Member for Planning) or Jose and Sally Ann and we will do our best to investigate. In the event of any problems it is much better to follow this process while the application is still being considered. Once an application has been decided, the mechanisms available to revisit the decision are very limited.

## Six Free Trees

The council's annual Six Free Trees scheme for Parish Councils is open again, running until 30 November. [South Cambs District Council: Parish councils invited to claim six free trees – with more than 750 already planted and counting](#)

## Local Climate Action Conference

The Council is hosting its third annual Local Climate Action Conference on Friday 17 October from 12pm to 5pm at Storey's Field Centre, Eddington. This event is open to parish councils,

community groups, charities and anyone interested in tackling climate change and enhancing biodiversity. [SCDC Local Climate Action Conference 2025 - RSVP Form](#)

## Mental health support for the community

There is a new partnership between the council and Cambridge-based charity Cogwheel Counselling to offer free counselling support sessions to council tenants. Cogwheel Counselling also offers support more broadly within the community, including free counselling sessions for people on very low income. There is a broader need for counselling and mental health support in our area. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council have worked together on a web site called KeepYourHead which provides comprehensive information on the support services available.

## Service Support Grants

Increased Funding of £300k is available for community projects in the coming year in Service Support Grants, increased from £167k last year, to help address the growing pressure faced by the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The grant is aimed at mental health support, advice services, community transport and other community services. Its aim is to empower local groups that deliver vital services to South Cambridgeshire residents, reaching those most in need and to help build inclusive, resilient communities. The application window is open until 5pm on Friday 31 October.

[South Cambs District Council: £300,000 available to support community services in South Cambridgeshire](#)

## Consultation on Climate and Nature Strategy

A consultation is open on the District Council's Climate and Nature Strategy for 2026– 2030. We have set out a transformative vision for a region where nature thrives, the air and rivers are clean, communities are resilient to the changing climate, and future generations can flourish. The consultation closes on 5 November.

[Project: Climate and Nature Strategies | South Cambridgeshire District Council](#)

## Consultation on Local Council Tax Support scheme

The council's working age Local Council Tax Support scheme is a means-tested banded discount scheme providing up to 100% support for working-age residents in need of Council Tax relief. Several changes are proposed to help focus support on those most in need. There is a public consultation on these changes, which is open until Wednesday 15 October

## Cambs County Council

For those hearing about the Community Gritting Scheme for the first time, this is a scheme where Local volunteers can help to keep their community moving in freezing weather. Under this scheme, the parish or town council decides on specific routes in their area which are important to the local community and agrees them with the county council.

If you are a parish or town council looking to join the scheme, please send your completed form by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025. The end of October deadline is to ensure we can order any equipment your volunteers will need. We will need a form for each of your volunteers, including those who have volunteered before. The form is required annually ensure our health and safety standards are being met. See below for a link to the Community Gritting registration form:

[http://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Community\\_gritting\\_registration\\_form](http://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Community_gritting_registration_form)

For further information please see our web page:

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/roads-and-pathways/gritting-roads-cycleways-and-paths/help-with-gritting-and-clearing-snow/>

If you spot a grit bin that is empty or running low, please let us know through our [online reporting tool](#).

## HAF Fund

The Holiday Activities and Food programme is set to continue until 2029, providing thousands of children in Cambridgeshire with food and fun during school holidays.

The Government has announced it will continue to fund the programme across England for a further three financial years, meaning that families in Cambridgeshire will continue to benefit from the scheme until March 2029.

Through the programme, local holiday schemes offer free access to fun, enriching activities and nutritious meals for children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals. Running during the Easter, summer, and Christmas holidays, HAF helps reduce pressure on families by providing safe, engaging environments where children receive a meal while having fun.

Holiday scheme experiences include sports, creative arts, Forest School, playschemes, and outdoor adventures. The programme also supports families by reducing childcare costs, promoting social inclusion, and connecting them with local support services.

Cambridgeshire County Council ran 132 schemes over the summer holiday period, with an estimated 3,300 children participating. (*figures based on 2024 attendance*).

The highest number of children attending a scheme this summer was at 'Come and Play' in Whittlesey, where 135 children attended.

To find out more about HAF, head to our website: [Cambridgeshire Holiday Activities and Food \(HAF\) Programme | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

## Alcohol Vapes, Tobacco Campaign

Police cadets aged between 14 and 16

have taken part in a series of Trading Standards exercises where they attempted to buy age restricted items such as alcohol, vapes and tobacco from 20 different shops in

Cambridgeshire. On every occasion the teenage volunteers were challenged over their age and were refused sales when no proof could be provided.

The exercises took place over the summer as part of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards continued crackdown on the sale of alcohol, vapes and tobacco to children. Advice and guidance for businesses is available on the [Business Companion](#) website.

If you have concerns about young people accessing alcohol in your local area, please report these to Cambridgeshire Police online. Information about shops selling vapes or tobacco products to children under the age of 18 can be reported to Trading Standards advice partner, Citizens Advice Consumer Service, on 0808 223 1133 Monday to Friday or via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service online form over the weekend. You can remain anonymous if you wish.

## Schools Appeals Panels

We are looking for people to join our independent School Appeal Panels, as volunteers are urgently needed to hear appeals when children are not offered a place at their preferred school.

All parents or carers have the right to appeal to an independent panel. As a panel member you will hear cases where parents or carers wish to appeal a decision made by Cambridgeshire County Council or a school. You will listen carefully to all sides, ask questions to fully understand the facts, and work with other panel members to reach a fair and lawful decision.

The appeal panel is independent of the local authority, and its decisions are binding on all parties, unless overturned by the courts.

### **What are we looking for**

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds. You do not need to have worked in education – full training will be provided, and you will be fully supported by the Appeals Service.

Key skills and qualities:

- Be committed to treating everyone equally
- Communicate effectively with a wide range of people
- Ask questions to obtain information and clarify points being made
- Analyse information and use it to form opinions and conclusions
- Obtain and weigh up evidence to reach a decision
- Work as part of a team, take advice and develop skills
- Computer literacy is preferred but not essential as training will be offered.

There is no minimum time commitment required; volunteers decide how much time they can give. Appeals are held throughout the year, with peak months being April to July. They can be either half days or full days. Hearings are currently held online using Microsoft TEAMS.

Anyone interested in applying or who would like an informal chat about the role should contact [Clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.cronk@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or visit our webpage at [School admission appeals panel volunteering | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)