

South Cambridgeshire District Council's 2026-27 Budget

On Tuesday 24th February, the district council held its full council meeting to discuss, debate and vote on its annual budget.

I voted against the proposal to increase council tax again by the legal maximum amount, and I voted against the proposal to increase affordable housing rents.

I also raised my concerns that the administration's budget gap is now almost £8.5 million. I have warned the administration that the budget gap would increase if they didn't change their mentality – and it has increased. I opposed the significant increases in debt and borrowing, concerned that the administration is still trying to live beyond the council's means. In 2025, the council increased its borrowing by £83 million and the projected borrowing for next year is another £77 million. This means that long and short-term borrowing at the council is projected to be £394.123 million at the year end. We all have ambitions for our district, but in such an unstable economic and nationally political environment I cannot see that borrowing this level of money is a sensible and prudent thing to do, particularly as last year, the debt increase was pretty much double the investment value. You will see from the link below that my proposal provided over £500,000 surplus that could have gone a long way to the council to absorb any unforeseen expenses, absorb any economic shocks or indeed reduce the ever-increasing budget gap.

In December, just a few months ago the council voted on its medium term financial strategy (MTFS). At that meeting I raised my concerns that the information was not reliable and that the net operating expenditure figure was unrealistic for the years ahead and warned that this would mean the budget gap would only increase. I was pretty much laughed at and completely dismissed, yet the revised MTFS produced just 2 months later showed that I was correct, the net operating expenditure increased by £6 million and the budget gap increased from £3.5m to £8.5million. I am very concerned that in just two months there was such a drastic change and makes me strongly of the view that the administration must listen to all councillors regardless of party and take them seriously when they raise such concerns.

My budget proposals were also presented and debated in the meeting. They are fully costed and included freezing council tax, in addition to removing the second special allowance for councillors. I believe that, especially with the current cost of living, the council should be

playing its part to help residents – not feathering its own nest. One proposal of ours was to install cameras on to our bin lorries. These cameras, using AI can automatically detect and report road defects and potholes, and as our bin lorries already drive down every single street, every week, no extra vehicles are needed, so no extra carbon cost. Potholes is one of the main local issues residents raise with me – and as pointed out by the administration in the meeting that potholes aren't a district responsibility, it's the county council's – I am at the view of that it doesn't matter which local authority is responsible for highways, if we can help get our much needed roads fixed, then we should. I was disappointed but not surprised that the administration unanimously rejected all of my proposals, but I am still hopeful that through the coming year that some of the proposals may get taken forward.

Here is the link to my budget amendments: [\(Public Pack\)Supplementary Document - Conservative Group Budget Proposal for 2026/27 Agenda Supplement for Council, 24/02/2026 14:00](#)

Here is a link to the administration's budget:

[scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g10256/Public reports pack Tuesday 24-Feb-2026 14.00 Council.pdf?T=10](https://scams.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g10256/Public%20reports%20pack%20Tuesday%2024-Feb-2026%2014.00%20Council.pdf?T=10)

Support for local pubs and policing

I was pleased to see a number of positive motions passed by all councillors, showing that unity is possible on important issues. My motion to support pubs and shops was also unanimously passed this time after failing to reach support and an agreement at the last council meeting. Our pubs, high street shops and the hospitality sector are the life and soul of our communities, so I was pleased to see cross party support for my motion. A motion was also fully supported by all councillors for the Leader of the Council to share all notes and materials from their meeting with government on the four-day working week was also passed. This was voted down by the administration at a previous council meeting, so I am pleased they have changed their mind and will now share those details. Its such a shame that we've had to wait all these months to find out what happened when this could have been avoided when they could have voted for this the first time.

I also voted in favour of the council urging the government for more, fairer funding for key services. I have requested that they highlight to government that as a rural district, it is actually more expensive to police – just one example of simply needing larger vehicles which are

double the price. Rural crime is serious, hare coursing is serious, and we need to ensure government understands the countryside.

Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

The consultation for the proposed Greater Cambridge Development Corporation closes on 1st April, so I would encourage you to take part in this important consultation. In my view, what is being proposed is very concerning.

To me, it feels less like a partnership with local communities and more like a centralisation of power, shifting planning decisions away from locally elected councillors and towards a body driven by central government priorities.

There is also a real risk that local voices and democratic accountability will be sidelined. Once planning control is lost, it may be very difficult to regain.

I enjoy visiting London, but I love coming home to the countryside. It is vital that those making decisions that will shape our area for decades truly understand where we live, the communities here, and the countryside itself.

You can read the proposal and take part in the consultation here: [Establishing a Development Corporation in Greater Cambridge - GOV.UK](#)

Greater Cambridge Local Plan - update

More than 4,500 responses were received from residents, community groups, and local organisations during the recent consultation on the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan which closed on 30th January. The Plan, which will apply to both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City, sets out proposals for where new homes and employment space could be located to meet the area's future housing and economic needs. It also considers the infrastructure required to support growth, including utilities, public services, green spaces, and community facilities.

All comments received are now being reviewed and will help inform the next stage of work on the Plan. A further consultation is planned for later this year, ahead of the Plan being submitted to Government for examination. Updates and further information are available at www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan.

Local Government Re-Organisation

A reminder that the Government's consultation for local government re-organisation closes on 26th March. The consultation is our chance to have our say on the proposals for the structuring of local government within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and I encourage you to put in your views, if you haven't already. The Government will make a final decision on which local government structures are put into place this summer, and new unitary councils are then due to begin operating in a shadow capacity from May 2027, with full implementation expected in April 2028.

Pothole Patrol

This month, I have been continuing to lobby the county council to fix our roads. I have reported large potholes on the A1198, and for anyone who follows my Facebook page, will have seen the gigantic potholes I've reported in Hatley and other villages in The Mordens ward. This week I have asked Highways for another meeting / walk / drive around our villages to highlight the state of our roads. Please, do keep reporting them here: [Report a highways fault | Cambridgeshire County Council](#) – the more reported, the better chance we have at getting them fixed!

Election Deadlines

A reminder of some important deadlines to be aware of ahead of the district and parish council elections:

- The deadline to register to vote is 20th April. If you aren't already registered to vote you can apply on the [government website](#).
- The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm on 21st April. You can apply on the [government website](#).
- The deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on 28th April. You can apply on the [government website](#).
- You must show photo ID when you vote at the polling stations now. If you do not have photo ID then you can apply for a free voter authority certificate. The deadline to apply for a free voter authority certificate (voter ID) is 5pm on 28th April. You can apply on the [government website](#).

Grants for community groups and parish councils

Local community groups and parish councils may be eligible for a range of council grant schemes. I would encourage groups to explore the funding opportunities available. Further information on grants for community projects can be found at:

<https://www.scambs.gov.uk/grants-and-funding>.

Thank you for reading my report. If I can be of any assistance, please do get in touch.

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