

Development Corporation for Greater Cambridge

An extraordinary meeting of South Cambridgeshire District Council was held in March to consider the Government's proposal to establish a Greater Cambridge Development Corporation - and the message from councillors was clear: support for growth must not come at the cost of local control.

The proposed Development Corporation would take over key planning powers across Greater Cambridge, with responsibility for major development decisions potentially shifting away from locally elected councils to a centrally appointed body. I expressed my concern that such a move would sideline local communities and undermine democratic accountability.

A central theme throughout the meeting was the importance of retaining local decision-making. Transferring planning powers for potentially decades would weaken the ability of councils to shape development in line with the needs and priorities of residents. It is my view that local authorities are best placed to understand their communities and ensure that growth is both sustainable and appropriate.

South Cambridgeshire is already planning for significant growth, with tens of thousands of new homes and jobs in the pipeline. The issue is not a lack of planning permission, but the delivery of infrastructure needed to support that growth - particularly in areas such as water supply, transport, and energy.

There was broad agreement in the chamber that Greater Cambridge needs continued investment and support from central government. However, this should be achieved through partnership, not by removing powers from local authorities. Concerns were also raised about the scale of the proposed Development Corporation, which would be one of the largest of its kind and could override existing local plans and community input.

Overall, we were united in our view that while growth is necessary, it must be properly resourced and locally accountable. The Council agreed to formally respond to the Government's consultation, setting out its objections and calling instead for meaningful investment in infrastructure and services. South Cambridgeshire welcomes support to deliver growth - but not at the expense of local democracy.

Reporting local issues

The condition of rural roads remains a concern for many residents, and it's one of the main issues that people raise to me. I continue to run "Pothole Patrol" sessions across the villages. While highways are the responsibility of the county council, I do what I can to support residents, and am regularly reporting them, as well as liaising with Highways directly.

I continue to promote the proposal to install our bin lorries with cameras that use AI to automatically detect and report road defects. Our bin lorries drive down every single road, every single week so its cost effective as there's no need for extra vehicles - and no extra carbon. Reporting road defects and potholes using this system could detect problems earlier, rather than waiting for defects to get bigger in size and cause real problems for our road users.

At present, this proposal hasn't been accepted at the council, so for now, its really important to continue reporting them at: [Report a highways fault | Cambridgeshire County Council](#) - it makes a difference, and the more reports received, the better chance we have at getting them fixed!

Call for action with rising oil prices

I have written to the Chancellor to raise serious concerns about rising oil prices and the impact they are having on rural communities. With many households relying on heating oil and limited access to public transport, families and businesses in rural areas are being hit hardest. As costs continue to climb, the pressure on everyday life is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. And as costs in oil increase, so does the risk of fuel theft, which could potentially leave rural households not only out of pocket but without heating or hot water. As well as raising this with the Chancellor, I have also spoken to our Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure that this is considered for our villages and action can be taken.

More must be done to support rural communities and ensure they are not left behind.

Local Government Re-Organisation

The consultation on Local Government Re-Organisation has now closed and, in my view, none of the options presented offer a particularly positive outcome for our area. We now await the Government's decision on the future structure of local authorities, which will have

significant and long-lasting implications for how our communities are represented and governed.

One of my key concerns is the potential size of the new wards that could be created under these proposals. Early indications suggest that the ratio of residents to councillors could increase substantially, meaning each elected member would be responsible for representing far more people than at present. This raises real questions about how effectively councillors will be able to engage with residents, understand local issues, and provide the level of support that communities rightly expect.

In rural areas in particular, this could prove especially challenging. Larger wards are likely to cover wider geographic areas, often with very different communities and priorities within them. Ensuring that all voices are heard - and not just those from the largest population centres - will become increasingly difficult.

There is also a broader concern about the potential loss of local identity and connection. Local government works best when it is close to the communities it serves. If representation becomes too diluted, there is a risk that decision-making feels more remote and less responsive to the needs of residents.

While reform may bring some efficiencies, it must not come at the expense of effective representation and accountability. As we await further detail from government, it is vital that these concerns are taken seriously and that any new arrangements genuinely serve the interests of our communities.

Election Deadlines – Parish Council and District Council elections

Elections will be held on 7th May 2026 for all Councillors on South Cambridgeshire District Council as well as for all Town and Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire.

Anyone wishing to stand as a candidate for the parish or district council elections will need to complete a nomination form and deliver it by hand to the Elections department at South Cambridgeshire District Council by no later than 9th April at 4pm.

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

- Nomination period for those seeking to be a candidate opens 30th March and closes 4pm on 9th April.
- 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](#).

Easter bank holiday bin collection

Only bin collections that would have been on Good Friday will be affected by the upcoming Easter bank holidays.

Households with a collection falling on Good Friday (3rd April) will need to put their bins out four days earlier than usual, for collection on Monday 30th March. All other bin days during the Easter period remain the same as usual.

Food Waste Caddies

Lots of our residents should now have been provided with food waste caddies, these include the parishes of Abington Pigotts, Guilden Morden, Shingay cum Wendy, Steeple Morden and some parts of Arrington. Croydon, Hatley, Tadlow and the rest of Arrington are scheduled to be rolled out in Wave 4, which will be throughout September this year. I am afraid that the council has not provided me with specific dates of rollout, but households will receive a letter with full details a few weeks before collections begin in their area. Residents can also check their bin collection information by entering their postcode at www.greatercambridgewaste.org. Residents can also directly come to me with any queries and I will do my best to help.

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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