

### **Local Government Reorganisation**

In November, the council will meet and vote on which business case to support. Ahead of this meeting I want to use the opportunity to explain my view and the reason I have not promoted a particular business case over another so far.

The Full Council meeting in November should be the time and place for debate on the business cases, as well as reviewing all the information, the public consultation and survey responses before deciding which case is best for our local residents here in South Cambridgeshire.

I've always been clear on that, unlike the administration who declared their position before the public consultation even closed. I believe it is our job as councillors to act in the best interests of our residents – which means listening to their views and looking at all the details of the business cases before coming to a decision.

The results from the public consultation on local government reorganisation showed that residents had very little trust in South Cambridgeshire District Council.

At October's full council meeting, I asked the Cabinet to apologise to the residents of South Cambridgeshire for the way the administration handled the controversial 4-day week policy.

Results from the public consultation asking residents across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough their views on Local Government Reorganisation came back with a disappointingly low 4% of people in South Cambridgeshire saying they strongly agreed that they trusted their council to make decisions in the best interests of the community. This was the lowest local authority score across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

## **What did the public consultation on local government reorganisation carried out in the summer actually show?**

It was pleasing to see that residents in South Cambridgeshire were fairly confident about areas not being overlooked in the reorganisation, as well as feeling they belonged in their local community.

However, as well as the low 4% trust result, it was disappointing to see that only 9% of people in the district strongly agreed that they were satisfied by the quality of services provided by the local council. This was lower than East Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Fenland councils, and it's particularly disappointing when the number of residents 'relying on council services' across all the councils in the county showed no significant differences.

You can read the full report findings here:

<https://www.scambbs.gov.uk/media/rl4niq3c/final-public-survey-accessible.pdf>

SCDC has recently launched a further survey called 'How are we doing?'. The purpose of this survey is to give residents and businesses the opportunity to provide feedback on the council's services. I would encourage all residents to complete it here: [www.scambbs.gov.uk/leave-feedback](http://www.scambbs.gov.uk/leave-feedback)

If anyone is experiencing any difficulty with council services, please let me know and I will help as best as I can.

## **Tackling period poverty**

I am thrilled that the council is continuing to support this scheme to provide free sanitary products to those who may not be able to afford them for another year. In 2024, I put forward this motion to council which was unanimously supported by everyone.

It's an important campaign with the aim to help residents who may be struggling to afford period products by giving out free eco-friendly products. Not only does it help many women who may be struggling financially to afford the products that they need, it's also about supporting them in a way to help maintain their dignity.

Residents can apply here: <https://www.heygirls.co.uk/south-cambridgeshire-home-packs>. Please do share with anyone that you think could benefit from this scheme.

### **Protecting the right for residents to ask supplementary questions to the council**

I am pleased that the district council passed a motion to protect supplementary questioning from members of the public. It is important to actively engage with the public we serve and the process of asking public questions is important for transparency, accountability and public confidence in our local authority. The reason we brought this motion to council was following Cambridgeshire County Council's recommendation to remove supplementary questions. I am pleased we received unanimous support to protect this in our district.

### **Multiple websites at SCDC – all at a cost to the taxpayer**

Last month I highlighted that I am raising concerns of the costs being spent on numerous websites of the council. SCDC has its main website for residents to use for information, contacting the council and applying for grants and help where needed - which I fully support because our residents need that platform. However, the council also owns and pays for three further websites - all paid for by the taxpayer. My update from last month is below showing the costs.

The Council has four websites in total:

- The main South Cambridgeshire District Council website with a cost of **£60,000** for modernising the website and bringing it to government accessibility standards.

- The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning website with a cost of **£16,000** for modernising the website and bringing it to government accessibility standards.
- The Shared Waste website with a cost of **£28,000** for modernising the website and bringing it to government accessibility standards.
- The Visit South Cambs website with a set up cost of **£25,000** in 2020.

I am raising concerns and questions around costs to ensure that the council does not waste residents' money on things that are not needed. Further spending on websites is planned, as you will see further in my report.

### **Update on local transport infrastructure**

This month I met up with the Transport Director at the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to discuss local concerns residents have raised with me. Topics included the Greenways and cycleways.

From meeting with residents and local groups, we have been discussing the Baulk Path alternatives in relation to the greenway proposed to go through Grantchester. These alternative routes are still being discussed and looked at and will be presented to the GCP Executive in due course. I will keep pushing to make sure these routes are in the best places for the effected villages and that the needs of equestrians are not forgotten.

While I did remind that Cambridgeshire does continue south of Royston, the GCP confirmed that if there were to be cycleways in our area these would not be funded by the GCP at this time.

### **South Cambs District Council was one of the highest councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for the most bins missed**

It was reported this month that South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City had the most bins missed for collection in the county last year. Both councils operate jointly for

refuse collection and a study showed that 12,797 bins were not collected last year – the highest across the county, and the fifth highest across the whole of the East of England.

With council tax increasing year after year and council staff only working 4 days a week on full pay, this is extremely frustrating.

This study verifies what I have been fearing. I can see from my casework that missed bins have been on the increase since the introduction of 4-day working week on full pay. I hope the administration take this seriously.

If your bin has been missed, please use this link to report it: [Report a Missed Bin](#)

### **Grants for community groups and parish councils**

If you are aware of any local community groups that would benefit from this or as the parish council, you may look to see what support is available to you. The council has a number of various grants, so I am encouraging you to make the most of the council's available grant schemes. Some grants require the endorsement of your local councillor - if this is the case please do get in touch with me, I'm happy to help as much as I can. For information on grants available for a community project from the council, please visit <https://www.scams.gov.uk/grants-and-funding>

### **Reminder for postal vote renewals**

The rules brought in by the Elections Act 2022 means that if you are a postal voter you have to renew your postal vote every 3 years. This means that if you completed a postal vote application before October 2023, you will need to renew it by January 2026 at the latest in order to remain a postal voter for the district council elections in May 2026. If you do not reapply by January, you will need to register as a new postal voter. Deadline for renewals is 31<sup>st</sup> January.

The easiest way for residents to re-apply is online at [www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote](http://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote), but the council can send paper forms to anyone who needs them. Please email [elections@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:elections@scambs.gov.uk) if you have any questions.

## **Parish Council Survey – Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Website Re-design**

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning (GCSP) are in the process of redesigning their website and have created a short survey for town and parish councils to complete to capture your views. It is only open until 2<sup>nd</sup> November, so I would encourage you to give your views if you can. You can complete the survey here: [Greater Cambridge Shared Planning \(GCSP\) Website Redesign – Survey Link](#)

## **Draft Local Plan**

This week the Draft Local Plan for Greater Cambridge was published. Here are the links: [Draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan: Scrutiny Committee Pack | Greater Cambridge Shared Planning](#). I appreciate it's a long report, but I would encourage you to look through it ahead of the public consultation this winter. I will be going through the plan in detail before the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting next week.

If there are any points, clarification or questions you have, please let me know and I will do the best to get the answers for you.

## **Government expresses 'deep disappointment' over council conduct over 4-day week**

Following the letter from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the Leader of the Council raising the government's concerns over the 4-day week, I have written to the Secretary of State. My letter highlights residents' lack of trust with the council – as shown in public consultations and surveys, concerns of the impartiality of the 'independent' reports, non-disclosure of future financial burdens

attributed to the 4-day week and declining service satisfaction. I believe it's important that the Secretary of State is given all the facts and all viewpoints, so he has the full picture.

I have consistently opposed the council's full-time pay for part-time work policy and irrespective of party colours, I will work cross party to ensure residents get value for money.

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

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