

Councillor Peter McDonald Duxford Division & Ward:  
District Councillor for Parishes of Duxford, Hinxton, Ickleton, Babraham, Pampisford.  
County Councillor also for Foxton, Fowlmere, Shepreth, Thriplow, Heydon, Chishills, Whittlesford

## **Parish Council Report January 2025**

### **South Cambs Council**

#### **Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)**

Under our SWEP, we are able to accommodate those who would not usually be accommodated in temporary accommodation. We can support you during periods of prolonged cold, damp or windy weather during the months of November to March. Anyone in South Cambridgeshire who needs to access this service should contact us by one of the following methods to speak with our Housing Advice and Homelessness Team:

- email: [housingadvice@scams.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@scams.gov.uk)
- call: [01954 713 000](tel:01954713000)
- emergency out of hours telephone: [01253 501 117](tel:01253501117)

#### **Frozen green waste bins**

At this time of year there is a risk that the contents of green bins can freeze and stick to the inside, preventing the bins from being emptied properly. The council's web pages on bins and recycling contain some advice on how to minimise the risk of your bin freezing. Please circulate this and keep residents informed to help minimise this frustrating problem. In January and February the green bins will be emptied once a month (on 7 January and 4 February). From the beginning of March, they will be emptied fortnightly again.

<https://www.scams.gov.uk/recycling-and-bins/our-policies-and-what-happens-to-your-recycling-and-waste>

#### **Assets of Community Value**

The council maintains a list of Assets of Community Value. These are buildings or land which further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community, have done so in the recent past, or have the potential to do so in the near future. The current register includes Chequers at Pampisford, Ickleton Lion. Parish Councils and other community groups are encouraged to nominate candidates for listing where appropriate to help protect these key facilities from being lost to the community.

#### **Council Tax increase for vacant properties**

From April 2026, Council Tax will be doubled on long-term vacant properties in South Cambridgeshire as an incentive to bring the estimated 2600 empty properties in the district into use. Exemptions exist for properties that are on the market, subject to probate, or are under renovation. This approach has been used successfully by other councils to bring properties back into use and is expected to help address the high demand for housing in the district. It is estimated that the change will generate an additional £100,000 a year in income for South Cambridgeshire which will help support vital frontline services.

#### **Help for people working with health problems**

The District Council has worked in partnership with neighbouring councils to launch a free programme called WorkWell, offering help to anyone struggling to find or keep a job due to health problems. This is a valuable initiative that seeks to improve the lives of those affected, Contact Details: E mail: [cllr.mcdonald@scams.gov.uk](mailto:cllr.mcdonald@scams.gov.uk) or [peter.mcdonald@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:peter.mcdonald@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
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to work with the wider community to understand and overcome the barriers involved, and to help boost our local economy.

**Government consultation on Right to Buy** On 20 November the government launched a consultation seeking views on how the Right to Buy should be reformed to deliver a fairer and more sustainable scheme. The consultation closes on 15 January 2025.

## **Cambs County Council**

### **County Council Budget 2025/26**

Ive deliberately focused on the 2025/26 budget as this is the key issue right now.

- The county council has shared its proposals to continue delivering its vision of a creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire. Part of these proposals will identify the Council's priorities for where to spend over £1billion to deliver services and support for people and communities across the county. Priorities included with the draft Business Plan and Budget are:
- Investing £21 million into the county's 4,500 miles of road network, footpaths, cycleways, and drainage systems in 2025-26, with a further £20 million being invested in 2026-27.
- Investing £20 million over the next 3 years to support providers of adult social care services to pay care workers the Real Living Wage, helping to recruit and retain people to deliver these essential services.
- Investing £6.8 million in low carbon heating for schools and council buildings and £8.7 million being invested to deliver enhanced and upgraded household waste recycling centres in Milton and March.
- However, rising demand for the services we provide, along with the costs of those services also rising, continues to impact the county council's available funding, just as is the case with many other local authorities. That means we also must continue to make difficult choices about where we spend and where we make savings.
- This means we have a budget gap of £34.2 million in 2025-26 which needs to be closed.
- As part of the report to be discussed by councillors, this includes a proposed council tax increase of 4.99% for 2025-26. This increase, if approved, would generate around £20 million in additional funding, not only helping the council to balance the books and set a legal budget, but more importantly, meaning we can commit to:
- continuing the record level of investment in the county's highway and cycleway network that we started last year.

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- ensuring that adult care services can continue to support and protect vulnerable adults by investing over £30 million to meet rising demand and costs and supporting the social care workforce.
- funding almost £0.8 Billion investment in capital expenditure to build vital schools, investing in care and community facilities, including libraries, and continue to deliver our ambitious net zero target.
- provide £2.5m to maintain holiday school vouchers for those most in need.
- sustaining home to school transport for children in education right across the county by a further £4.7 million in additional funding to help meet rising demands and costs.
- helping to provide extra capacity to support children and young people in care and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- In our pre-budget engagement exercise, just over 50% of respondents supported an increase in Council Tax of up to 4.99% to help maintain or improve essential services.
- In reports, published for the Strategy, Resources and Performance committee, councillors considered:
  - Progress to date and key investment areas for 2025/26 aligned to the council's recently updated and approved Strategic Framework – setting out how the authority will deliver its vision of a creating greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire through its seven ambitions and responding to the needs of residents gathered through its annual Quality of Life Survey.
  - The proposed council tax increase of 4.99% and what this additional funding will mean in terms of helping to meet some of our increased costs, as well as additional investment in priority areas.
  - The council's long-term approach to changing the way it operates so that it can improve efficiency, value for money and productivity. This means getting the basics right and innovating the way services are delivered so the council can maximise the value of every pound it spends. This work includes saving £1.5m from rationalising office accommodation, and £0.5m from making greater use of technology.
- Have your say - [complete our consultation survey](#).

Happy New Year to you All

Peter McDonald Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 2025

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