

District Councillor Report – June 2023

Cllr. Shrobona Bhattacharya

Zero Carbon Communities grant

This grant, now in its fifth year, aims to encourage exciting community projects that reduce carbon emissions and engage local people about climate change. Until the closing date of Friday June 2 community groups in the district are invited to bid for a share of £125,000. Previous projects have included cooking classes that reduce food waste, tree planting, a community e-bike rental scheme, solar panels for village halls and a men's mental health and wellbeing project that runs a mobile library for gardening equipment and tool hire.

This year, groups in South Cambridgeshire can apply for between £1,000 to £15,000 from the District Council's total pot of £125,000. The process has been simplified to aid applicants, with applications invited under two categories.

- The first category is for projects which reduce carbon emissions or lock up carbon in a measurable way such as low carbon, energy saving improvements to community buildings, or tree-planting initiatives.
- The second category is for community engagement projects which support and encourage lower carbon living. Full eligibility criteria and ideas for projects are available at scambs.gov.uk/zerocarbongrant.

Housing disrepair online signposting tool

The UK Ministry of Justice has developed a housing disrepair online signposting tool for private rented sector tenants with housing disrepair issues. The tool was developed in collaboration with other government ministries and third sector organisations such as Shelter to give users the information and guidance they need to resolve their housing disrepair issues before they worsen. The tool asks users a series of targeted questions before providing tailored information, guidance, and signposting to relevant advice and support. This helps users understand their rights and responsibilities and identify an appropriate next step when trying to resolve their housing disrepair issues.

The tool has been placed on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website and can be found at:

<https://check-how-to-get-repairs-done-in-your-rented-home.form.service.justice.gov.uk/>

Four day working week trial

On 15th May, the District Council Cabinet agreed to extend the trial of a four-day week for staff at the Council on full pay for a further twelve months. An initial three month trial had commenced in January 2023. Separately, the Cabinet will decide whether to introduce a four 4DW trial for non-desk based staff, which will include waste collection crews.

The Council has published some data on council performance in key areas during the first three months of the 4DW trial. The data and reports are available here (item 4):

<https://scambsmoderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=413&MIId=9590&Ver=4>

The data from the trial is mixed. There have been falls in Council performance in some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) during the trial (in some cases falling below target), though an increase in staff well-being is also reported. However, there must be some impact on morale for staff in non-desk based roles who must work currently work a five day week while their office based colleagues only have to work for four days.

The trial of a 4DW for waste collection services is being planned alongside changes to optimise the collection network. The extra cost to Council Tax payers of introducing a 4DW for waste collections is estimated at £132,000 in the first year, rising to £207,000 in the second year. The extra cost arises from the need for extra lorries and crews to complete collections in four days rather than five.

If the trial of the 4DW for waste collection is approved, it will start in July or August this year. The plan is for collections to run Tuesday to Friday with no collections scheduled for Mondays. This will require fewer changes for bank

holidays as these mostly fall on a Monday, however there will still be some changes each year on Good Friday and in various years Christmas and New Year's Day will fall on other days of the week. For a capital intensive operations which use a large amount of expensive equipment such as bin lorries, it is inefficient to have that equipment sitting idle for nearly half the week.

This experiment has attracted negative coverage from several media outlets, including national ones:

www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/local-news/south-cambs-council-chief-secret-26829996

www.gbnews.com/politics/south-cambridgeshire-council-four-day-working-week

www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12090049/Locals-slam-four-day-week-local-authority-hiked-council-tax.html

Community Engagements in Cambourne

- (1) On the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development, I met with Cambourne residents from diverse backgrounds, joined by Anthony Browne MP. They expressed their satisfaction with living in Cambourne for themselves and their children. However, transportation and the absence of a local post office were mentioned as challenges.
- (2) I am working towards integrating the communities of West Cambourne with Lower, Great, and Upper Cambourne. Through the S106 Kick Start funding working party, I aim to represent West Cambourne in the District Council and organise community events that cater to their specific needs.
- (3) I helped to start a Music Group for the elderly residents in Cambourne.
- (4) Organised a Fundraising Dinner for the wellbeing activities of the elderly residents in Cambourne on 21st May.
- (5) I am closely working with the NHS's social prescription programme, where residents require care and support within the community. I am running many bespoke projects aimed at helping people stay happy, healthy, and connected with others.

Healthcare in Cambourne

Recognising the importance of accessible healthcare services, I am working to explore the possibility of opening GP services during evening hours. I am also in discussions with local pharmacies to understand ongoing changes. To foster dialogue and find effective solutions, a public consultation involving the pharmacy, GP surgery, Town and County Council, and residents will be organized. The goal is to establish a smart working system for prescriptions that caters to the community's needs.

Community Minibus

The Cambourne Community Minibus has become a cherished resource for community groups, schools, and retirement homes in Cambourne. To plan trips, please contact me at shrobona@gmail.com

EW railway:

Excitingly, the announcement regarding the EW railway was published on 26th May, bringing hope for improved connectivity. This development would significantly reduce travel time to Cambridge, potentially allowing residents to reach the city in just 10 minutes. The Cambourne community was eagerly awaiting a new railway station in the North.

Next steps

In the coming weeks there will be public information events and meeting stakeholders across the route to answer questions about the updates.

The events will run from 2pm - 8pm and the dates can be found below. Further details are available on [Community Hub](#).

13 June - Bedford Heights
20 June - Ravensden Village Hall
22 June - Eversden Village Hall
26 June - Harston Village Hall
30 June - Summerlin Centre, Woburn Sands
04 July - Lidlington Village Hall
07 July - Tempsford Stuart Memorial Village Hall
11 July - Cambridge Belfry Hotel
12 July - John Paul II Centre

20 July - Love's Farm, St Neot's

We'll continue to work on more detailed designs and proposals, which we'll present at the statutory consultation which we expect to take place in the first half of 2024. This will be a key part of the process to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

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