

The Annual Parish Meeting was held on Wednesday 16th April 2025 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

Apologies: Malcolm Ralph, Val Barnes - other commitments

Present: Mr Barnes, Mrs Sole, Mr Wenman, Mr Wheeler, Mr Sole, Mr Buchanan, Ms Newland, Cllr Kindersley, Cllr Williams, the Clerk and 3 members of public.

Minutes: of the March meeting were agreed and signed.

Declarations of Interest: None

Reports:

Croydon Parish council – AGM Police report 2024-2025

Police incidents recorded for above period

1 x Theft business

3 x violence without injury

2 x arson reported

3 x Stalking / harassment

1 x Theft from vehicle

8 x Domestic related incidents = 3 x violence without injury as above and the stalking reports.

Total = 18 for the year

This does not include:-

Reports for information, example would be farming shooting occurring for vermin control.

Unable to share further information as above, as they will include Criminal investigations and safeguarding requirements to those immediately affected and linked to these.

Policing Patrols = Burglary / ASB ongoing in hot spot areas, this does not include Croydon at present as no reports received 😊

So well done for keeping vigilant and ensuring the community is kept safe.

Please report any suspicious activity or seek help / advice from your Neighbourhood watch team, reporting via 999 in an emergency, online or 101 for non-emergency

Regards John Coppard

PCSO for South Cambs john.coppard@cambs.police.uk

Parish AGM Report 2025 – The Mordens Ward

Financial position of South Cambridgeshire District Council

The Budget for 2025-26 was agreed in February. There were a number of proposals I supported, including continuing the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and the council homebuilding programme. Unfortunately, however, there were too many elements that I was uncomfortable with and I voted against the Budget. Below are some of the reasons for my decision:

- The Budget included increasing the Council Tax by the legal maximum amount of £5.09 for a Band D household. I felt this was inappropriate given that many residents are struggling with the cost of living. Moreover, Council Tax and rents going up when council staff are being paid 37 hours to work 32 hours is incredibly unfair. I decided to oppose the 2.7% increase in affordable rents and the 4% increase in shared ownership rents for the same reason.
- It was extremely concerning that the Budget included a £46 million increase in borrowing when interest rates - the cost of borrowing - remain incredibly high. Additionally, by our

calculations, the administration's Transformation programme has cost over £10 million, yet only saved £1.7 million. We do not believe that the council should be wasting your money in this way.

I put forward an amendment to the Budget proposals for 2025-26. This included holding a referendum on the council's four-day working week; removal of the second Special Responsibility Allowance for councillors; bolstering planning enforcement and fly tipping; and introducing a Tackling Rural Isolation officer. Unfortunately, the administration unanimously rejected my amended proposals. If you are aware of anybody who is struggling with the cost of living, please do get in touch.

There is support available so please do not suffer alone. For more information online, please see the cost of living support page on the council's website.

Four-day week update

2024 was a significant year of change for the council with the four-day week trial. The new Labour government did not renew the council's Best Value Notice when it expired in November 2024. The trial officially ended in March 2024 - but a year later, council staff continue to be paid 37 hours per week for 32 hours work. It does feel that the administration has continued the four day week in a way that was not presented to us at the start. That is very disconcerting and it has damaged trust between the council and residents.

In a council meeting in July 2024, the results of the four-day week trial were considered by councillors. My group and I raised the following questions and concerns from this report:

- 37% of staff reported working more than four days a week in 2024 – up from 28% in 2023. That means at least 160 staff cannot fit their work into four days, and are propping up the trial for everyone else. Naturally, this creates a worrying picture for staff wellbeing, with almost 1 in 3 more stressed under the four-day week. I have continued to raise concerns over the pressure cooker environment that such intense working creates.
- Costs have been incurred running this four-day week. The reported 'savings' - in reality, money not spent - was reported as £371,500 to be split between two councils, far less than the original £776,000 projected. However, the cost of two extra bin lorries and bin crews to complete bin collections in four days, plus the cost of legal fees, officer time and the public consultation, immediately evaporate these savings.
- 16% of staff are undertaking other paid work on their non-working day. Residents are paying staff not to work on their four-day week non-working day, and staff's productivity is being re-used elsewhere. Whilst this is a totally rational response from staff, it remains unfair that residents are paying staff to work elsewhere.
- Sickness has not reduced under the four-day week - despite council staff working 13.5% fewer hours. From later Employment & Staffing Committee papers in February 2025, it was then reported that musculoskeletal absences accounted for 17% of absences, followed by personal stress anxiety and depression causing 14% of absences. It is concerning that the four-day week has not reduced sickness. We have raised from the start our concern at the extra physical pressure that is being put on our waste crews.

I have fought hard for residents' voices to be heard on the four-day week. It is only right that if the administration is forcing residents to pay council staff not to work, then residents should have a say. I believed this moment would come with the promise of a four-day week consultation in January 2025. However, the consultation document was in fact a consultation on council services - with just one out of over 50 questions actually asking for comments about the four-day week. Nowhere did the consultation ask residents if they were happy to pay for it, yes or no. This was an incredibly disappointing let down of democracy. Nevertheless, it has been vital for residents and businesses to fill out the consultation to still make their voices heard.

Weekly food waste collections

The council is following national policy change by the previous government. It will become mandatory for councils to collect separate food waste on a weekly basis. I have been raising

this issue with colleagues at a national level and it is pleasing to see that this campaigning has paid off. The original grant awarded by the government to cover the costs of weekly food waste collections did not cover our costs at the council. Following conversations with government, this shortfall has now been rectified. Nevertheless, I am currently investigating the additional costs of weekly food waste collections under a 4-day week bin collection scheme, as bin crews in Greater Cambridgeshire are also working 32 hours per week but being paid 37 hours. I believe that more lorries and more staff are required to collect the same number of bins in 4 days rather than a regular 5-day week, and I believe it is important to understand these additional costs as it is residents who continue to pay council staff not to work.

Local Government Reorganisation

On 19 March, the Council held an Extraordinary Full Council meeting to discuss the Council's response to the government's Local Government Reorganisation plans, which look to replace the current council system with larger unitary authorities.

In Cabinet's response to the government's plans, I requested that the following considerations be made:

- The workload that will be required for councillors in larger authorities representing significantly more residents, and how this may become a barrier for full-time workers looking to become councillors alongside their job.
- That the impact of reorganisation on our parishes is considered to preserve the most local levels of government.
- That all options are considered when it comes to dividing areas into unitaries.
- To formulate a plan for engagement with residents and parish councils to encourage well-informed cooperative working, achieving the best outcome for our residents.

There was a general feeling of discomfort and dissatisfaction that the government is doing this to us when there was no mandate for these changes in their general election manifesto. Similarly, concern was raised at the 'London feel' of the model, which may not suit our rural district where parish councils and localised government ensures representation at all levels. The joint response given by council leaders in Cambridgeshire can be found at:-

<https://scambs.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s138677/Appendix2-ProposedResponsetoGovernment.pdf>.

I am continuing to fight to ensure local representation remains accessible for everyone and that parish councils continue to be supported as a vital layer of local governance, especially in our rural South Cambridgeshire. All parish councils and residents who have concerns about Local Government Reorganisation, please do reach out and I will help in any way I can. This issue will continue to develop and change as the government considers the applications put forward by councils. I will continue to update you as and when I know of any new developments.

Five Year Land Supply

In December, the council lost its Five Year Land Supply. This threatened uncontrolled development in South Cambridgeshire's green spaces which we at the council were less empowered to do anything about if we did not feel the development application was suitable. The Five Year Land Supply was restored in April, enabling councillors on the Planning Committee to control unsuitable development where appropriate. I would still urge caution in responses to planning applications being robust and clearly identifying harm when outlining reasons for refusal. To be clear, it is still the case that there is no land supply for self-builds at the time of writing this report in April.

As your councillor

As your District Councillor, I am on the following committees:

- Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
- Civic Affairs Committee
- Climate and Environment Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Full Council
- Employment & Staffing Committee
- Grants Advisory Committee (substitute)
- Licensing Committee
- Planning Committee
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee (substitute)
- Planning Committee Steering Group

In addition to the above, I have additional responsibilities as the Major Opposition Group Leader. I am also a member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly and I am regularly in attendance at Cabinet and Scrutiny & Overview meetings.

Political balance of South Cambridgeshire District Council

Liberal Democrats	35
Conservatives	8
Independents	2

Cllr Heather Williams - SCDC The Mordens Ward

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Verbal report: Councillor Williams referred the meeting to the financial state of the District Council, in her annual report. She said that the full council is finally being allowed to debate on the continuation or not of the four day week. What is not known however, is whether the final decision will be made by full council, or whether it will just be made by the Cabinet.

Weekly food waste collections are going to be made by SCDC, but Cllr Williams is concerned that not enough thought has gone into the implementation of this, with the current four day week and whether more lorries and staff would be required. This would add extra costs.

Five year Land Supply - due to the government moving the goalposts on this, there was a brief period where the available land dipped below the requirement. This has been rectified.

Gamlingay Division Councillors Report - South Cambridgeshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council - April 2025

The Gamlingay Division comprises the Parishes of Abington Pigotts, Arrington, Barrington, Croydon, Gamlingay, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Hatley, Orwell, Shingay-cum-Wendy, Steeple Morden, Tadlow & Wimpole. This report is for all Division Parish Councils but please be aware that it will include items that may have little or no relevance to your particular Parish. Apologies in advance!

Goodbye! As previously advised Sebastian is not standing for re-election on May 1st. He says "As I leave after representing Gamlingay Division Parishes on South Cambridgeshire and Cambridgeshire County Councils for 26 years all told I would like to thank everyone who has been kind and supportive of my job as a Councillor. It has been a tremendous privilege to serve you."

Being a councillor is a privilege but it is also a very important job and people benefit from having a really good local councillor who can make a significant difference to lives especially during hard times. It is easy to talk about the big issues such as potholes and parking but the

majority of the work is to do with people and their problems and of course these issues must remain confidential but they include planning issues, mental health support, homelessness, education and transport for SEND children, care for the elderly, sick and disabled to so much more. So if you are interested in public service please talk to us or to the parish council which has a few vacancies at the moment - being a parish councillor is a very good way to dip your toe into the world of local government.

By a quirk of the Local Government Act 1972 although he won't be a Councillor Sebastian will continue as Chair of the County Council until it meets for the first time on May 20th.

Access for Gamlingay Fire Station: We have heard very concerning reports of the firefighters not being able to get to the fire station or to get the engine out when they receive a call during school pick up or drop off time. This problem results in vital minutes being lost in response to a fire or road traffic accident. It is up to all of us to help avoid making this situation more difficult. If you can walk or cycle please do so and if you can't please think carefully about where you are parking.

Council Tax Fraud: Fraud officers have clawed back £360,000 in false claims for council tax discounts, with the money set to be invested back into public services across South Cambridgeshire. The money has been returned to District Council budgets after staff uncovered hundreds of false claims by comparing data records. Called the Cambridgeshire County Council Fraud Initiative, the project continues to identify single person discount fraud and error, since launching in July 2023. It works by comparing data held by the local authority with other information such as the electoral register or credit reference data. Where there is a debt identified, it is recovered through the normal Council Tax billing process, with the income used to fund public services. Data gathered as part of the initiative indicates that around two in 10 claims reviewed by the authority, were being claimed incorrectly.

Local Government Reorganisation: An Extraordinary meeting of South Cambridgeshire District Council agreed to send a letter to the Local Government minister Jim McMahon clarifying that we are working productively with the other councils in Cambridgeshire to design new Unitary Councils. This will mean that the County Council is broken up and its responsibilities will go to either 2 or 3 new councils which will be amalgamations of the current district councils. We have until the autumn to submit the detail of the boundaries of these new authorities.

Meanwhile Leaders of S Cambs, City and County and Mayor Johnson have had a meeting with Lord Patrick Valance to hear about his plans for the Oxford Cambridge Corridor. He has been appointed by the chancellor and said that his aim is to get some stuff done this year. Council leaders pushed him for early solutions to the problems of water scarcity and waste water disposal.

Warmer Council Homes: More than £8 million in Government funding has been awarded to South Cambridgeshire District Council to improve the energy efficiency of Council homes. The idea is to upgrade thousands of social homes across the country which are currently below the standard of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C. Improvements to South Cambridgeshire's Council homes could include insulation, ventilation, heating controls, double glazing, solar panels, and heat pumps - cutting bills and tackling fuel poverty.

South Cambridgeshire District Council will now work to allocate funding to properties with priority given to those most in need of energy efficiency improvements. Council tenants will be contacted direct if their home is able to benefit – with the aim for the Council to have as many of its 5,500 properties above an EPC rating of C in the next four years.

The funding from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero is part of the national Warm Homes Plan. A total of £8,280,376 is being provided for South Cambridgeshire under the latest wave of the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund scheme. South Cambridgeshire District

Council will contribute £10 million from its Housing Revenue Account – consisting of Council house rents - to the improvements too.

Empty Properties: During 2023/24 – 28 South Cambridgeshire properties that were sat unused and vacant were bought back into use by the District Council. A similar number of turnarounds is expected by the end of the current financial year. Anyone who is looking to turn an old, neglected property into a home may be able to save thousands of pounds in VAT on renovation costs - just by contacting South Cambridgeshire District Council's Empty Homes Officer.

Home maintenance and improvements are usually charged at the standard rate of 20% VAT. However, the Government offers a 5% VAT rate on renovations for properties that have been unoccupied for more than two years – but were lived in beforehand. Anyone who has recently purchased, or is about to buy, an empty property which meets these criteria simply needs to contact the Council. The Empty Homes Officer can then provide paperwork needed to confirm the house was unoccupied - triggering a substantial saving. To see if you qualify, email env.health@scambs.gov.uk and provide as much information as possible on the property you have recently purchased or are looking to purchase.

Council Tax on empty homes: As part of other efforts to bring local empty homes back into use - Council Tax will be doubled on longterm vacant and second homes in the District. The aim is to encourage people to sell or rent their properties to tackle the national housing shortfall - which is particularly acute in South Cambridgeshire. Council estimates suggest there are around 2,640 empty homes in the district, and a further 360 second properties.

Healthy Start Vouchers: Parents of children under the age of four years old are being encouraged to check if they are eligible for free Healthy Start vouchers to help buy food and milk. The Healthy Start vouchers are offered by the NHS to parents receiving certain benefits but are estimated to go unclaimed by more than a third (38%) of eligible parents in South Cambridgeshire.

This results in almost £88,000 of unclaimed funds each year in the district, largely due to a lack of awareness of the scheme.

In our latest campaign to support residents with the cost of living, we have used our new and innovative IT package, called the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT), to identify 377 households who are likely to be eligible for Healthy Start vouchers.

All these households have been contacted by letter and text where possible to encourage them to apply for Healthy Start vouchers if they have not done so already.

Parents are eligible for Healthy Start vouchers if they have a child under the age of four and are on certain benefits. If eligible, parents will receive a Healthy Start card that can be used in most UK supermarkets, similar to a debit card. The card will be pre-loaded with £8.50 a week for children aged under one, and £4.25 a week for children aged between one and four years old.

Net Zero Villages Awards: Nine local organisations are celebrating grant awards, as South Cambridgeshire District Council announces those successful in their bids to receive a share of more than £360,000 available through the Net Zero Villages scheme. The funding for the scheme was provided by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, with supplementary funds contributed by the District Council.

In line with the District Council's 'Green to our Core' commitment, the scheme empowers voluntary groups, parish councils and community-minded businesses to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from community assets, such as village halls, and using nature-based solutions to adapt these buildings for a future with more extreme weather patterns. The grant also welcomed proposals for low carbon transport schemes, such as e-bikes or community shuttle buses.

Security support for domestic abuse survivors: CCCI has renewed a scheme which helps survivors of domestic abuse to feel safer and more secure in their own homes. The scheme

provides additional security measures which can delay or prevent a perpetrator from entering a property. It supported 525 people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough between April 2023 and March 2024. Measures offered depend on the level of risk, and may include window alarms, additional bolts, lock changes, security advice, video doorbells, dummy cameras, and response lights. The service is available for all types of housing, whether owned, privately rented, or social housing. The contract will be funded by a Safe Accommodation grant from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), enabling the council to carry out its statutory duty.

New South Cambs website: Please take a look at the new SCDC website - scams.gov.uk - which has lots of new features including localisation: people can put their postcode in and find information purely relevant to the area they live, such as their local councillors and the bin schedule, planning applications close by and the local events happening in their area.

Local Plan update: Development of the emerging Local Plan for the 2030s has been on hold for over a year due to uncertainties over water supply and transport provision. However, Greater Cambridge Shared Planning has announced that sufficient progress has been made to allow a draft Local Plan to be produced this year, for review by the council and for public consultation. There is a huge lead-up time in plan making and these are only steps in a very long process.

State of the roads and pavements: Significant additional resource has been allocated to Highways for the coming financial year via the new business plan, which should help. However, it is important to note that what is needed to bring the network into a decent state of repair is estimated at a sobering £600M. Nevertheless, more resource is allocated this year than last. Thank you very much to all who have taken the trouble to report on the County website. Please don't hesitate to send us any reporting reference numbers that need chasing.

Fancy becoming a farmer? Cambridgeshire County Council is offering five initial tenancies of 10 years to allow development of a rural business on one of Cambridgeshire's leasehold farms. Our Farms Estate is the largest in England and Wales and covers over 13,400 hectares, supporting over 160 tenants with 45 new entrants in the last 10 years.

We are seeking to continue our long track record of helping establish new farming businesses in the county. With five initial tenancies of 10 years currently available from October 2025, successful applicants will have the opportunity to join the Estate's community and exercise their entrepreneurial abilities to develop a rural business on one of the leasehold farms listed below.

Recent new tenants have included businesses that seek to address the climate change challenge, with some exploring regenerative farming, which benefits carbon capture and biodiversity.

The properties come fully equipped with a house and various outbuildings, offering potential for cereal and root crop farming, as well as other diversified uses. Council Farm, Little Wilbraham; Larkhall & Block Farm, Fordham; Whitehall Farm, Littleport; Fen Bridge Farm, Cottenham and Chancel Farm, Wicken are the farms in question.

Community Navigators service renewed: The renewal of a service which helps residents remain independent and stay living in their own communities has been approved by Cambridgeshire County Council's Adults and Health Committee. 'Community Navigators', which has been running since 2012, provides personalised support to older people, residents aged 18 and over with disabilities, and their carers. A dedicated team of staff and volunteers from Care Network, which currently runs the service on behalf of the council, connects individuals to services, activities, and interventions in their local communities.

The support provided includes informing people about, and referring them to, relevant activities and services; helping people access information to answer questions and enable them to do things for themselves; supporting people to access activities that enable them to remain independent, safe, and well and reaching out to communities to engage with people who may be eligible for Adult Social Care services.

Service users can choose to receive support either in the community, at home, or over the phone. Over the last three years, Community Navigators has received nearly 9,000 referrals via the NHS, community and voluntary sector, and the county council's adult social care service. A further two-year contract is due to start on 1 October. <https://care-network.org.uk/community-navigators/>

Learning Disability Support : County Councillors have confirmed their commitment to ensuring ongoing support for people with learning disabilities and their families, following changes to how the council works with the NHS in Cambridgeshire. The Learning Disability Partnership (LDP), which has provided integrated health and social care support for adults with learning disabilities in Cambridgeshire, has been formally dissolved from 1 April 2025. Councillors are calling on local health partners to fully share information about the arrangements for NHS funded support from this month and to ensure complete continuity of care from the NHS for people currently receiving services, to match those commitments already made by the council.

The Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) are continuing discussions on how to work together to maintain services across the county. However, discussions are ongoing about payments owed for the services provided by the council, including historical debts. There still remains an opportunity to reach an agreement before entering formal legal mediation, and the council hopes for a constructive resolution that benefits all involved, particularly those who rely on these important services. County councillors have raised concerns about this service separation and the associated financial issues, which has been formally escalated as a corporate risk by the council. The council continues to press for a resolution.

Council of Sanctuary: Cambridgeshire County Council has received Council of Sanctuary status, reaffirming the council's commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for people seeking sanctuary in Cambridgeshire. The council is amongst one of the first county councils in the UK to receive this national award, which celebrates local authorities that work hard to demonstrate hospitality and a warm welcome to new arrivals in the area. The title was awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, a nationally coordinated network of organisations and services that support refugees and people seeking asylum. Cambridgeshire's wider commitment to being a place of welcome and inclusion.

Tree & Woodland Strategy : The County Council has adopted a Tree and Woodland Strategy and Action Plan. It has also approved the introduction of a 'woodland pledge' to increase canopy cover and safeguard existing woodland across the council's own landholdings. A target to increase woodland canopy to 13 per cent, and to increase the hedgerows to 323km, will be included in the Council's performance management framework and in the Climate Change and Environment Strategy.

Biodiversity Strategy:

The Council has also adopted a Biodiversity Strategy with objectives and Action Plan. The key performance indicators within the action plan will form part of the Council's performance management framework. The objectives of the strategy are based on the Making Space for Nature review led by Sir John Lawton in 2010 which sets out the key principles for rebuilding nature in the UK and make it bigger, better, and more connected.

Your Councillors are always ready to help. Please do not hesitate to contact County Councillor Sebastian Kindersley on 01767 651982 or skindersley@hotmail.com or write to the Manor Barn, East Hatley, SG19 3JA District Councillor Bridget Smith (Gamlingay Ward, SCDC) is on 07729 836449 or Cllr.BridgetSmith@scambs.gov.uk

**Cllr Kindersley Cambridgeshire County Council - Gamlingay Division
Annual Report 2025**

1 Introduction

The composition of the County Council has changed during this Council's tenure. The table below shows the current composition of the Council compared to the latest election results in May 2021.

	2021	2025
Conservatives	28	21
Liberal Democrats	20	23
Labour	9	10
Independents	4	3
Unaligned	0	4

Local elections for all 61 County Councillors across our 59 electoral divisions will be taking place on Thursday 1 May 2025. I would encourage everyone who is registered to vote to take part in the forthcoming County Council Elections as well as the election of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Mayor. As you know I have now stood down (assuming you are reading this post-May 1st).

The Council

The Joint Administration of Liberal Democrat, Labour and Independent councillors continues to run the Council. Our vision for Cambridgeshire remains unchanged and we are committed to creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire.

In 2024/25 I continued to be the Chair of the Council which is a very great privilege especially as I had the honour of being Chair before in 2016/17 - the first person to serve twice and with the upcoming Local Government Reorganization likely to be the last. As Chair, my responsibilities included upholding the council's constitution, presiding over council meetings, and promoting public involvement in council activities. I also welcomed many Royal guests to Cambridgeshire and attended Civic events across the county at the invitation of Council Chairs and Town and City Mayors. The most important (and enjoyable) part of the role is participating in weekly Citizenship ceremonies – welcoming up to 60 new UK citizens to Cambridgeshire.

This municipal year I have sat on Planning Committee and the Constitution & Ethics Committee as well as being available as a substitute member of the Assets & Procurement Committee, Children's & Young People Committee and others.

I also continue to sit on the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority where I chair the Policy & Resources Committee. We have appointed a new Chief Fire Officer, Matthew Warren, and despite a difficult financial position the Fire Service still represents amazing value with brilliant service to Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents.

Strategy, Resources & Performance

The Council set a balanced budget in February 2025, though this is becoming increasingly difficult for councils of all political colours across the country. An increasing number of local authorities are issuing 'Section 114' notices—the nearest council equivalent to bankruptcy. A 2023 poll of English councillors for the New Statesman found that a quarter of them believed that their council would soon go bankrupt, with 6 per cent saying this was 'very likely'. Councillors acknowledged the challenges the council is facing with the demand for services, increasing complexity of need, inflation and market failures. Despite this, the business plan and budget process has been about listening to residents which is why more than £56m is being invested into highways maintenance.

The county council had to close a gap of £35.1m – with 73% of the Council's net spend now being funded from Council Tax.

The council has prioritised several key areas, based on resident feedback through its Quality-of-Life survey, and are aligned to its vision to make Cambridgeshire greener, fairer and more caring: Investment of more than £56m in highways maintenance, sustaining critical adults and children's social care and continuing to support vulnerable communities.

The Council increased its portion of council tax by 4.99% in total including a 2% hypothecation for adult social services (i.e. it cannot be spent on anything else). This increase will raise £20m of local income to help maintain and protect critical services for the most vulnerable communities. For most of our residents in Band A-D properties that will mean between an extra £1.04 pence to £1.55 a week.

For the second year, the county council commissioned the Quality of Life Survey involving more than 5,500 residents. We asked our residents to tell us what it is like for them living in Cambridgeshire and what concerns them most and we were delighted that so many people have been willing to participate.

We heard our residents continue to feel happy, safe and belong which is heartening. However, they have given a clear message about the challenges they are facing around the cost of living crisis. It is particularly concerning that residents are telling us that they are having to cut back on heating and nutritious food. Whilst work to tackle poverty is still ongoing, we clearly need to keep looking at what we can do to support our residents further if we want to deliver on our vision to be a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire. The survey also tells us that fewer people are struggling with mental and physical health this year which is a positive change for our residents.

Adults & Health

The Adults and Health Committee has a significant role in ensuring 'health inequalities are reduced' and 'people enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs', as part of our Strategic Framework

We have confirmed our commitment to ensuring ongoing support for people with learning disabilities and their families, following changes to how the council works with the NHS in Cambridgeshire. The Learning Disability Partnership (LDP), which has provided integrated health and social care support for adults with learning disabilities in Cambridgeshire, will be formally dissolved from 1 April 2025.

The Council and the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Integrated Care Board (ICB) are continuing discussions on how to work together to maintain services across the county. However, discussions are ongoing about payments owed for the services provided by the council, including historical debts. There still remains an opportunity to reach an agreement before entering formal legal mediation, and the council hopes for a constructive resolution that benefits all involved, particularly those who rely on these important services.

County councillors have raised concerns about this service separation and the associated financial issues, which has been formally escalated as a corporate risk by the council. Reports presented to the Adults and Health Committee, have highlighted the potential impact of these unresolved issues, and the council continues to press for a resolution.

Children & Young People

In Cambridgeshire, between 2020 and 2024, there was a 70% increase in children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), cost increases in home to school transport and in autism services over the same period. The council is facing significant pressures to meet the demand and costs of supporting children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities. Currently we do not receive adequate funding from Government to meet the need. We are doing all we can locally to manage the increased pressures on funding as result of this rising demand. We have recently submitted a revised Safety Valve proposal to the Department for Education to help the council to manage these dual pressures of rising demand and costs.

Part of the proposals include a new Special School on the First School site in Gamlingay which I am very enthusiastic about. Although it is being help up for review by the Dept of Education I am hopeful the Meridian Trust will be given the go ahead to start works soon. Fingers crossed.

The Council endorsed a motion for an urgent national review of the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system at this March's Full Council meeting. The motion called on the council's Chief Executive to write to Secretary of State for Education and the Minister for Schools to take assertive action to address the SEND crisis recognising that for the lowest funded Local Authority areas, like Cambridgeshire, children and young people are the most impacted because the funding received is not sufficient to meet the existing needs. A recent report from the Local Government Association and the County Councils Network, stated that reform was necessary, essential, and unavoidable, which was an honest and thorough assessment of the SEND crisis.

COSMIC

COSMIC (Communities, Social Mobility & Inclusion Committee) has continued to oversee the Household Support Fund, which supports people experiencing immediate financial hardship to pay for essential items. An increasing number of families are struggling financially at the moment.

COSMIC unanimously approved the renewal of a scheme which helps survivors of domestic abuse to feel safer and more secure in their homes. This is key to the delivery of Cambridgeshire's Safe Accommodation Strategy, and Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy, and is provided in conjunction with working with a domestic abuse specialist. The survivor will be given a bespoke safety and support plan focused on their individual needs.

I am delighted the Council has received Council of Sanctuary status, reaffirming the Council's commitments to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for people seeking sanctuary in Cambridgeshire. We are amongst one of the first county councils in the UK to receive this national award.

Poverty affects us all - either through personal experience or through the impact on those around us, family, friends and communities. No single organisation can tackle poverty alone and a new commission involving organisations from across Cambridgeshire has been launched to tackle poverty in the county. The Cambridgeshire Poverty Strategy Commission brings together a group of independent commissioners who have extensive professional experience supporting residents. This independent body is concluding its work and COSMIC committee will ensure the council responds to its recommendations with our partners.

We continue to recognise the importance of our libraries which are at the heart of our communities. Libraries are where many of the council's resident facing interactions take place and they have an essential role in our communities as places of sanctuary, knowledge and community. We have planned further improvements for our Libraries through £1.3m committed for the Libraries Plus programme, creating more flexible spaces and expanding the range of services available to our residents.

Environment

The Environment and Green Investment Committee discussed Anglian Water's proposals for the two new reservoirs and the Council will be involved as a statutory consultee on these proposals. We want to ensure ambitions for much needed growth are balanced with the significant pressures it creates on local services and infrastructure, and we will continue to work with our mayor and central government to deliver for local residents, communities and businesses.

Through the committee's stewardship, the council has reduced its direct carbon emissions by 42% and developed several major energy projects that will not only provide income but also provide renewable energy sources for the council and some of our communities including at Comberton Village College.

The Cambridgeshire Energy Retrofit Partnership (CERP) has won a national award for its success in promoting environmental best practice and quality retrofit programmes. The CERP partnership has been awarded bronze for its contribution to 'Green Public Service', these awards recognise, reward and promote environmental best practice across the public sector in the UK.

Also known as Action on Energy Cambridgeshire, CERP is a partnership between Cambridgeshire County Council and the Districts.

Highways & Transport

The condition of our roads and pavements is still a huge challenge, in Cambridgeshire as it is nationwide—a mixture of inadequate Government funding, decades of neglect, extreme weather, and in some cases poor standards of repair.

The Highways and Transport Committee agreed a £59m highways maintenance and improvement programme for 2025/26.

The county's roads need more than £400m worth of maintenance to address all the issues, and that does not include soil impacted roads, which is roughly an additional £530m.

However, the council's business plan, has enabled an additional £20m in 2025/26 to address our highway issues; a further £20m is allocated for 2026/27.

This funding, along with an additional £8m from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, will prioritise increased funding for Local Highway Improvements (LHIs), trees, weeds and vegetation, drainage maintenance, road safety, active travel, soil affected roads, highways maintenance including potholes, lining and signs, street lighting and bus shelter enhancements.

The programme, which has been produced using a new prioritisation process already agreed by the committee, means each scheme is scored against a set criterion. Such as the type of road, does it have active travel links, is it a public transport route, the condition, is it near a school or a care home and how many people use it. It means the schemes are designed to apply the right treatment suitable to that location.

Improvements include more than £30m worth of carriageway maintenance, an additional £2m on soil affected roads, more than £7m on footpath and cycleway maintenance, £1m on active travel and £4m on drainage.

Following approval at committee, the programme will now go through design and development work before delivery begins in April, running through to March 2026.

I am delighted that Church Street Gamlingay and Church Street Guilden Morden – both streets with significant longstanding issues – have been repaired alongside Croydon Hill. I was asked to submit 3 schemes for consideration for major works (the entire road through Abington Pigotts, Flecks Lane flooding issue in Wendy and a new and longer run-off at Odsey from the A505 to Station Rd Steeple Morden) and although not successful this year they will hopefully now be addressed sooner rather than later. Likewise significant works have been undertaken on the A1198 at Arrington to stop the road flooding and I very much hope these will be successful.

However, much work remains to be done before we can say we have recovered from the previous policy of managed decline that has caused so much damage to Cambridgeshire's Highways.

Staffing and Appeals

Cambridgeshire has become the first County Council to be awarded 'Gold' membership of The 5% Club's 2024-25 Employer Audit Scheme. This award recognises the Council's significant contribution to the continued development of all its employees through "earn and learn" schemes such as Apprenticeships and Graduate Development Programmes. The 5% Club works with UK employers to drive positive action towards accessible workplace learning, by looking at numbers of apprentices, sponsored students and graduates employed. The goal is to increase employment and career prospects for young people and equip them with the skills they need to become an integral part of the workforce, and of society.

It's also great that the council has been shortlisted as a finalist in four categories of the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards. The LGC Awards celebrate the very best in local government, highlighting councils across the country that demonstrate outstanding leadership, creativity, and impact in serving their communities. Being shortlisted finalists for these four awards is a huge honour and is testament to the positive changes our members and staff are driving forward.

Combined Authority

The council has reaffirmed its commitment to improving public transport accessibility and affordability by endorsing the Tiger bus fare scheme and the Mayor's recent decision to franchise bus routes, providing a more reliable and integrated service for residents. We have a modern and growing county and the transport network model that we have is not fit for purpose. We want to expand the Cambridgeshire bus network, with more routes, more destinations; we also want the local authority to be accountable for bus services.

The Combined Authority approved its spending plans from 2025/26, funding improvements to transport, skills and business growth. Separately, the Mayor's budget was also approved and confirmed that the Mayoral precept portion of council tax bills will be frozen for 2025/26. Included in the approved budget is the extension of the £2 bus fare cap to 30 June 2025, moving to a £2.50 fare cap from July to December 2025. This aims to maintain affordable and accessible travel, reduce road congestion, and ease cost-of-living pressures.

The Combined Authority secured £2.4m to support local people in getting good jobs. This funding will support skills bootcamps which are designed to equip local people with the skills they need to advance their careers. This is a fantastic collaboration between employers, learning providers, and the Combined Authority, working together to up-skill residents, fill vacancies, support the unemployed, and develop workforce talent across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Skills bootcamps are an excellent initiative, and I urge people to take advantage of them.

Local Government Reorganisation

The Government published the English Devolution White Paper in December, which set out their programme to achieve greater devolvement of powers and their intent to undertake Local Government Reorganisation.

On 5 February 2025, the Government issued an invitation to every council leader in two-tier areas of local government and neighbouring unitary authorities. The invitation asked for an interim update to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025.

Council Leaders across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together (more or less) to explore the impacts and various options for our county. We issued a response to the Minister outlining our position [The letter is available for you to read.](#)

There is a lot of work ahead of us to explore financially viable scenarios and I am pleased to share we have collectively approached reorganisation with a spirit of wanting the best for all our residents and for the local area as a whole.

Conclusion

There are hundreds of people I would like to thank for their support over my 26 years of being an elected Councillor in Cambridgeshire. The first are Council officers - over the years of working in partnership with officers and employees of the Council from top to bottom I have always been impressed by their professionalism, good humour in the face of often very difficult circumstances; their empathy for those in our communities in the most difficult situations and their willingness to work to achieving our shared goals with respect and dedication.

Secondly I have worked with fellow Councillors of all parties and none and while healthy disagreement has sometimes featured in our deliberations I can say nearly every single one has had the communities they represent at the heart of their service to Cambridgeshire.

Over 20 plus years I've represented many Parishes in the Gamlingay division - currently 13 - and I have had a warm and friendly reception from each and every one at their meetings for which I am very grateful - and I retire absolutely certain that Parish Councils are the bedrock for positive good in our communities. My thanks to the clerks and parish councillors of the parishes whose hard work keeps our communities together. Long may they continue.

Most importantly I thank the residents who put their trust in me to serve them by putting their X on the ballot paper next to my name. Local democracy depends on people stepping forward and I encourage anyone who cares about their community to stand, to serve and to make a difference. It is a role that matters. Thank you.

Verbal report: Cllr Kindersley reported that over the years, there have been several fatalities on guided busways and the Council has to pay a fine of £6 million, at £2 million per year over the next three years. The Guided Busways now have a dedicated Health and Safety team, to hopefully prevent this from ever happening in the future. He also reported that a fire engine on its way to an incident had crashed into a guided bus, which in turn crashed into another guided bus. There were several injured in the crash, who are all receiving treatment.

Councillor Kindersley reiterated his intention to stand down at the election on 1st May. He would like to thank everyone who has been kind and supportive of his job as a Councillor, and he has felt privileged to serve the area. Council stated that he would be missed and councillor Kindersley left his last meeting with Croydon PC to a round of applause.



Petersfield Church of England Aided Primary School Annual Report – 2025

Mrs Meredith reports - I spoke to a group of 5 children from years 2-6 (6–11-year-olds). The children were articulate and confident and were very keen to talk about our school.

I asked them to imagine that they were talking to a child who was thinking of coming to our school. What would they tell this child about the school to persuade them that this was a good idea? One of the children had started our school just a few months ago and others had joined later than their peers, so there was experiences to be shared of being the new arrival. The youngest child said that art was a favourite lesson with lots of painting and drawing. She recently had to draw a garden, which she particularly enjoyed.

PE was a particular favourite. The children were so pleased that they had three sessions a week and felt very lucky. They had two sessions with a PE coach and then they had a Commando Joe session led by Dan. This is a regular favourite. They love these sessions which involve team building, challenges, competitions between classes and 'they motivate people to do better'. They are currently doing football and tennis in PE. Football remains a firm favourite.

One child stated that everyone is so friendly. New children, outside of EYFS, aren't allocated 'buddies', as one child said, 'there is a rush to support someone new'. Teachers are always checking in with the new children, too.

Another child said that they loved Spanish and others agreed. The Spanish teacher is fun and 'super nice' and they learn something new in every lesson and do exciting activities such as Food Battleships which help them to review their learning. They start learning Spanish in Y3.

The other very popular things were breaktime and lunchtime. They recognised they were very lucky as not all schools get a 60-minute lunch break. It means they don't have to rush to eat their lunch and have plenty of time to socialise and play. There are a wide variety of activities: football, trim trail, manhunt etc. When the footballers are called in to play then others can use that space, too.

The child who had most recently joined the school in upper key stage 2 was very positive about her experience and she said she made friends very quickly. It is always a delight to talk to the children they are so happy and positive.

Headteachers' report – In the Bible, John 10:10 Jesus says “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”. As a Church of England Aided Primary School, our school vision of ‘Live Life to the Full’ informs every aspect of our decision making and drives our actions as we strive in this time and this place to enable all children and adults in our school community to flourish.

To enable us to live our school vision, we have identified our 2024-2025 school priorities to be:

1. Ensure Key Stage and Subject Leaders are responsible and accountable for ensuring that the curriculum and pastoral provision meets pupil need.
2. Through internal coaching and external support, further develop the quality of learning and teaching.

Please do look at the '[Latest News](#)' on the homepage of our school website www.petersfield.cambs.sch.uk and the website [Gallery](#) to hear more about the exciting place of learning that we are proud to call Petersfield School! The Bishop's 2025 Lent Challenge encouraged us to notice the good things around us. Particular recent highlights include a Paralympian visit, the English Challenge success, our Mothers' Day celebration, the FOPs disco and the many sporting opportunities and events (such as cross country and bowling) that pupils have participated in school and at competitions this year. Since our last report, we are delighted that Miss Swain, Mrs Budge and Miss Squires have joined our staff team.

If you wish to contact us or find out more, join our wonderful volunteers who support children in activities such as reading, sewing, coding, administration and playing, please do not hesitate to do so by calling 01223 207382 or emailing office@petersfield.cambs.sch.uk. We very much look forward to welcoming you!

Linda Meredith & Jane Johnson, Laura Penrose & Lynsey Perkins, Co-Chairs of Governors & Co-Headteachers



Croydon Reading Room Charity Number 1185668 Annual Review 2024/25

The Reading Room is continuing to be used regularly with additional activities, such as a Gong Bed on Sunday afternoon and The Croydon Kids Club for which rethink you! Pilates, Art & Craft Classes, The Croydon Cafe, and a Monthly Book Club are still going strong though we need more support for our Art & Craft club.

The Reading Room remains fully registered as a Charity and we have a new Trustee, Maggie John. Michael Norie has helped me to cut the grass and Maggie and other villagers help with the gardens. We are all very concerned about the falling trees in the moat and a bad smell. Mr Farrer has removed several close trees last year, but more needs to be done to protect the Reading Rooms. I have produced a report which I need to give him.. The bench is going to be replaced next month.

We are very grateful for the Parish Council's support with the WI FI and Web Site for the Reading Room & the ongoing funding. It is SO appreciated as this year things have been very tight again.

The new flooring still looks good and the building is sound and John put in a gate to secure the terrace from Geese! Our thanks to John, Frank and Tim. The new Eco efficient heating is working well - though WE MUST ALL REMEMBER TO SWITCH IT OFF and the Play Area and Baby changing facilities are well used & enjoyed!

We had a fire safety check two years ago and are hoping to have the trees surveyed & the building's structure checked again this year. We still hope to help clear up the moat which could be such a wild life sanctuary in time. We still have Padel Tennis sessions, and perhaps more fitness sessions and a Pop up Shop or Pop Up Pub would be nice!

Although retired I still work at least 20 hours a week for the NHS and have seven beautiful grandchildren!

My thanks to all the Trustees, and the continuing support of the Parish Council. I wish all of you good health & safe passage through this next 12 months

AGM ; 10th June 2025

Diana Walters

TRUSTEES; Chairman, Bookings Clerk & caretaker; Diana Walters.

Secretary; Janice Horsford. Treasurer; Tim Walters, Chris Elsey, Frank Sole, Melita Brownrigg, Chris Sole, and Maggie John.

Community Reports:

Croydon Community Clear-up and Litter Picks

Report to the Annual Parish Council Meeting 16th April

The main event of the year took place on 1st March 2025. Ten people in total turned out on a chilly Saturday morning. The initial gathering was as usual in front of Clopton Close where the necessary equipment was made available. A list of potential tasks had been drawn up in advance and this provided an opportunity for volunteers to sign against selected tasks which helped to provide guidance and avoided duplication. Key tasks accomplished were litter picking along the length of the High Street and part way up Church Lane, also from close to Croydon Hill Farm down almost to the junction between Larkins Road and Lower Road. A separate effort was also made to clear along a stretch of Lower Road.

In addition to litter picking, some overhanging brambles and branches were cut back from the footpath running alongside the High Street. Work was also carried out to clear the path where it narrows due to grass encroachment from between Orchard Lodge towards Church Farm Heights, though more work is required. The considerable build-up of earth at the eastern ends of the parking areas at both Clopton Close and by the water control cabinet were dug out and cleared away. It was a surprise to later learn that this activity was not welcomed by some residents as much as might have been expected!

In terms of equipment, this was the first outing of the extra long litter pickers and these proved invaluable for reaching inside wide roadside hedgerows and ditches, so have proved well worth their purchase, thank you. The four litter picking warning signs were used and proved essential for protecting volunteers, though sadly not 100% effective in slowing all speeding vehicles. Very much on the plus side, were the thanks and encouragements received from some passing motorists and cyclists. Four additional warning signs for those volunteering themselves to work along Lower Road it is felt must be an essential addition. A potential custodian for these has already come forward.

In total, twenty black bags of litter etc were collected together with a large road warning sign, plus various plastic car body parts. As on previous occasions all bags and material were speedily collected by SCDC operatives. One significant and most unwelcome change was the large number (around twenty) of large urine filled plastic bottles discarded along the roadside, sometimes in groups of perhaps six at a time. These posed a particular difficulty due to their heavy weight which pickers were unable to handle. More importantly they required emptying as they became too heavy also for the black bags. Quite apart from the distasteful task of needing to empty these, clearly, this poses something of a health hazard for volunteers, some of whom may be put off from future clearing.

There was general agreement among the team that this new hazard should be brought to the attention of this Parish Council, District and County Councillors. It was felt that a communication should be sent to Environmental Health teams to consider what steps might be taken to discourage this now prevalent discarding. Disposal when back home has got to be the clear message. Very recently some unsatisfactory replies have been received from SCDC officials but these have not proposed any action such as an advertising or literature campaign to dissuade this anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that Councillors at all levels will continue to press this matter with SCDC. Other than this one flagged issue, another successful effort.

Finally, thanks to Parish Councillors and SCDC for the support given to date and help with the supply of equipment.

Malcolm Ralph pp Croydon Clear-up Team

Croydon Café

It is getting on for 3 years now since we started the Café and I'm pleased to say it is still going strong with lots of friendly chatting and plenty of cake!!!

Our heartfelt thanks to the Parish Council for their continuing support which is much appreciated.

Regards

Val and Carol

The Croydon café is now in its 3rd year of operation. The response has been good and we generally have about 12 visitors a session. We have met with several outside community groups over the time including the Police. There have also been times when our sessions have had a focus e.g. knitted poppies for a Remembrance Day display. Although we only charge £1 per visit we still seem to make a small profit. This is mostly due to kind donations of cakes from fellow villagers and of course the generosity of the Parish Council who pay for our Reading Room rental. With the profit made, we host a free villagers' lunch annually, sometimes combining this with national initiatives e.g. The Big Lunch, Queens Jubilee, King's Coronation. We tried out a Friday monthly coffee morning but this was not so popular and was stopped after the trial. We thank you for your continued support.

Jackie

All Saints' Church, Croydon cum Clopto'

Fabric Report to the Annual Parish Council Meeting 16th April 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to report on All Saints' Croydon. Sorry we can't be with you this evening but with it being Holy Week we are in attendance at services.

Fabric: After several years of reporting on major structural concerns about the collapsing Chancel floor over the Downing Crypt, decayed ancient windows including two propped with timber, movement of the leaning South Arcade, and cracks at the base of the Tower, last year's annual report finished on an upbeat note. Several window and crack repairs had been completed, and even better, following a visit from Historic England's (HE) Buildings at Risk Team (BAR), it was reported very positively that the PCC had been strongly invited to make an application for funding directly to HE itself as the National Lottery had still not emerged from its Covid induced shut down to new applications. So, it is sad and very frustrating to report today that the promised positive ending of last year has turned out to be at best a waste of time, at worst a bit of a charade, as HE funding in the end has not been forthcoming.

Following the invitation from HE to make an application much of the past year was spent building a specialist team and putting together a detailed and costed work programme. This included inside and outside investigations of foundations and site conditions using deep boreholes and trial pits, drainage investigations, further extensive monitoring of building

movements, and crucially the design of repair schemes for the Chancel Floor and also stabilisation of the South Arcade. The Christmas and New Year periods were particularly busy meeting the declared early January submission date. During February further requests were received for information and around the end of the month we received the good news that the East of England Regional Panel supported the application. During March we learned that the application faced yet another tier of HE decision making at a National Panel. Again further requests were received but then all fell silent. Worse still, it was only after repeated requests for a decision that finally we were informed only last week that the application had fallen at this final hurdle. Naturally, this news was very disappointing, and particularly so given the large demands placed on us, and that we had no forewarning of the HE multi-layered decision process. On the plus side, through all these twists and turns we have been well supported by the Diocesan Historic Church Buildings Support Officer, and it is telling that her description of the key reason behind this rejection was a “misalignment of the criteria between the HE Regional and National Panels”. A message has been sent by the Croydon team to HE emphasising the almost two years of wasted effort and extra burden placed on the PCC. The Diocesan Support Officer has indicated that she will be submitting a “formal complaint” on behalf of Croydon and another small parish.

The plain fact is that HE’s decision now leaves us returning to the National Lottery, more or less back full circle to where we were in April 2020 when the Lottery closed its doors to new applications in response to the Covid outbreak. Thankfully, the Lottery reopened around the turn of this year. Early reports are that there appears to be a heightened appreciation of need given the nearly five years of hiatus, and of greater realism about the demands being placed on small communities, but only time will tell. It’s been said to us recently that setbacks such as this should be regarded as no more than “delayed success”. This is a great thought and certainly how we intend to go forward with renewed determination.

Picking up for a moment on the continued monitoring of building movements, this has been described in some detail in previous reports. Suffice to say this will continue with local labour plus the invaluable support from Graham Pledger the (volunteer!) Diocesan Structural Adviser, though at a lower intensity and focusing only on key areas of movement.

Churchyards: Sympathetic management of the cut areas in the old churchyard has been a major focus during the past year as a very careful balance is being developed as between safety and trip hazards, the needs of families maintaining graves, and encouraging a more nature friendly approach. Thanks once again to Michael Norie for his work; thanks also to the Parish Council for continuing to contribute to the cost of churchyard maintenance. The recently purchased cordless strimmer/brushwood cutter has begun being used and has already shown that it will be a very helpful asset. The conservation and biodiversity project is continuing with adjustments as further learning takes place and we are looking forward to a colourful season this year and a possible bid for a Wildlife Trust Silver Award. We would encourage all local residents to visit and, if they wish, to make use of the developing sitting areas. Thanks especially to Maggie and Judith for coordinating this work, and thanks also to Jake Pillinger, a Croydon youngster, who has contributed as part of his working towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award. Thanks also to the Rectory owner for helping with extensive clearing of dead and dying elm trees in the NW corner of the old churchyard.

Briefly on finances: What seems to have developed into the biennial Croydon Classic Vehicle Show was held on Sunday 8th September and was another enjoyable and successful event. After concerns at the planning stage about possibly very large numbers of visiting vehicles, in the end a very showery early morning reduced the numbers of show vehicles to a little under the previous show in 2022. Despite this, over £8,300 was taken on the day, and after expenses over £2750 was handed over to both Church and Reading Room funds. Thanks to the Sole family for again loaning their fields. Thanks also to all who helped in any way to make this event another great success.

For this year, a new style of summer Fete is in the early stages of planning. Once again monies raised will go towards supporting the Reading Room and Church. Help is certainly needed, and all would be most welcome to join the friendly team, and particularly any more recent residents. Please message Jackie (07999-574481) or Di (07808-738085).

We would again remind everyone how easy it is to financially help All Saints' to remain open and functioning as a parish church. It is worthy of note that Croydon Parochial Church Council is required to make a sizeable annual contribution to the Diocese of Ely for parish ministry costs. It also has to pay all of the running costs needed to keep the church open and functioning. The fact is that for both of these outlays, no external funding is received from any organisation, neither from the Church of England, the Government, nor the Local Authority. All of these costs need to be found from local giving and events. Several Croydon households have already joined the Parish Giving Scheme which, with ease and no fee at all, collects one off and regular giving payments on behalf of Croydon Church. This has become the key lifeline for keeping All Saints' open and functioning for regular services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, burials, or simply to provide a space for quiet reflection. Even if your interest is solely its historical importance, or its place in the village landscape, then please do consider joining the Parish Giving Scheme with regular giving, however small. It is really easy to do, simply go to www.parishgiving.org.uk then find Croydon Church (postcode SG8 ODL) or use the unique parish code 140614137. Thank you.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit a report to the annual meeting, and thank you everyone for your attention.

Malcolm Ralph and Carol McGeoch – Churchwardens All Saints' Croydon cum Clopton

Tree Wardens Report to Croydon PC AGM April 2025

Trees provided by SCDC continue to flourish. Previous plantings at Clopton Close are adding colour to the village. We are grateful to the PCC for arranging provision for the planting of six saplings this season, 3 each of hazel and silver birch, in the new churchyard as part of the planned wildlife foraging hedgerow. Despite the dry weather, the efforts of volunteers to water the saplings have proved invaluable, and the young trees are currently thriving. Further watering will, no doubt, be needed for this and the next year to ensure establishment.

The lack of publicly owned land, other than the small strip at Clopton Close, means that additional tree planting in the village – and wider parish – depends on the efforts of landowners – from residents with a small garden to the local farmers. We are pleased to report much local planting, from a large apple tree plantation and considerable tree and hedge plantings associated with recent developments and we want to encourage further planting wherever practical. Planting the right tree in the right location is crucial and we can offer advice on the species that thrive – or otherwise – in our area.

With this in mind, and to publicise that the tree wardens can offer advice and contacts where needed, we propose to hold a "Tree Wardens Competition" at the forthcoming village fete. This will take the form of an accessible quiz with the prize being either a suitable tree or a tree related product. A display will feature individual tree species, and together with a planned promotion of the village What's App site "Croydon Trees and Wildlife" which currently has 20 members, is primarily aimed at increasing awareness and appreciation of our natural environment. The designated County Wildlife Sites of Rouses and Gilrags Woods and the history of Croydon Plantation will feature, and the tree wardens will attempt to address tree related questions.

Judith Pillinger
Maggie John

Biodiversity and Conservation report to the Croydon Parish Council Annual General Meeting on 16/04/2025.

The focus of activity in Croydon has again been the Conservation Project located in the two churchyards at All Saints. This is a joint initiative between the Diocese of Ely and the Cambridgeshire/Bedfordshire/Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. We have a detailed management plan and will continue to strive towards protecting and promoting biodiversity within the environment of this much loved local space. This year the Silver Award may be within our grasp.

The Conservation Project sits within the scope of the Cambridgeshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy which is a key component of the Environment Act 2021. The LNRS brings together conservation organisations, including the Wildlife Trusts, in order to share information and analysis and identify priorities for the region. This work is essential as the average decline in species' abundance of 32% in England is considerably greater than for the UK as a whole (19%). East Anglia suffers more than other parts of England due to the high percentage of land which has been subject to intensive agriculture. Sadly, Cambridgeshire is one of the most nature-depleted areas in England, so every little helps if we are to reverse the collapse of eco-systems on which we depend for food, fresh water and clean air.

In Croydon we continue to do what we can with limited resources. We have implemented the Conservation Management Plan primarily through timing the grass cutting in the churchyards to optimise wild flower abundance, creating food for pollinators from March to November. The late Autumn cut means that wildflower meadows can look scruffy from August onwards but we hope that a deeper understanding of how important the scruffy stage is for the setting of seeds for next year's growth will lead to increased patience and tolerance of this necessary cycle.

We conduct regular counts of wildflowers, butterflies and birds. During the Summer months of 2024 the wildflowers were well over 70 species, which is an increase from our pre-covid counts which were around 60. Last Summer saw some first recordings of ploughman's spikenard, saxifrage burnett, and common spotted orchid. The recent March flower count identified all the usual suspects for the time of year, including cowslips, ground ivy, primroses, Alexander's, salsify, cow parsley, cow parsnip, buttercup and nettles. Many more should be emerging in the next few weeks.

We have continued to make use of grants from SCDC to plant saplings in the churchyards. Another six small trees were added this Spring. The unseasonal dry spell in March meant that these young trees had to be watered to help them to establish. In September we had a stall at the Car Show which was well received. We invited visitors to make bug hotels and bird feeders, we had an entertaining 'cabinet of curiosities', and the competition to guess the number of peanuts in a feeder was very popular. We had displays focussing on individual plant species found in the churchyards and information regarding the loss of biodiversity and remedial actions to bring about change. There continues to be a display in the church and this is regularly updated.

We have been working hard to change the balance of species in the lower section of the new churchyard to reduce the dominance of bind weed and course grass, not an easy task. Butterflies so far this year include brimstone, peacock, cabbage white, comma, speckled wood and orange tip. The warmer months should bring tortoiseshell and painted lady, red admiral, meadow brown and gatekeepers, and the lovely marbled white. Last year was bad for butterflies due to the heavy rain in Spring which washed eggs off the host plants (mainly nettles). This year we have had a dry Spring, which will also create problems.

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The first swallows have been sighted and the early migrants are arriving, lots of black cap and chaff. No cuckoo yet, but surely any day. There have been numerous sightings of barn owls in the village, reported in the Croydon Trees and Wildlife Whatsapp group. We plan to have a presence at the village event in July, promoting conservation and biodiversity, and sharing our growing understanding of why this is such an important issue for everyone.

Maggie John
Judith Pillinger

Chair of the Parish Council Report 2025 - Mr Garth Wheeler

Planning

The council has considered several applications this year and council made comments as appropriate.

East West Rail

The proposed new East West Rail link continues to be an area of concern in our area.

Speedwatch

For some time, the PC has discussed with the community group the possibility of starting a Speed watch group. We still need volunteers to come forward to get this off the ground. If you are interested in helping out, please let me know. We are also investigating traffic calming measures around the corner by the War Memorial.

Precept

The Precept is a tax that Parish Councils charge their local electors to meet their budget requirements.

Parish Councils do not receive any direct funding from central government so rely on their precept. The Parish Council Precept is part of the Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments. The Council has budgeted £8,390 for what it believes it will cost to manage the village for the next financial year (2025-2026).

This sum covers our costs which include for example, rental of the Reading Rooms, Clerk's salary and expenses, website and cemetery grass cutting.

Thanks

Many people contribute to the life of the Parish and we are grateful for all your support.

This year has seen the new Community Café going from strength to strength and is appreciated by many. Thank you to all those who are on the maintenance rota for the AED.

Thanks to Di Walters and the Trustees for continuing to improve the building for the benefit of village. Additional thanks to Maggie and Judith for their efforts as tree wardens and Malcolm and the litter pickers.

Thanks to all the Councillors and of course Marian for her tireless work as Clerk, for which we are all very grateful. Marian is retiring at the end of July after 39 years of outstanding service and dedication.

Finally, I will be standing down as Chair, and from the council at the May meeting. I feel it would be good for the new Chair to gain as much knowledge from Marian as they can before we get a new Clerk.

Croydon Parish Council Accounts April 2024 - March 2025

Receipts	
Precept	£6,755.00
NSI Interest	£198.68
VAT reclaimed	£91.80
Total Receipts	£7,045.48
Restricted Funds	
Community Fund	
Balance 1 April 2024	£16,319.82
NSI Interest	£198.68
Balance 31 March 2025	£16,518.50
Balances at 31 March 2025	
Investment Account	£20,012.38
Bank Account	£5,216.51
less unpresented cheques	
100308	-£70.00
100313	-£68.34
Total	£25,090.55

Payments	
Reading Room rental - PC	£304.00
Reading Room rental - Café	£504.00
Reading Room rental - Big Lunch	£24.00
Big Lunch food contribution	£60.00
Reading Room rental - Bazaar	£48.00
Churchyard maintenance Croydon PCC	£500.00
Insurance	£562.86
Visual Graphix (litter pick signs)	£136.68
WC Portables - Car Show toilets	£384.00
Clerk - annual salary	£1,650.00
Clerk - petty cash	£89.47
Clerk - IT allowance	£50.00
Internal Auditor	£75.00
Bank charges	£25.00
Strimmer for church Biodiversity project	£439.00
RBL wreath	£20.00
Defibrillator battery	£354.00
Defibrillator pads	£86.34
CPRE membership	£60.00
Village Christmas tree	£47.50
Subs to SLCC Association	£80.00
Website hosting	£70.00
Sanders and Jay (problem)	£60.00
Sanders and Jay - annual contract	£479.04
Sub total	£6,108.89
Restricted funds	
No payments this financial year	£0.00
Balance at 31 March 2024	£24,153.96
add receipts	£7,045.48
less payments	-£6,108.89
Total	£25,090.55

The clerk distributed the AGM accounts to those present, explaining the unexpected payments of bank charges, and why that had come about. There were no questions on the accounts.

The clerk reported that the Community Benefit Fund had not been used in this financial year and the addition was from the interest on the NSI account.

Village Matters:

Defibrillator: New pads and a battery have been purchased this year, so the defibrillator is in good condition for the next few years. Volunteers continue to monitor, for which the village is grateful.

Litter Pick Signs: Two more signs have been purchased as originally requested, but it seems as though a further two might be required.

Minor Highway Improvements: The clerk met with Matthew Larter from CCC highways, regarding the proposal to move the 30 mph limit back to the Croydon village sign. It is hoped that by doing this, traffic will be slowed sufficiently to take the bends safely. The clerk was asked if council would be able to increase their financial contribution to the scheme to £10k from £5k. Following discussion it was proposed by Mr Buchanan that the increase should be made, Seconded by Mr Wheeler. There was a majority vote in favour, should the scheme gain approval. Council will not hear the outcome until the autumn.

Public Session:

There were no comments or questions from the floor.

Matters requiring Council Attention:

Behaviour at meetings: The Clerk had prepared a possible Behaviour policy for councillors to peruse and decide whether or not to adopt, or have some ideas on what they would like to suggest. This will be recirculated for the May meeting for amendments/comment. or a rewrite.

Notice Board: Council has already decided in principle to purchase a replacement for the old wooden notice board, erected circa 1983. It has been mended several times and is getting beyond sensible repair. The clerk has found some websites and prices for councillors to start with, and hopefully choose a board or come up with some alternatives. There is currently around £1,000 in the Street Furniture nominal.

Planning:

Proposal: Erection of an equipment store

Site address: Low Farm, Acacia Farmhouse Lower Road Croydon

Reference: 25/01140/HFUL

Public Access Link: <https://applications.greatercambridgeplanning.org/online-applications/PLAN/25/01140/HFUL>

Councillors inspected the plans and after discussion it was proposed by Mr Buchanan and seconded by Mr Sole that there should be no objections to this application. All in favour.

Proposal: Erection of an equipment store

Site address: Low Farm, Acacia Farmhouse Lower Road Croydon

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There were a lot of documents associated with this application, but the clerk had only printed out enough to indicate the position of the dwelling, layout of the building and the site, which used the original access. A further complication was that the prints were only A4 and the originals were A1. Councillors were able to see what was necessary and after a discussion it was proposed by Mrs Sole and seconded by Mr Barnes that there should be no objections to this application. All in favour.

The clerk will add these comments to the South Cambs website immediately, as one of the applications had a deadline of 17 April.

The next Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday 15 April 2026 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm. The next regular parish council meeting will be on Wednesday 21 May 2025 in the Reading Room at 7.30pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed at 8.47pm.

Signed Date

Clerk was asked to record that, in line with GDPR, all those mentioned in reports have given their permission for their names to be published.

DRAFT