

South Cambs Magazine Spring 2026

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Hello

Welcome to the spring edition of South Cambs Magazine

As we welcome longer days and warmer weather, there's a renewed buzz of activity across South Cambridgeshire.

This edition includes several important updates on how we're planning for the year ahead. Councillors are currently setting our budget and aspirations building on last year's long term Corporate Plan and its vision for a fairer, kinder and greener South Cambridgeshire. Inside, you can see the key actions we'll be working on - from supporting you and building new Council homes to expanding food waste collections and ensuring services offer even more value for money. To find out more, turn to pages eight and nine.

There's a feature on local government reorganisation on page 6. The Government is consulting on proposals to replace county and district councils with new unitary authorities, and the consultation is now open. We're encouraging everyone to review the proposals and share views on how local services should be shaped for the future.

Elections for all 45 district council seats, plus some parish and town councils, take place on Thursday 7 May. Make sure you're registered to vote and aware of your options for postal or proxy voting. Read more details on page 8.

We highlight the Age UK Community Warden Service, which offers daily contact, practical help and friendly companionship to help older residents live independently and confidently at home. There are 12 schemes across South Cambs so do turn to page 16 to find out more about how it works and how to access a free two week trial.

To help you enjoy staying active, there's plenty inside this magazine. From new walking netball groups to exercise referral and cardiac classes, plus Easter and summer netball camps, there are lots of options outlined page 16.

Cllr Bridget Smith
Leader
South Cambridgeshire District Council

Contact us

It's easier to contact us online. You can do more online at a time to suit you.

Chat with SAM, our artificial intelligence (AI) assistant

SAM can help you instantly, or signpost you to the relevant team that can support you further. Just click on the speech bubble icon on our website and ask SAM a question.

www.scams.gov.uk

Create a My South Cambs account

See personalised information – such as your Council Tax payments or your Benefits account.

<https://mysouthcambs.scams.gov.uk>

Or you can email us, phone us, write to us, visit our offices, or get in touch using our social media channels.

email: scdc@scams.gov.uk phone: 01954 713 000

South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambs Hall, Cambourne Business Park,
Cambourne, CB23 6EA

Facebook, LinkedIn: South Cambridgeshire District Council

X, Instagram: @SouthCambs

If you phone us

Our phone line is available 8am to 5:30pm on weekdays - apart from Wednesdays when it stays open later until 6:30pm.

Our AI-powered telephone system makes it easier and faster for you to get the help you need.

When you phone, you'll be asked to briefly explain what your enquiry is about. The more specific you are, the better – our system uses your response to connect you directly with the right advisor, who's trained to deal with your particular issue. Prefer to speak to someone straight away? That's fine. You can still choose to speak to an advisor at any time!

This system is all about giving you a smoother and faster service. So next time you call, try to be as specific as possible.

If you visit us

Our office opening hours are 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. If you come to the office, we'll try our very best to resolve your query there and then. If we can't, our advisors will book you a follow-up appointment when you will be able to speak to someone. Alternatively, you can book your own appointment at www.scambbs.gov.uk/book-an-appointment

Request a large print copy communications@scambbs.gov.uk

South Cambs Magazine

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Putting you first

If you phone us we will:

- resolve your enquiry as quickly as possible.
- provide voicemail if the person you need is unavailable.
- answer your phone message within three working days.

If you write to us we will:

- reply to your letter or email within 10 working days.

If we write to you we will:

- write in plain language.

- arrange for translation, large type, braille or audio tapes upon request.

If we visit you we will:

- carry identification that you can check with a phone call.
- arrive at the time we say we will, or give you as much notice as possible if we have to change the time.

If we get it wrong we will:

- apologise if we have made a mistake or failed to meet our standards.
- acknowledge your written complaint within three working days.
- reply in full to your complaint within 10 working days.

Assisted digital service support

We run an Assisted Digital Service Support to ensure nobody is excluded from completing an online application or e-form due to difficulty with digital skills or access to a computer. Eligible residents are offered telephone support or face to face help by one of our contact centre advisors. Your local library or Parish Council hub can also help. To take advantage of this service, just call us on 01954 713 000.

News in brief

Cambridge South station: Connecting communities sustainably

Opening in summer 2026, Cambridge South station will offer South Cambridgeshire residents improved, sustainable access to healthcare, employment, education, and leisure. Located on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, the station will connect directly to Addenbrooke's and Royal Papworth hospitals, making travel easier for patients, staff, and visitors. It also links communities to thriving life science and academic careers, with better access to Long Road Sixth Form College and the Cambridge Academy for Science and Technology. Cycle parking, step-free access, and nearby green spaces support active, inclusive travel. Cambridge South is a big step toward cleaner air, reduced congestion, and a more connected future.

See the National Rail website for timetable information at www.nationalrail.co.uk

Ash and dust in wheelie bins

Please ensure any cooled ash from log-burners, BBQs or fire pits or dust from vacuum cleaners is gathered within a sack before being put into your black wheelie bin. Clouds of loose ash and dust can blow into the air when bins are tipped, so it must be contained. If possible, dampen ash with water before disposal. Bins found to contain loose ash or dust will not be emptied. Wood ash will no longer be accepted in the green bin – all dust and ash should be bagged and placed in the black bin. Thank you.

New Council house record

By the end of January, our New Build Council house team had completed a record 113 new affordable homes for the financial year 2025/26. There are still a few more weeks to increase this number with the Council expected to reach 140 homes by Tuesday 31 March, almost double our yearly target. This is a significant achievement as our previous highest annual total was 91 homes. There are a variety of Council homes available to rent and shared ownership homes across South Cambridgeshire.

You can find out more about new build council home developments at www.scams.gov.uk/housing

Council support boosts Cambridgeshire Cats' Premier Division push

The Cambridgeshire Cats, an American Football team based in Shelford, are continuing to build on their success at the highest level of British American Football, thanks in part to funding from us. Founded in 1984, the Cats are one of the country's longest-established teams and currently compete in the BAFA Premier Division. The club offers a wide range of opportunities, from playing and coaching roles to vital backroom support.

Support from our 'Let's Get South Cambridgeshire Active' grant helped fund rookie pre-season training sessions, additional coaching support and promotion, strengthening grassroots participation and long-term development.

Visit cambridgeshirecats.com to learn more and get involved.

Thousands of comments on Greater Cambridge Local Plan

We received over 4,500 comments from residents, community groups, and local organisations during the latest consultation on the draft Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

The new Plan, which will cover both Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire, sets out where new homes and workplaces could be built to meet our area's growing economic and housing needs - alongside the utilities, services, green spaces, and community facilities to support them.

The Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service we share with Cambridge City Council engaged with local communities at more than 75 events during the eight week period. All comments submitted during the consultation are now being processed and will help shape the final version of the Plan. A further round of consultation will take place later this year before the Plan is submitted to Government for examination.

Keep up to date at www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/local-plan

Northstowe's Unity Centre ready to welcome the community

Northstowe's new permanent community centre, named the Unity Centre, is a two-storey, L-shaped building comprising of a large hall, café, meeting rooms, office accommodation, a messy-play room, a health visitor room, and a Changing Places facility.

The building has been constructed using a 100% timber frame with super-sustainable cross-laminated timber. It incorporates a range of sustainable features, including solar panels, green roof areas, and ground source heat pumps, helping to minimise running costs and reduce environmental impact.

The building is one of the community facilities that we have completed in Phase 1 of Northstowe and was built by Kier under a 52-week contract. Work is nearing completion, with handover of the building expected in the weeks ahead.

Stay active through walking netball

If you are looking for something physically active that's fun, sociable and suitable for all ages and abilities, then why not try one of these walking netball sessions run by likeminded ladies. Beginners are welcome - you do not need to have played netball before! The sessions are supported by Care Together funding.

Melbourn Sports Centre: Tuesdays, 7:30pm to 8:15pm

Cambourne MUGA: Fridays, 9:30am to 10:30am

Swavesey Sports Centre: Wednesdays, 6:30pm to 7:15pm

For more information and contact details to sign up, visit

www.scams.gov.uk/health-andwellbeing/local-sports-activities

Have your say – how are we doing?

We've launched our revamped 'How are we doing?' survey to make it easier for everyone to share feedback - good or bad - about our work, projects, and policies. Your views help us monitor performance, improve services, and strengthen communication with our community. Feedback is reviewed weekly by our Leadership Team, so your comments really make a difference.

The survey is quick and simple to complete online at www.scambbs.gov.uk/how-are-we-doing

Tell us what you think today!

Financially secure and fit for the future

Setting our plans for 2026/27

As we go to print, District Councillors are finalising our plans for the next 12 months by setting the Council's budget and Corporate Action Plan.

Last year, Councillors agreed to our long-term vision when they adopted the 2025 to 2030 Corporate Plan. That plan set out five key priorities for our work. Now, Councillors are setting out what we will do over the next 12 months to help achieve those priorities.

"Our vision is for a fairer, kinder, and greener South Cambridgeshire, where all residents will be equal partners in their communities."

Healthy and supported communities

The cost-of-living crisis is still hurting people across South Cambridgeshire, which is why we are continuing our cost-of-living support package.

In the last year, we used new technology – the Low-Income Family Tracker - to help identify those who most need our help. In the last year alone, this scheme supported residents with more than 1,000 successful benefit claims – worth an estimated £4 million over the lifetime of those claims.

In November, Councillors agreed a crackdown on antisocial behaviour at Milton Park and Ride, by putting in place a Public Spaces Protection Order, in a first for South Cambridgeshire.

Councillors are now planning a review of the success of this work to see how it can be replicated at other hotspots for anti-social behaviour.

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

2025/26 has been our best year on record for building new Council Houses, with over 110 and counting. We're planning to continue with our ambitious New Build Council Housing Strategy.

Alongside Cambridge City Council, we will also move forward with the next stages of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan – which sets out where homes, jobs and supporting facilities will be built over the next 20 years. We're reviewing the feedback from the public consultation in December and January and will produce a final Plan for you to comment on this summer.

We are also moving ahead with an ambitious programme of retrofitting existing Council homes, to help our tenants reduce energy bills and save water.

Being green to our core

As part of our efforts to boost recycling rates and reduce the amount of rubbish we send to landfill, we've already begun the roll out of weekly food waste collections to households, and this will continue over the next year.

We're looking to support projects like the Greater Cambridge Chalk Streams project as well as to fund community climate projects through our Zero Carbon Communities programme, which has funded projects worth over £650,000 in the past seven years.

Financially secure and fit for the future

We plan to continue prioritising our efforts to investigate and prosecute cases of fraud to make sure your money isn't wasted. We also want to make it easier than ever for you to find information and access our services, which is why we'll be exploring ways to make it easier to do things online – but don't worry, it will always be possible to phone or visit us in person.

Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire

We will be bringing forward plans for the Employment Zone and Local Centre in Northstowe. We're also looking to work with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to develop the Action and Investment Plan for their Growth Plan and the Greater Cambridge Transport Strategy, to ensure our area is an attractive place for businesses to invest in and move to.

Residents, and especially young people, tell us about the importance of apprenticeships – so we're planning to run events over the next year to encourage more businesses to promote apprenticeships.

Balancing the budget

We charge one of the lowest Council Taxes in the country. Most of the Council Tax we collect is passed to Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police, Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and parish or town councils. Some is also passed to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, to support local buses.

Less than half of our annual budget is funded from local Council Tax. Our other funding sources include some outside of our control, such as Business Rates and grants, whilst funding is also generated from our investments. A £5.24 per year increase in Council Tax for the average band D home was due to be discussed by councillors as we went to print. This would help protect essential frontline services for you.

It would mean the average band D home charge for South Cambridgeshire District Council would become £180.64 per year. We expect this would still maintain our position among the lowest 25% of taxing District Councils in the country.

Our Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, Cllr John Williams, said: "We work hard to deliver great value for money. Despite rising demand and reduced funding, we only keep a small share of Council Tax - most goes to other authorities - so we make every penny count."

Financially secure and fit for the future

Updates to Business Rates and Council Tax for 2026

There are changes being made to Business Rates which local businesses need to be aware of, plus some alterations to Council Tax and support for residents on a low income.

In the 2024 Autumn Budget, the Government announced that from 2026/27, Business Rate Relief for retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) properties will be replaced by a lower business rates multiplier. These new levels were confirmed in the 2025 Autumn Budget.

From April 2026, five multipliers will apply based on business type and business property value. From 2026, RHL multipliers will no longer be classed as a relief and will instead be applied in line with Government regulations. For information on qualifying and excluded properties, please refer to the GOV.UK website.

For information on the reliefs available, visit www.scams.gov.uk/business-rates

All non-domestic properties are reassessed at each revaluation, with the next taking effect from Wednesday 1 April 2026. Revaluations will then occur every three years. As your local Council, we are responsible for issuing Business Rates bills and applying any reliefs.

The Valuation Office Agency sets the rateable value of your property and should be contacted with any valuation queries.

Council Tax and second homes

From Wednesday 1 April 2026, a premium will apply to properties that are not occupied as someone's main residence. This means that if someone owns a second property that is not occupied, a premium will be applied to the Council Tax after a 12 month period. In certain circumstances, a premium will not apply. For more information or to apply for an exception to the premium, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/council-tax

Help with your Council Tax

Residents on a low income may be able to receive a reduction in their Council Tax; this is referred to as Council Tax Support. This includes people who are working and liable for Council Tax.

The scheme for the financial year 2026/27 was due to be discussed at our Full Council meeting on Tuesday 24 February - just after we went to print. For more information, or to apply for Council Tax Support, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/benefits

Receive your bills and benefit letters by email

Did you know you can receive your bills and letters through our secure, online portal?

You can also access your Business Rates and Council Tax accounts, as well as your benefit entitlement. This helps the environment and reduces the costs of printing and postage. It also allows you to access your information at a time convenient to you.

To sign up, visit www.scambs.gov.uk/open-portal

Financially secure and fit for the future

Local elections on 7 May

Elections will take place across the whole district on Thursday 7 May this year, when you will be able to vote for local district councillors to take up the 45 seats on South Cambridgeshire District Council.

These important elections will decide control of our Council – it is the district council that is responsible for a wide range of local services such as bin collections and deciding on planning applications. Parish and town council elections will also be taking place on the same day.

You can make sure you are ready to take part in these important elections by registering to vote now. Registering online is quick and easy: www.gov.uk/register-to-vote

Remember, you don't need to register again if you are already registered, and that you are less likely to be registered if you have recently turned 18 or moved house. The deadline to register to vote in this election is Monday 20 April 2026. All eligible registered voters will receive a poll card in the post around the end of March to tell them where their polling station is.

If you are going to be away for the election you can register to vote by post or by proxy. If you vote by post, your ballot papers will be posted to you a couple of weeks before polling day. If you choose to vote by proxy, you will need to appoint someone to visit your polling station for you and vote on your behalf. You can find more information about absent voting on our website:

www.scambs.gov.uk/elections

We want all residents to be able to take part in our elections. You can find out about the work we do to improve access to elections on our website: www.scambs.gov.uk/elections/accessibility-at-elections. If you need more information about accessibility of elections, please email us at elections@scambs.gov.uk and we would be happy to help.

Elections will take place across all 45 district council seats which are spread across 26 ward areas. There will also be elections for some parish and town councils in South Cambridgeshire.

Visit our website for more information on how to stand as a candidate in any of these elections. www.scambs.gov.uk/elections

The deadline to apply for a postal vote is 5pm on Tuesday 21 April. The deadline to apply to vote by proxy is 5pm on Tuesday 28 April.

Financially secure and fit for the future

A smarter, stronger future for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

Discover why we believe that option B in local government reorganisation offers the best balance of efficiency and local identity - and make sure your voice is heard in the national consultation, which is now underway.

In December 2024, the national Government set out plans to move towards a new system of local government, abolishing all 'two-tier' Council areas in England. It means places with county and district councils – like Cambridgeshire – will see their councils replaced by a single, unitary council. Town and parish councils are not currently being asked to change.

The Government's consultation on local government reorganisation for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is now live - and your views matter. This is your chance to help shape how local services are delivered for decades to come.

One of the four proposals on the table is option B, which is supported by us, along with Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire District councils. Here's why we think it stands out:

Financial sustainability

Option B offers the strongest financial case of the local proposals. It could save around £43 million per year - significantly more than competing options - and cover the set-up costs within four years. These savings mean more money for frontline services like social care, housing, and waste collection.

Efficiency with a local focus

Option B would create a northern unitary council – covering Peterborough, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland, and Huntingdonshire, and a Greater Cambridge unitary council for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire. This approach combines economies of scale with local accountability, ensuring decisions reflect the unique needs of both rural and urban communities.

Simpler, stronger services

Whichever option is chosen, you'll no longer need to navigate separate county and district councils. Services will be streamlined under one unitary authority per area, making it easier to know who to get in touch with.

Our Leader, Cllr Bridget Smith, said: "Option B offers South Cambridgeshire residents the best of both worlds: the financial resilience and streamlined services of a unitary model, combined with the ability to retain our strong local voice and identity. But it's important you tell the Government what you think – so please complete their consultation today."

Give your opinions

The Government's consultation is open now and runs until Thursday 26 March 2026. Please take the time to review all the proposals being consulted on and share your feedback – whichever option you support.

Visit the government's consultation portal online at consult.communities.gov.uk or check www.scambbs.gov.uk/localgovernment-reorganisation for more information about option B.

The Government will make a final decision on which local government structures are put into place this summer. New unitary councils are then due to begin operating in a shadow capacity from May 2027, with full implementation expected in April 2028.

Being green to our core

Air quality in focus: Raising awareness and driving change

Air quality continues to be a top priority across the UK, with increasing recognition of its direct link to health conditions.

The issue is so important that the Government's Environmental Audit Committee chose air pollution as the main topic for its 2026 investigation.

In South Cambridgeshire we continue our commitment to improving air quality and reducing pollution as set out in our Greater Cambridge Air Quality Strategy and in 2026, one of our biggest priorities is bringing the community on board – in particular young people.

We're kicking off the year by teaming up with local youth groups to spark real conversations. These sessions will use new monitoring tech to show live emissions from everyday situations, making the impact of domestic burning visible in real time. It's a hands on way to help young people understand what's happening in the air around them.

We're focusing on youth organisations because engaging people early can build lasting awareness and inspire positive choices that shape a cleaner future for everyone.

We continue to work with our partners to deliver exciting initiatives such as the Clearer Skies, Healthier Lives project. This project will work with schools to strengthen understanding of the link between air quality and public health, with a particular focus on active travel as a practical way to reduce pollution.

We will be supporting workshops with primary schools and helping to develop educational resources that can be shared more widely across the district.

These activities build on strong foundations that we laid in 2025. Last year, our air quality team joined the Peterborough Environment City Trust Sustainability Showcase, running hands on workshops and presentations for more than 100 children.

Pupils explored the health impacts of burning and vehicle idling and were challenged to get creative by designing their own Clean Air Superheroes - turning learning into something fun and memorable.

We also worked with Scout groups where young people carried out practical experiments to see the effects of burning for themselves and tested their knowledge through interactive air quality quizzes.

All of this feeds into a much bigger programme planned for 2026, with several new initiatives already in development to keep building awareness, curiosity, and positive action across local communities.

Cllr Natalie Warren-Green, our Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "Improving air quality is one of the most important things we can do for the health and wellbeing of our communities. By working directly with young people and schools, we're helping to build the knowledge and habits that will protect our environment for years to come. I'm proud of the innovative work happening across South Cambridgeshire, and I'm excited to see even more community-led change in 2026."

If you'd like to learn more about our air quality work or get in touch with us about running an engagement activity, drop us a line at air.quality@scambs.gov.uk

Being green to our core

Young people leading the charge on climate action

Climate change is at the forefront of many young people's minds. As they experience more of its impacts first-hand, their motivation to take action continues to grow.

Last October, our award-winning Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Youth Engagement Service surveyed more than 500 young people at a careers fair at Cambourne Village College.

Being Green to our Core was voted the second most important priority. Over half of the students said the most important step we can take is supporting households and businesses to reduce consumption and waste, while promoting reuse and recycling. A further quarter said they want support to reduce emissions so the district can achieve net zero by 2050.

A climate action survey at Comberton Village College found that eight in 10 students are concerned about climate change and want to take meaningful action. Family involvement, environmental and sustainability school programmes, and support from charities and influencers all increased the likelihood that young people would get involved. One student highlighted the importance of collective action: “The truth of the matter is that you may feel far from the issue, yet largely you are part of the issue. ‘I can’t make a difference, I’m just one person,’ said eight billion people.” Others called on Government and large corporations to take more impactful steps: “I feel that my age group is very aware and vocal, but we simply don’t have as much power as we need. All we can do is influence those in power.”

Young people have a strong desire to build a better foundation for the future and are already taking meaningful action locally. Over the past year, nine local schools have created climate action plans, pledging initiatives such as eliminating single-use plastics, reusing uniforms, harvesting rainwater, installing new recycling bins, and planting trees - supported by the Peterborough Environment City Trust’s Climate Education programme.

To learn more, visit www.climateeducation.co.uk

Have an idea about how we can help young people take climate action? Let us know by emailing climateandenvironment@scams.gov.uk

Being green to our core

Making homes warmer, greener and more affordable

Action on Energy is a partnership between the councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We support our communities by offering advice on how to save money on energy bills and reduce carbon emissions through improved home energy efficiency.

Home energy efficiency upgrades are now available through the Warm Homes: Local Grant. You may be eligible for this funding if:

- Your household (or your tenants) has a combined annual income of up to £36,000, or is in receipt of specified means tested benefits; and
- Your property has an Energy Performance Certificate rating of D–G, or is a park home.

Measures available can include insulation, air source heat pumps, solar panels, and ventilation improvements. A full list is available on the Action on Energy website. To learn more about eligibility and to apply for funding, visit www.actiononenergycams.org/funding

Find out more about Action on Energy: phone 01223 457340

www.actiononenergycams.org

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Being green to our core

How we crack down on environmental crime

Two recent environmental crime prosecutions have sent a powerful message: We will track down offenders anywhere in the UK to protect South Cambridgeshire’s environment and keep it clean and safe for generations to come.

Ordered to pay £1,754 for illegally abandoning a vehicle

One case saw us successfully prosecute a vehicle owner for abandoning their car illegally in Melbourn. The vehicle, a silver Honda Civic, had been involved in a traffic collision at Norgetts Lane. It was left in a dangerous condition, and an unsecured state, causing a hazard and safety issues for local residents.

The registered keeper was traced to an address in Central Bedfordshire, and they were given the opportunity to remove the vehicle or discuss their options and plans with our Environmental Crime Enforcement team. Despite repeated warnings, the owner failed to respond. A Fixed Penalty Notice was issued, but they failed or refused to pay. The case was taken to court, where they were found guilty and ordered to pay fines, costs, and a victim surcharge totalling £1,754. They now also have a criminal record.

Ordered to pay £9,005 for fly tipping

Another case involved a householder from Harrow in North London who failed to take responsibility for transferring their waste to a legitimate waste carrier and failed to take all reasonable steps to ensure their waste was disposed of in the correct manner.

An Enforcement Officer from our Environmental Crime Enforcement team responded to a complaint of dumped rubbish on the Caxton Bypass, close to the balancing pond. The waste included furniture, wood and general household rubbish.

Evidence was found inside the waste leading our Officer to the North London address. The resident there failed or refused to co-operate with the investigation, so did not detail who they had passed their waste to, or how it had become illegally dumped in South Cambridgeshire.

As a result of this lack of assistance in the investigation, they were issued with a fixed penalty notice for the offence - but the occupants of the property failed or refused to make a payment to discharge their liability for the matter.

The case was pursued through the courts, resulting in them being found guilty, and issued fines, costs and a victim surcharge totalling £9,005.

Cllr Natalie Warren-Green, our Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, said: "Both cases are excellent results for our Environmental Crime Enforcement team based at Waterbeach. They show that we take these offences seriously and will go to great lengths to protect our communities and countryside. Environmental crime isn't just unsightly, it damages wildlife, pollutes land and water, and puts public safety at risk."

Report fly-tipping at www.greatercambridgewaste.org and abandoned vehicles at www.scams.gov.uk

Being green to our core

Weekly food waste collections begin in parts of South Cambridgeshire

We have started rolling out our new weekly food waste collection service.

We have now delivered new food waste caddies to 17,200 households and began collecting food waste from them weekly in late January. This includes some blocks of flats.

The weekly collection service for food waste is being introduced in different areas at different times throughout 2026. This additional service is part of new national legislation requiring councils to collect food waste separately.

The food waste is taken to an anaerobic digestion plant, which generates electricity from the waste. You can check when collections are due to start for you by putting your postcode into the In My Area section at www.greatercambridgewaste.org

You will receive full instructions when your caddies are delivered to you. There is also a video you can watch and more information at www.greatercambridgewaste.org/foodwaste

How does it work?

Claire's household has been using the weekly food waste collection service. She says: "We've found that recycling our food waste has become a habit quickly, and the new service is easy to use. The liners for the kitchen caddy keep everything clean and it has really highlighted which foods are getting thrown away. I've been making more effort to use things up or freeze them and have even stopped buying some foods that our family haven't been eating up. We all need to do our bit for the environment, so I'd recommend everyone uses the new service."

Avoidable food waste

You may be surprised to learn that so much food is thrown away by households. We expect to collect around 9,000 tonnes of food waste per year in the new weekly collections, which is over four times more than is collected in green bins now.

Most food - over 88% of it - is put into black bins and sent to landfill. Some of this is what we call unavoidable food waste – things you can't eat like bones, eggshells or banana skins. But over half of it is food that could have been eaten.

When you start using your new caddy for weekly food waste collections it is well worth paying attention to what you end up putting in it, and why. You might even find it helpful to keep a notebook next to your kitchen caddy so you can make a note or keep a list on your phone. If you are producing avoidable food waste think about why – you can get tips and ideas to stop wasting food and save potentially £100s each year at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire

Thinking of starting your own business?

The idea of working for yourself is both exciting and daunting. If you have a business idea but aren't sure how to get it off the ground, don't panic - there is plenty of advice available.

A good starting point is the business section of our website: www.scambs.gov.uk/business There you'll find information about sources of finance, which businesses need licences, specific advice for food businesses, and how to register for Business Rates, including whether you can apply for an exemption.

Organisations we work closely with to support new businesses include the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Cambridgeshire Chambers of Commerce, the Business & IP Centre Cambridgeshire, and the Federation of Small Businesses.

If you would like to talk to a member of our Business Support team, email OpenForBusiness@scambs.gov.uk to arrange a chat or an in-person meeting.

A number of local start-ups have used our shared workspace, South Cambs Connect, as a base to focus and share experiences with other entrepreneurs. As well as a welcoming, open-plan working environment, our team is on hand to answer your queries - from marketing to business plans, networking to finance streams.

Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire

Spring into South Cambs!

This is a wonderful time of year to get outside and see the bulbs creating colourful displays and the young animals gambolling through the fields.

Thriplow's annual Daffodil Weekend and Country Fair offers traditional entertainment from Morris dancers and a chance to see a blacksmith at work. At the Wimpole Estate, learn about different daffodil varieties while enjoying the views. You can also say hello to the lambs and piglets while you're there. For fresh flowers, cut your own tulips at Bury Lane Farm in Melbourn.

There are more - bigger and wilder - animals to be found at Linton Zoo and Shepreth Wildlife Park, or you could create your own nature trail through the blossom at one of our beautiful open spaces, such as Millbridge Brook Meadows Park, Duxford Brewery Field, RSPB Fen Drayton, Milton Country Park or Coton Nature Reserve.

There are also plenty of historical buildings and heritage sites to visit. Among the chocolate-box churches are St Mary's at Comberton and St John the Evangelist at Papworth St Agnes. You could also explore the windmills in Bourn and Great Chishill, Hinxton Watermill, the Mary Challis House and Gardens in Sawston, or the American Cemetery in Madingley.

Easter is just around the corner, and that means egg hunts! Follow one of the many trails around the district and discover tasty treats to share - or not. The Easter holidays also mean finding ways to entertain the kids. There are art and craft sessions at Denny Abbey and Stapleford Granary to channel their talents, while your future Bear Grylls can learn outdoor skills at Wandlebury Country Park or Bourn's Wildly Curious.

Now's a good time to get the garden ready, so why not visit one of our well-stocked garden centres, such as Oakington, Arrington, Coton Orchard or Darwin Nurseries at Teversham, for horticultural inspiration.

Most have a café, so while you're there, why not enjoy a drink and a snack or settle in for lunch? Whenever you need ideas for things to do and places to go in South Cambridgeshire, www.visitsouthcambs.co.uk is your go-to guide whatever the time of year.

South Cambs-based hospitality, leisure and independent retail businesses, as well as event and market organisers, can promote themselves with a free listing on the site, which is seen by thousands of people around the world each month.

Helping businesses to thrive in South Cambridgeshire

Local business spotlight on Bartlow, Castle Camps and Shudy Camps

Beyond the busier edges of South Cambridgeshire, the smaller villages of Bartlow, Castle Camps and Shudy Camps occupy a more secluded space.

Travel here is deliberate rather than simply by chance but the reward for the journey is a collection of independent businesses and experiences from unique workshops and welcoming pubs to camping experiences and historical landmarks.

In Bartlow, The Three Hills country pub stands out as a highly praised destination in its own right. With an award-winning reputation, this 17th-century pub, named after ancient burial hills, serves up excellent food, offers characterfilled rooms and friendly hospitality – a place where seasonal menus, local produce and an ambience steeped in tradition are suitably found for all occasions.

Not far away, The Oak pub in Castle Camps offers another warm village pub experience with daily food and drink bringing people together in a social setting perfectly suited for this rural community. Elsewhere, Castle Camps invites outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy great walks and wildlife at its eco and family-run Camps Camping site. With pitch options for tents and motorhomes, this wide and lusciously expansive area can be hired for events whilst providing an accessible base for exploring the countryside or even the Bartlow to Ashdon Circular Walk, a trail that weaves its way across hillsides and meadows.

This is where local history enters the conversation. Bartlow's impressive Roman burial mounds, known as Tumuli, stretch back centuries, and footpaths allow ramblers and dog walkers to meet the intersecting three counties of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Suffolk, and note the ancient parish roots.

Creativity and craft have a strong presence in Shudy Camps where Salix Arts offers a distinctive blend of workshops, overnight accommodation and community engagement centred around

living willow structures. From basketry to sculpture, visitors can experience one-on-one tuition workshops in 16th-century surroundings but also view exhibitions elsewhere, such as Gallery Above & Beyond in Linton not far away.

This part of South Cambridgeshire might be gently off the beaten track but is certainly no less deserving of recognition when contributing to the vitality of our district.

Cllr Peter McDonald, our Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: “South Cambridgeshire is full of surprises, and our smaller villages are where you’ll find some of the most vibrant and quirky gems. Whether it’s award winning food, creative workshops, family friendly camping or centuries of local history, there’s so much to see and experience. These peaceful, picturesque places offer a real chance to slow down, breathe, and enjoy something special. Our local businesses are amazing - come visit, explore and support them.”

Want to see your village under the spotlight? Email us at OpenForBusiness@scambs.gov.uk

Healthy and supported communities

Walk, wheel or cycle into spring on the Greater Cambridge greenways

With spring approaching, we’re all looking forward to the longer days and warmer weather.

People across South Cambridgeshire are dusting off their trainers, digging out their bikes and planning to take up more active ways of getting around - and the greenways are helping them do just that.

What are the Greater Cambridge Greenways?

The greenways are a 150-km network of 12 walking, wheeling and cycling routes across Greater Cambridge. As one of the partner organisations in the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP), we work with the GCP to support healthier, more active journeys across South Cambridgeshire.

The greenways are helping communities get outside and get active, whether that’s for a long cycle ride at the weekend or a short walk to school. Newly completed paths, junctions and surfaces in the villages of Barton and Coton, and a new three-metre-wide path along Barton Road, are making getting out and about under your own steam a more attractive option.

In Coton, new surfaces on paths and roads are encouraging local people to walk, wheel, or cycle to the village’s football and cricket clubs, so you’re already warmed up by the time training starts.

Walk to School Week, a campaign led by charity Living Streets, takes place between 18 and 22 May, and the extended 20mph speed limit and safer crossings throughout Barton village will help more students and families at Barton Church of England Primary walk to school.

And even more is on the way for walking and cycling in Greater Cambridge. The GCP are looking forward to the opening of England’s first ever cycle street on Adams Road in Cambridge. Once completed, wider footways and cyclist priority on Adams Road will make taking a walk or a bike ride a popular option for getting to the sports facilities nearby.

What’s next for the greenways?

After the success of the Meldreth Station Link, the GCP are excited to deliver further improvements on the Melbourn Greenway, this time in Shepreth. Further information relating to works will be sent to local residents prior to works taking place. The GCP are also looking forward to working on similar improvements in Stapleford and Great Shelford as part of the Sawston Greenway with further information on these works coming later in the year.

How will you make the most of the Greater Cambridge Greenways this spring?

For more information and updates, visit www.greatercambridge.org.uk and search ‘greenways’.

Healthy and supported communities

Community Warden Service could make a huge difference

Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Community Warden Services support more than 150 older people to live safely and independently in their own homes.

Do you or a loved one need a bit of extra support to live independently and happily at home? Would you like more day-to-day companionship and reassurance that you will see the same person one week to the next?

If you answered yes to any of the above, then the Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (CAP) Community Warden Service could make a huge difference to your or your loved one's life.

There are 12 Age UK CAP Community Warden Services across South Cambridgeshire which support more than 150 older people - over 60s - to live safely and independently in their own homes.

With the support of us at the District Council, the charity has been able to share best practice with other independent Community Warden Schemes so that they can collectively deliver a comprehensive, consistent and robust service to all older people across South Cambridgeshire.

Benefits of the scheme

The Community Warden is in daily contact with you or your loved one from Monday through to Friday, by telephone, with at least one to two face-to-face visits weekly.

The Community Warden offers:

- Practical support: light shopping, collecting prescriptions, changing bedding, reading post.
- Emotional support: a friendly ear, a constant companion, a regular point of contact.
- Reassurance: a lifeline to the older person and the extended family whether living nearby or far away.
- Engagement with the local community: encouraging older people to attend local events to combat isolation and loneliness.

You can benefit from an introductory two-week free trial to assess whether this service meets your needs. It is then charged as a monthly fee, designed to be affordable, due in part to funding from us at the District Council and some Parish Councils.

Edna highlights: "I am happy that I am able to talk to my Community Warden about something I love and have someone with me while taking a walk around my garden to keep me safe."

Pauline, who is in her 80s said of her Community Warden: "She does everything from filling my bird feeder to lifting bags of compost from the car boot to helping me package and return a chair to Amazon at the Post Office. All done with the utmost grace and generosity of spirit. And sometimes we just talk."

- For Community Warden enquiries, contact 07812 496004
- For more details on the Age UK CAP Community Warden Service and the areas covered visit linktr.ee/ageukcap
- For information about community transport visit www.scambsgov.uk/community-transport

Healthy and supported communities

Healthy for Life: Make exercise part of your daily life

Whatever your age, there's strong scientific evidence that being physically active can help you lead a healthier and happier life.

Regular physical activity lowers the risk of several health conditions and can support the management of them. These include coronary heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes,

cancer, osteoarthritis, hip fracture, falls among older adults, depression, and dementia including Alzheimer's disease. Research also shows that physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality, and energy, and reduce the risk of stress.

For those requiring support in getting physically active to manage an already diagnosed health condition, our Active & Healthy 4 Life Exercise Referral Scheme is here to help. It is a four-month personal exercise programme designed by a qualified instructor within a fitness suite environment, along with advice on other daily activities to support your progress.

Just ask your GP or health professional to refer you using the form at www.scambs.gov.uk/active

Sessions run at sports centres in Bottisham, Cambourne, Comberton, Gamlingay, Impington, Melbourn, Sawston, and Swavesey.

For more information, go to www.scambs.gov.uk/active or email AandH4L@scambs.gov.uk

Healthy and supported communities

Keep children active and healthy during the school holidays

Come along and enjoy practising netball skills through fun activities and games as part of a team sport. Be inspired by the England Roses this summer and watch them in the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow.

Netball camp dates for 2026

- Easter – 30 and 31 March
- May half term – 27 May
- Summer – 20 and 21 July
- October half term – 28 October

All camp days are:

- 10am to 3:30pm
- School years three to nine
- All abilities welcome - everyone is invited
- Held at Impington Village College Sports Centre, New Road, Impington, CB24 9LX

All coaches are suitably qualified and appropriately checked.

The cost is £25 per day. If a child attends more than one day, or two or more siblings attend, the cost is £23 per child per day.

For further information and to book a place, go to www.scambs.gov.uk/sportscamps

Healthy and supported communities

Communities celebrating diversity

South Cambridgeshire is home to vibrant, welcoming groups that help newcomers settle in, make friends, and feel part of the community. These initiatives show how much stronger we are when we come together.

Cambourne

In 2025, a Mahjong club ran for six months, hosted by UK Welcomes Refugees. It gave participants the opportunity to socialise with new neighbours, introduced Hong Kong newcomers to local resources such as Cambourne Library, and helped volunteers gain confidence and new skills. It's a great example of how shared activities can build bridges.

Marleigh

A weekly craft group brings residents together in this growing village - people who have moved here from across the UK and

beyond. Community spirit is woven together one stitch, one brushstroke, and one conversation at a time. The group welcomes everyone, from beginners to experienced artists, creating a tapestry of experiences and stories. A local church organises conversation classes designed for those whose first language isn't English. These simple yet powerful initiatives remind us that community isn't just about living side by side - it's about coming together, learning from one another, and celebrating diversity.

Northstowe

A resident originally from Hong Kong hosts a weekly drop-in session for older community members, focusing on preventing cognitive decline through social interaction and mental stimulation. Games such as Rummikub and cards are played - sparking conversation as well as mental agility, keeping minds active while building friendships across generations and cultures. Northstowe also boasts a Community Lounge, which is open to everyone for board games, table tennis, and Mahjong, along with free refreshments. An international mix of residents come together to relax, connect, and share experiences.

Supporting Ukraine

Through the Homes for Ukraine scheme, we have supported more than 1,000 Ukrainians and those generously hosting them to stay here safely. We've run tenancy workshops, commissioned English lessons, and worked with partners such as Beam to deliver employment support. Community integration has been strengthened through collaboration with local groups like Open Arms in Shelford and Stapleford, Cambridge Refugee Resettlement Campaign, and Cottenham4Ukraine, alongside many others.

Cllr Henry Batchelor, our Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, said: "South Cambridgeshire's strength lies in the way our residents welcome and support one another. These community led projects show how much richer life becomes when we embrace our diversity and build connections across cultures."

Want to get involved?

To find local groups, visit How Are You Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

<https://haysouthcambs.co.uk/>

If you want to start a new group, email us at duty.communities@scambs.gov.uk - small funding pots may be available along with help and guidance.

Report hate crime

You can find support at True Vision at https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force, who can also help you to report to the Police. Alternatively, you can do this at www.cambs.police.uk

Healthy and supported communities

Our grants boost community services and allotments

We are investing in our communities with two major grant programmes, supporting vital services and improving green spaces.

Service Support Grants – £300,000 per year for three years to 19 organisations

These grants help voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations deliver essential services. Funding has increased significantly from £167,400 to £300,000 annually, showing our commitment to wellbeing and tackling inequality.

Key recipients include:

- Cambridge and District Citizens Advice – £105,000 per year for free, confidential advice.
- Over Day Care – £30,000 per year for transport and hospital discharge support for older residents.
- Support Cambridgeshire (CCVS) – £20,000 per year to strengthen the voluntary sector.

- Hope Against Poverty CIC – £14,400 per year for a Wellbeing Programme.
- Disability Huntingdonshire – £12,998 per year to help people live independently.
- Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre – £10,000 per year for specialist support for survivors.
- Royston and District Community Transport – £7,000 per year for accessible transport.

Other funded groups include:

- Blue Smile, Cambridge Acorn Project, Home-Start, Ormiston Families, Romsey Mill, Turtle Dove, and Waterbeach and Landbeach Action for Youth – supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing.
- CamSight – helping people with low vision.
- Reach Community Projects – helping families facing poverty.
- Care Network Cambridgeshire, Sew Positive, and The Voluntary Network – supporting older residents and tackling isolation.

Allotment Improvement Grants – Over £100,000 awarded to 16 groups

These grants are transforming South Cambridgeshire’s allotments into welcoming, sustainable spaces. Highlights include:

- St George’s Allotment Association, Melbourn – £10,000 for secure fencing.
- Foxton Gardens Association – £10,000 for communal area development and tools.
- Duxford Parish Council – £10,000 for accessible paths, raised beds, and rainwater harvesting.
- Hope Against Poverty CIC – £9,466 for water mains and path improvements.
- Bar Hill Allotment Society – £8,316 for paths and fencing.
- Shepreth Parish Council – £8,592 for pest control and rainwater collection.

Other projects are adding waterless toilets, sheds, picnic benches, and improving orchards.

Cllr Bill Handley, a district councillor for Willingham and Over and allotment owner, said: “Allotments offer so much in terms of physical and mental wellbeing. It was a great comfort to me to be able to get outdoors with a purpose and spend time on my allotment during the COVID-19 lockdowns and to be able to speak - or rather, shout to other allotment holders.”

“The aim was to make allotments more accessible to families by installing toilet facilities and to make the plots more productive by providing water - especially in our area, which is the driest in the UK. I’m delighted that some good has come from this initiative.”

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Save thousands on retrofitting and renovating an empty home

Our Empty Homes Officer can support you in upgrading the property to bring it back to use.

At the beginning of the year, many people look to move home. And now more than ever, families are considering the purchase of an empty property to renovate and make their forever home as a way to combat the higher prices of new builds.

However, older properties tend to come with higher heating costs and dubious weather proofing. Is it a risk worth taking? Consideration has to be given to low energy costs and comfort – now you can have both, for a lower cost!

Buying an empty home can be an excellent trade off if you plan the retrofit well and use the incentives available. Two such empty property owners have done exactly that by retrofitting an empty home in Milton and saved over £17,000 through contact with our Empty Homes Officer.

The owners retrofitted their home with eco upgrades to reduce their carbon footprint and make their home energy efficient – saving money now, and in the future.

Our Empty Homes Officer provided the evidence that the property had been empty for over two

years. The new owners then passed this to their VAT registered builder which enabled them to pay just 5% VAT on all work and materials – they saved over £17,000 just on refurbishment items alone! This included:

- External wall insulation: £46,500, VAT saving £6,975
- New external doors and windows: £32,000, VAT saving £4,800
- Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery: £17,700, VAT saving £2,655
- Floor insulation: £10,800, VAT saving £1,620
- Roof insulation & airtightness: £6,700, VAT saving £1,005

A total saving of £17,055.

The retrofit was designed using Passivhaus principles. Now the air quality is markedly better, and the house is noticeably quieter. The owners are more aware of actively managing solar gains, especially during heat spells, and are slowly implementing smart controls for lighting, heating, ventilation and security. They feel proud of the home's potential and are looking forward to making further tweaks and improvements.

Cllr John Batchelor, our Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, said: "It's fantastic to see empty homes being brought back to life with the support of our Empty Homes team. If you've been considering a renovation project on an empty home, get in touch with the team to check it's eligible for the VAT discount."

If a home has been unoccupied for at least two years, many renovation services and the building materials your VAT registered contractor supplies and installs can be charged at 5% VAT instead of 20%. HMRC sets this out in VAT Notice 708, section 8.

Contact our Empty Homes Officer at env.health@scamb.gov.uk for more information.

Sustainable homes and vibrant places

Get a guaranteed continuous monthly rental income

Our Shire Homes Lettings service leases and manages private homes for landlords.

Do you have a spare home? Struggling to sell a property, or are looking to reduce the workload of your rental properties? Our Shire Homes team can help!

Shire Homes Lettings leases and manages private homes for landlords, providing secure, affordable, good-quality accommodation for local people who need it the most.

Working closely with the Empty Homes team at the Council, we can help turn long-term empty properties into warm, wellmaintained and vibrant new homes. The team can assist in bringing your property up to rental standards, making the process simple and saving you money.

Our full management service lets our landlords sit back as we handle maintenance, rent collection, inspections and administration. As a non-profit organisation, we don't charge fees for administrative tasks, minor maintenance or legal costs, ensuring that our landlords get the most out of their property. The uptick in enquiries we have had over the past several months has shown the appeal of our leasing scheme in offering an alternative to traditional rentals or selling their properties.

New homes which have joined our leasing scheme recently have included one to three bed houses, maisonettes and flats in areas including Cambourne, Bar Hill, Waterbeach, Huntingdon and St Neots.

With the newly passed Renters' Rights Act bringing many changes to the private rental market over the next few years, Shire Homes is well prepared to help landlords stay in the market and stay ahead of the new legislation. Utilising provisions available to local-authority-owned companies, we can guarantee the return of your property empty and in the same condition as we received it, without charge or fuss at the end of the lease.

Cllr John Batchelor, our Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, said: “Shire Homes can guarantee rent payments even when a property is empty or the tenant is in arrears, putting our landlords and tenants first.”

Joining Shire Homes’ leasing scheme is fast and simple. Dependent on whether the property meets the required rental standards, you can start leasing your property in less than two weeks. To get started, all you need to do is contact us and we can arrange a visit to view your property. We’ll also send you our detailed information pack, giving you all the information you may need about how the scheme works.

Contact us

01954 713046

shire.homes@scambs.gov.uk

Facebook: Shire Homes Lettings

Competition

WIN: Unlimited dinner for four people at Scott’s All Day

Scott’s All Day based on Mill Road in Cambridge are offering a lucky winner a three course bottomless dinner for four people, with unlimited refills of soft drinks, Prosecco, wine or bottled lager!

‘Scott’ is Scott Holden who moved to Cambridge in 2013 to manage Fitzbillies, after running some of London’s best casual restaurants - The Pig and Butcher, Smokehouse and Heirloom.

In Cambridge, Scott and his family lived off Mill Road, growing to love the area’s rich food scene. When the opportunity came to open his dream neighbourhood cafe, it could only be on one street.

Scott has travelled widely, working in Vancouver and New York, running a low and slow BBQ restaurant and obsessively checking out every diner, deli and corner joint from Brooklyn to the Bronx. The quirky neighbourhood restaurants and diversity of great tasting quick food helped shape his ideas for Scott’s. Just like those cosy dives embedded in New York’s avenues, Scott wanted to build a home-from-home for locals with friendly faces and comforting dishes.

“Cambridge is a great place for food right now, says Scott, and there are amazing suppliers in the countryside all around, but I reckon there’s something more. Mill Road is our greatest food asset - tremendous ingredients from all over the world, a cosmopolitan crowd and a particular attitude I really recognise - a kind of feisty community pride.”

To enter

To be in with a chance of winning, just answer this question:

We’re rolling out weekly food waste collections across South Cambridgeshire. How much food waste do we expect to collect per year under the new arrangements?

- A) Around 90 tonnes
- B) Around 900 tonnes
- C) Around 9,000 tonnes

You can enter the competition online. www.scambs.gov.uk

Click ‘Apply’ and then ‘Reader’s competition’.

Don’t have internet access?

You can enter by post. Send your name, address and telephone number, along with your answer to the question, to: South Cambs Magazine Competition, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, CB23 6EA

Closing date for entries is 5pm on Monday 30 March 2026.

The terms and conditions for our Reader Competition are available at www.scambs.gov.uk/t-c or can be requested by calling us.

The winner will be notified in April and announced in the summer 2026 issue of South Cambs Magazine.

Winner's spotlight

The winner of our previous competition was Simon Flood from Linton. Simon won sixmonth access to all comedy shows at the Town and Gown theatre for two adults, thanks to Big Deal Comedy, and said: "When I read the email to say I'd won I thought it was a joke. I'm very pleased and now looking forward to enjoying some laughs over the next six months."