

District and County Councillor's Report – July 2025

Expiry of postal votes

Following a change to the law as part of the Elections Act, postal votes no longer apply indefinitely. They now expire after a period of three years. Due to the timing of the reapplication legislation, around 15,000 South Cambridgeshire postal votes are due to expire at the end of January 2026. The South Cambs Elections Team has just started the process of contacting those residents whose postal vote will be expiring to explain to those voters that in order to keep their postal vote in place they will need to make a fresh application. SCDC may contact affected electors via email, post or text message (or via a combination of means) to raise awareness of the changes and to ensure they have sufficient time to make a new application if they want to before next year's elections. SCDC also plan to include an article in South Cambs Magazine in Autumn 2025. Unfortunately, the change in the law means that affected electors who do not make a fresh application will have their postal votes removed when they expire at the end of January 2026. Any help the parish councils can bring in publicising to and supporting parishioners with this process would be much appreciated. Questions can be emailed the elections team elections@scambs.gov.uk

Acorn Anaerobic Digester

The Acorn anaerobic biodigester planning application, which has been rolling through the system for a few years now, finally came to Suffolk County Council's planning committee this month and was refused. Since the developers have said they will be appealing the decision, this may not be the last we hear of the plan.

Local Government Reorganisation – Public Consultation

Council leaders have announced they have identified 3 preferred options for creating new unitary councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The announcement has been made in response to a national government requirement to replace the current district, county and city councils with simpler unitary councils, instead of two tiers of local government. From April 2028, rather than dealing with separate county, city, and district authorities, residents will access all services—from road maintenance and bin collections to education, planning, social housing, social care, and support with benefits—through a unitary council. A public consultation has opened at <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/council-structure/local-government-in-cambridgeshire/devolution-and-local-government-reorganisation/have-your-say-on-local-government-reorganisation> The consultation closes at midnight on Sunday 20 July 2025

Kingsway Solar Application

Local MP Pippa Heylings, along with Geoff as local councillor recently met with the Project Manager, David Vernon, from Kingsway/Downing Renewables to raise concerns about poor community engagement, lack of transparency, battery fire risks and the need for proper consultation over potential community benefits. Pippa also raised this issue of the timing of the Statutory Consultation and the timing of that in relation to the publishing of the results of the Non-statutory Consultation and Mr Vernon agreed that the Statutory Consultation should happen after the holiday period and that the results of the Non-statutory Consultation should be published in advance to avoid overloading parish councils and other interested parties.

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