

## District Councillor report to Parish Council January 2025

Happy new year. I would like to wish all of the residents and Parish Councillors a happy 2025.

### Annual report to tenants and leaseholders

There are a number of things in this report that are concerning for our tenants and leaseholders within South Cambs. There are number of areas that highlight that SCDC are bottom of the pile in terms of how we compare to other local authorities when it comes to the people that matter most, our residents. This report can be found on the SCDC website on the following link [Tenant and Leaseholder news - South Cambs District Council](#) . There are a couple of points that I would like to highlight from the report that are particularly alarming, especially when you consider this report was compiled in conjunction with a 4-day working week. There is good and bad in this report but to come amongst the bottom performing councils in certain areas based on this resident feedback is disappointing.

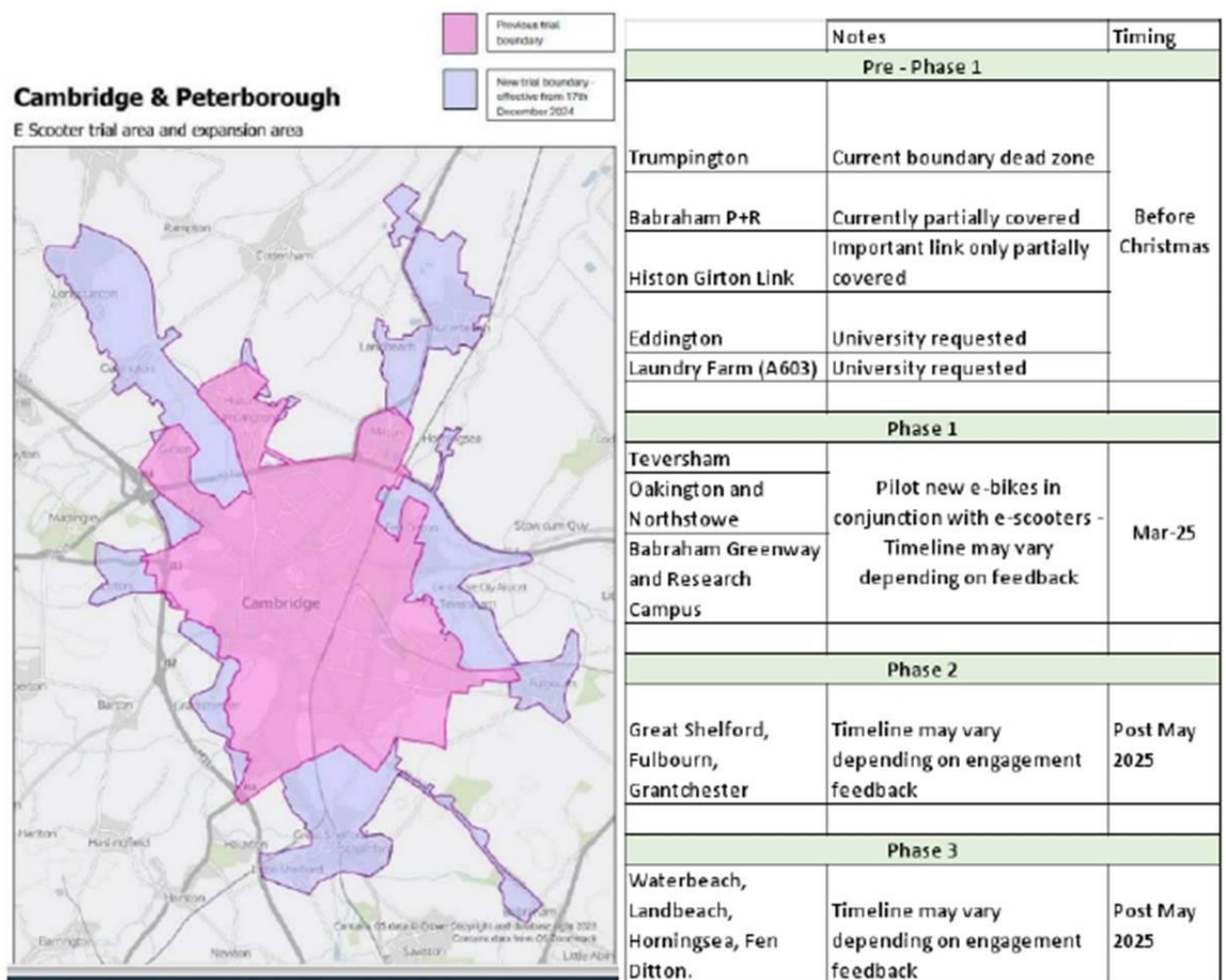
**Improving Complaint Handling:** Effective complaint handling is crucial for any organization, particularly in public services like housing management. Recent survey results reveal that South Cambridgeshire's approach to managing complaints is falling behind compared to other organizations, with a satisfaction rate of just 29%. This puts the local authority among the lowest scorers, with the lowest satisfaction rate across other organizations being 28%. When compared to similar organizations, South Cambridgeshire's score is noticeably lower. This indicates that there is significant room for improvement in how complaints are handled and communicated.

**Resident involvement:** when it comes to whether the landlord listens to tenants views, only 54% of residents were satisfied. Unfortunately, when compared to similar organisations, South Cambridgeshire ranks among the lowest in tenant satisfaction related to the landlord's responsiveness and follow-through on tenant feedback.

As a Council we will have to try harder to improve this situation going forward.

### Expansion of VOI scooter scheme

Earlier this year, the Combined Authority’s Transport and Infrastructure Committee submitted a proposal to the Department for Transport (DfT) to expand the current e-scooter trial area in Cambridge. The DfT has approved the plan, which includes both the boundary expansion and an increase in the fleet size. The Combined Authority’s Transport and Infrastructure Committee has confirmed that the rollout will take place in phases, with the proposed phasing schedule shown in the table below.



It is worth noting that parish Councils will still have an option not to participate if they see fit. You will see that there are four of the Fen Ditton and Fulbourn ward villages within these plans. My view as District Councillor is that I support the implementation of the VOI scooters and believe it will be a real asset to residents within the ward, allowing another option for transport which

encourages modal shift (i.e. journeys that may be taken by car would swap to another mode of transport). It is my view that the VOI scooter scheme is well regulated and well run with the GPS system they employ. I am happy to chat with residents and Parish Councillors regarding the VOI rollout but I felt it was important that you understood my viewpoint on this which is very supportive of the scheme.

### **Devolution white paper plans**

I will start by saying there is quite a lot to digest in this document and councillors are currently being briefed on this, but I will give you a summary of what councillors are being told thus far.

The government has released the English Devolution White Paper, outlining plans to expand and enhance devolution in England. The document proposes granting mayors unprecedented powers and funding, integrating them into the governmental framework. It also details how the government intends to rebuild and reform local government as a basis for devolution, reset the relationship between central and local authorities, and provide communities with the tools to shape their local areas' futures while enhancing accountability and strengthening the local government sector.

Key proposals include:

- Empowering mayors with new authorities in areas such as planning, infrastructure, transport, skills, business, and energy, alongside strong partnerships with councils and other stakeholders to achieve the government's set objectives.
- A Devolution Priority Programme aimed at rapidly advancing devolution, with plans to establish new strategic authorities and elect new mayors in the May 2026 elections, ensuring devolution is available across all of England.
- Reforming and rebuilding local government, including a program for reorganising local governments in two-tier areas and unitary councils.

My personal view on unitary authorities is that on the whole it will be a good thing as it removes a layer of Government (in this case combines County and District Council into a Unitary Authority). I am a little sceptical over timescales and I do have concerns regarding the size of wards that councillors would represent given that being a County, District or Unitary Authority Councillor is still a voluntary post with expenses paid, I think there needs to be a realistic

view on the commitment that they are expected to make around their full-time jobs. We need to be careful that it is not only the retired or the rich that can commit. As you will be aware, there are many layers of Government in Cambridgeshire. I would also like to see the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership abolished (happy to chat through why, but briefly I feel it is unaccountable, poor at delivery and another layer of bureaucracy that we simply don't need). I support the Government nationally in looking at this and trying to streamline the layers of Government, I just hope this isn't rushed, real consideration is given to reasonable workloads and a system that works for residents.

*Thank you for taking the time to read my report; if you have any questions or want to discuss any of the issues raised email me on [graham.cone@councillor.online](mailto:graham.cone@councillor.online) or ring 07595 361 285 (please leave a voicemail if I am unavailable) **Councillor Graham Cone***