

## District Report

### Cllr Richard Williams

#### **District Council Budget 2026/27**

The District Council has now set its budget for the coming financial year.

As expected, the administration has proposed a Council Tax increase at the maximum level permitted without triggering a referendum. I voted against this increase. Whilst I recognise the financial pressures facing local government, I do not believe that continually raising Council Tax to the limit each year is sustainable for residents already facing significant cost-of-living pressures.

The budget also included increases in council house rents above the rate of inflation. Again, I voted against this. At a time when many tenants are struggling with household bills, increasing rents beyond inflation adds further strain to some of the most financially vulnerable residents in our district.

That said, there were elements of the budget that I supported. Continued commitment to the Council's Climate and Nature Strategy is welcome, including investment in energy efficiency of council housing stock and wider environmental initiatives. These measures not only help address the climate emergency but can also reduce long-term running costs.

The budget-maintained funding for core statutory services and key community support programmes, which is important given ongoing economic uncertainty.

In summary, whilst I support several of the Council's strategic priorities — particularly on the environment— I believe the approach taken on Council Tax and social rents places too much burden on residents and tenants. I will continue to argue for a more balanced approach that protects frontline services while recognising the financial pressures facing households across South Cambridgeshire.

#### **South Cambridgeshire Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Consultation**

South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council are currently consulting on the introduction of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the Greater Cambridge area. The consultation runs from 16 February to 29 March 2026 and seeks views on the proposed charging schedule and supporting evidence before it is submitted for independent examination.

The consultation documents and response portal can be accessed here:

<https://oc2.greatercambridgeplanning.org/document/1334>

CIL is a standard planning charge that local authorities can apply to new development in order to fund infrastructure required to support growth. More than half of planning authorities in England now operate a CIL scheme. Currently South Cambridgeshire does not have an adopted CIL, and most infrastructure contributions are secured through negotiated Section 106 planning obligations linked to individual planning permissions. These agreements typically fund local mitigation measures such as schools, healthcare facilities, open space, play areas, libraries and community facilities.

The councils consider that the existing system is less effective at funding major strategic infrastructure, particularly transport improvements required to support planned growth across Greater Cambridge. Section 106 contributions are limited to impacts directly related to individual developments and can also delay planning decisions due to negotiation. The proposed role of CIL is therefore primarily to collect pooled contributions from development towards larger strategic infrastructure projects, particularly transport schemes required to accommodate growth.

For Parish Councils an important feature of CIL is the neighbourhood portion. Where a parish has an adopted Neighbourhood Plan, up to 25% of CIL receipts from development within the parish area would be passed directly to the Parish Council to support local infrastructure or community priorities. In areas without a Neighbourhood Plan the portion would be 15%. This would represent a new and more predictable source of locally controlled infrastructure funding compared with the current position where no CIL operates in South Cambridgeshire.

### **Local Government Reorganisation Consultation**

The Government has opened a public consultation on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, seeking views on different structural options for replacing the current two-tier arrangements with new unitary authorities. The consultation considers four proposals submitted by councils across the area, including “Option B”, which is supported by South Cambridgeshire District Council (alongside Cambridge City and East Cambridgeshire District Councils) and would create two unitary councils: one for Greater Cambridge (Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire) and one for North Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Residents, parish councils and local organisations can respond directly to the Government’s consultation via the official portal:

<https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/cambridgeshire-and-peterborough/>