

November 2023 Update from Cllr Heather Williams

Leader of the Conservative Group at South Cambridgeshire District Council

Government issues Best Value Notice on four-day week

At the beginning of November, the government issued a Best Value Notice to South Cambridgeshire District Council – a formal notice expressing concerns over the council's ability to deliver value for money to residents due to the four-day working week trial. This echoes the concerns we have raised since the trial began in January 2023. In practice this means that the government have requested the council to send them performance data on a weekly basis, alongside providing them with other historical information such as a business plan for the four-day week.

We called for an Extraordinary Full Council meeting to discuss what has happened in a public forum and to hear what consequences residents face from the Lib Dem administration's decision to continue with the trial despite governments request for it to stop. The meeting was held on Monday 20 November and can be viewed [here](#).

Reports presented to us in the meeting recommended we should provide the data requested by government, consequently proceeding with the four-day week trial. We proposed the following amendment:

To note the report and agree that the Council should request the Best Value Notice to be withdrawn on the proviso that the Four Day Week trial is stopped before March 2024.

One of our reasons for the amendment is that we have no way of knowing the costs incurred in providing the data. The Lib Dems voted down this amendment 24-8, so the council will provide the government with data and the trial will continue in the meantime. The council was clear that as councillors we could only vote on the reaction to the Best Value Notice, so we still have had no vote as to whether the trial should continue which we believe is a huge failure of democracy and disrespectful to many residents.

Free trees for South Cambs towns and villages

Parish councils have until 22 December 2023 to apply for six free trees or one large potted tree. This is part of the Six Free Trees campaign.

We are encouraging parish councils to apply for a Six Free Trees voucher to support nature and greening in South Cambs. We support the council's ambitions for a net zero district by 2050 in the fight against climate change – and planting trees is one way we can all help.

To apply for a Six Free Trees voucher, please click [here](#) – or, to find out more, please see the [council's webpage](#).

#DoTheRightThing Fraud Awareness Campaign

We are urging all residents to #DoTheRightThing and complete forms correctly as part of the council's fraud awareness campaign. Fraud costs taxpayer's money and council staff's time which means it takes longer to help people who are actually struggling.

If you are in any doubt about what information you need to provide on a form, please do get in touch with the council offices and they can help you to complete the form correctly.

Check if you're entitled to benefits

We are encouraging residents to check if they're entitled to benefits in order to help people with the cost of living this winter. 25% of benefits go unclaimed – so if you know of anyone struggling that may be entitled to claim then please do get in touch, there is support out there.

You can find out more on the [council's website](#) which has useful links including a [benefits entitlement calculator](#), [eligibility criteria](#) and a [benefits application form](#).

Consultations

Please see the below table of open council consultations:

Consultation Name and link	Description	Closing Date
Polling District Review	Giving residents the opportunity to provide feedback on polling stations and local democracy.	27/11/2023
Statement of Community Involvement	South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council are requesting comments on how to improve community involvement in the planning process.	29/11/2023
Homeless Strategy	A consultation regarding South Cambs District Council's responsibility and plans to prevent homelessness.	05/01/2024

Thank you for reading our report. If we can be of any assistance, please do get in touch.

Cllr Heather Williams

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