

Autumn 2020



Tenant  
Involvement  
South Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# In South Cambs

## Community information

*For people living in South Cambridgeshire Homes*



Become a tenant  
representative

Annual report: how  
your rent is spent

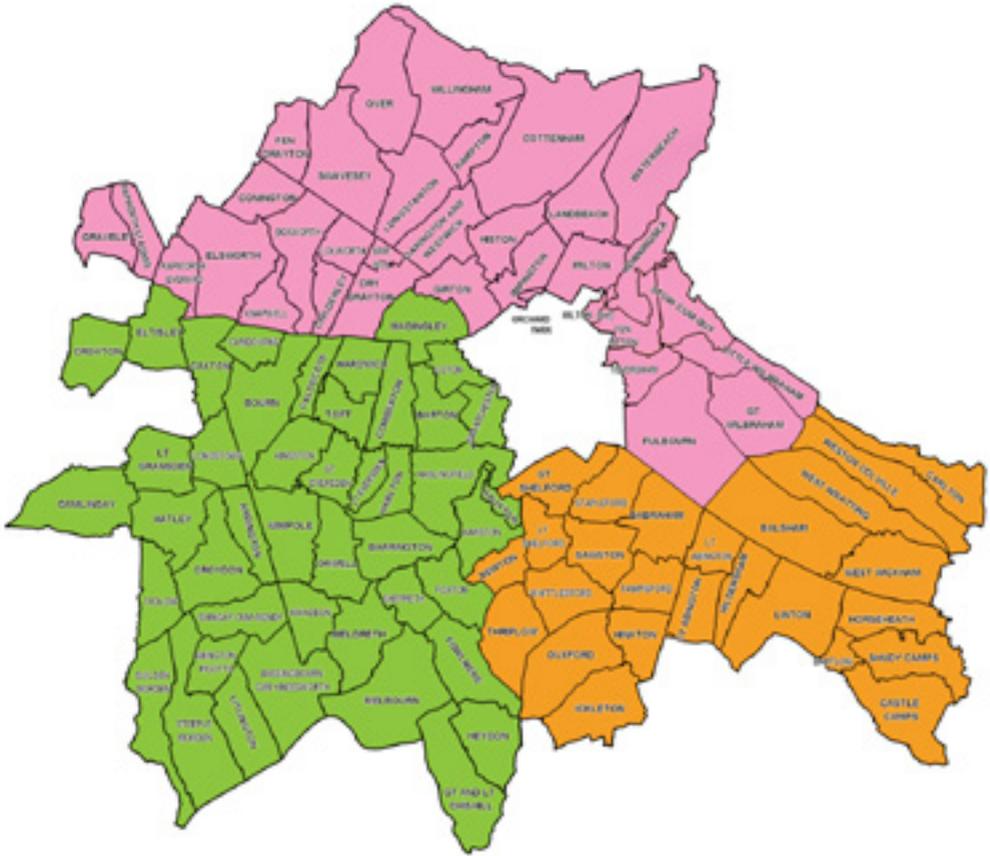
Help to keep your  
house warm for less

Information and advice from South  
Cambridgeshire District Council for  
our tenants



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Housing Areas



- North Housing Area
- West Housing Area
- East Housing Area

# You said, we listened

Last year, our tenants said that the tenant groups were not working; not enough people participated, and tenants didn't feel their views were being considered when it came to a range of decisions.

Working with our tenants we came up with a new way of working that gives tenants more influence. You can read more about this on pages 4 and 5.

Tenants also wanted to hear more about their housing service and issues that concern them and their families. They said they wanted more information about other services that could be useful. We hope this new annual update and directory will provide you with the overview you need.

On top of this new printed update, we have started sending monthly e-newsletters to all residents whose email addresses we have. If you haven't been receiving these, please contact us and we will be happy to add your email to our list. You can see previous e-newsletters online: [www.scambs.gov.uk/in-south-cambs](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/in-south-cambs)

We have also launched a new Facebook page just for our tenant and leaseholder community. Follow us for any updates just for people living in our homes:



[www.facebook.com/  
InSouthCambs](https://www.facebook.com/InSouthCambs)

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# New ways of working with you

## Representing tenants; your voice in housing decisions.

Tenants should have information and a say about their housing service. Together with tenants, we have changed the way we work to give tenants more influence over their housing service.



5 tenants and  
1 leaseholder



Head of  
Housing



3 District  
Councillors

### Tenants have a seat at the decision table

A new Housing Engagement Board will review, discuss, and make recommendations about how the housing service is managed so that it is fair for all tenants. It will include:

- six elected tenant representatives (one will be a leaseholder)
- three District Councillors
- Head of Housing, Peter Campbell

### Elections

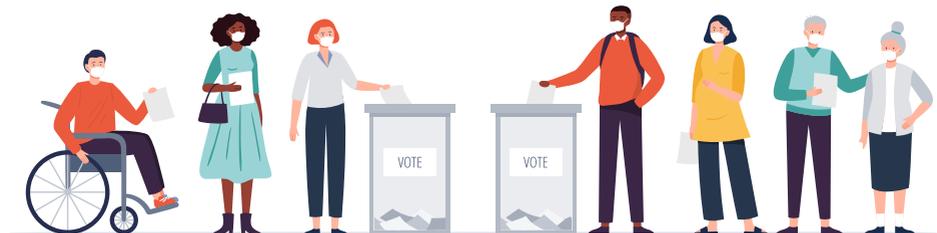
Every council home will be sent a voting pack and ballot in March 2021. The successful candidates will be announced in April 2021.

### Meetings closer to home

Quarterly local area meetings (when safe to do so) will give you the opportunity to hear news and to ask your questions directly to your tenant representative and the housing team. We are also planning on making these meetings available online.

### Timely information

We will still send you this printed annual update, but we are adding digital communication methods to reach tenants too, including e-newsletters, a new Facebook page, the Council's website and the My South Cambs online portal.



# Become a tenant representative

## Join the Housing Engagement Board.

We need tenants like you who can help us focus on tenants' priorities, to make sure that your rent and service charges are being well spent, council homes are maintained, and your neighbourhood is a safe and nice place to live.

### What do I need to know about becoming a representative?

You don't need any prior experience or formal education. We will be holding workshops in January for potential candidates to give you a chance to learn more about being a tenant representative. We will also provide support and free training for all representatives. Representatives will receive an annual allowance of £400 for their time, and the experience can be incredibly valuable, for instance as something to show responsibility and time commitment on a CV.

### Applicants are required to:

- be a council tenant or leaseholder
- agree to represent the interests of all tenants, not only your self-interest
- ensure your own rent and any service charges are paid up to date
- agree to follow a Code of Conduct. A copy of this can be sent to you upon request
- attend four meetings per year, which are three to four hours each. These meetings may be held online

- prepare for the meetings by reading committee reports, financial and statistical information, and relevant paperwork (this can take several hours)
- undertake relevant training provided for free by the Council
- serve a four year term.

### How to stand as a candidate

If you would like to stand as a candidate in the election, please contact us for an application pack. You have until Monday 1 February 2021 to submit your completed application.

To apply as a candidate or find out more about the role, please contact Tenant Engagement Officer Pam Cowles.

📞 01223 458 323

✉ [resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk)



# Annual Report

## Our performance in 2019/2020.

Every year we publish an annual report for tenants and leaseholders to outline how we have been performing.

You can read some of the highlights of the report below, or read in full on our website: [www.scamb.gov.uk/tlnews](http://www.scamb.gov.uk/tlnews)

### Your rent

Have you ever wondered how we spend the money collected from your rent? Below is a breakdown of the different services your rent goes towards, based on a weekly rent of £101.48.



● New housing provision	£23.33
● Resident involvement	£0.51
● Other	£1.98
● General management	£9.23
● Repairs and maintenance	£40.34
● Outdoor	£0.57
● Sheltered housing	£0.71
● Loan	£24.81

### Your repairs

The repairs service is carried out in partnership with Mears. In 2019/2020 we completed 12,547 repairs to your homes.

**Emergency repairs** 3,820



**Non-emergency repairs** 8,727



**Installed**  
115 new kitchens



**Installed**  
222 new boilers



**Installed**  
117 new windows



**Throughout this work we were able to keep 96% of our appointments.**

## Providing you with homes

On 1 March 2020 there were 1,130 households on the housing register waiting for an affordable home. In 2019/2020 we were able to:

- let 284 council homes
- nominate 253 people to our partner housing association homes.

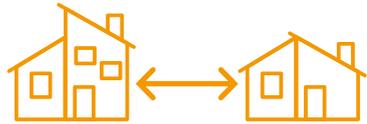
### JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Don't forget, you can follow us on our new Facebook page for updates.

[www.facebook.com/InSouthCambs](https://www.facebook.com/InSouthCambs)



The average number of people who bid on each home was 33



We agreed 35 mutual exchange applications



**We built 33 new affordable homes**

# Frequently asked questions

## How do I change my tenancy?

You may need to make a change to your tenancy, for example to:

- remove a joint tenant due to divorce, break up or death
- add a tenant due to marriage or living with a partner for more than 12 months
- change a name
- seek permission to have a lodger
- seek permission to have pets at the property
- end a tenancy.

All requests need to be made in writing. You can do this by writing to:

 Housing services, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA

Or find out more online: [www.scambs.gov.uk/housing](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing)



## Can I swap my home for a different one?

Most council housing tenants have the ability to swap their home with us, with another council, or with a housing association tenant, by mutual exchange.

This can be really helpful if you are looking to move to be closer to family, work or amenities, if you are looking to downsize or if you are just looking for a more suitable property for you and your family.

There are a lot of things to consider and make yourself aware of before deciding upon seeking a mutual exchange. Please speak to your Housing Services Officer for more information or visit [www.scambs.gov.uk/mutualexchange](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/mutualexchange)

## Why do I need home contents insurance?

We do not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement. Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions in case of damage or theft. We can recommend Crystal Insurance for affordable tenant insurance.

 0345 450 7286

 [www.crystalinsurance.co.uk](http://www.crystalinsurance.co.uk)



## I'm having problems with condensation, what can I do?

If you have condensation between your window, this needs to be reported to Mears via the repairs line. A visit will be made for the unit to be inspected, measured up and replaced.

Condensation in your home can lead to mould, which can contribute to asthma and other respiratory problems. To reduce condensation, you need to reduce moisture in the air by:

- covering pans when cooking
- drying washing outdoors whenever possible, or over the bath with the door closed and the window open
- putting any tumble dryer vents outside, or buying a self-condensing type.



**Did you know that drying clothes in an unvented tumble dryer produces a massive 10 pints of water?**



## How can I heat my house more efficiently?

Try to avoid having any areas in the home that are cold; it is better to heat your whole home to a lower temperature rather than heat one room to a high temperature. Condensation often affects the rooms you are not heating, for example, a spare bedroom rather than where you are making the moisture. This is because they are colder.

## Why do I need to have my gas appliances checked?

A gas safety check is vital for your safety. It is also a legal duty by the landlord to ensure that a properly qualified gas engineer checks all of our gas appliances every year, plus a visual inspection of any tenant owned appliances. The gas inspection is carried out every 12 months and we or our contractors will contact you when the inspection is due. You must allow the gas contractor into your home to carry out this work as part of your tenancy agreement. Failure to do so is treated very seriously and we will take legal action if necessary.

If you think your gas boiler is faulty, call the Repairs line as soon as possible. For gas, oil and solid fuel boilers or air-source heat pumps contact Mears directly.

 0333 207 0766

# Housing officers

## Managing your tenancy.

Your housing officer is there to provide guidance and advice on all tenancy matters. Repairs are reported separately on our free helpline: 0800 085 1313.

### Your housing officer can assist you with:

- tenancy changes
- successions
- mutual exchanges
- ground maintenance enquiries
- leaving the property (voids)
- rent arrears.

### They can also:

- grant permissions for alterations or additions to properties
- undertake property inspections and tenancy audit visits
- re-let properties, including viewings and sign ups.

Housing officers also want to promote a nice community. They work with tenants to deal with anti-social

behaviour issues and neighbour disputes. They can liaise with local Councillors on issues in their villages.

Although our housing officers are not social workers or police officers, they do have a wealth of experience and can often signpost people to benefits and other support services.

### Housing Neighbourhood Services Manager



Geoff Clark

Contact your housing officer by calling 03450 450 051 or emailing [duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk)



# Financial support for tenants

The pandemic has caused job losses and financial difficulty for many people.



## Rent

If you are having difficulty paying your rent, we can help. The sooner you contact us, the sooner you can have peace of mind.

📞 03450 450 051

✉ [housingadvice@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@scambs.gov.uk)



## Healthy Start Food Vouchers

Have you heard about Healthy Start Food Vouchers? Pregnant women or parents of children who are four and under may be eligible for vouchers that can be used with participating retailers to buy cows' milk, fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables, or infant formula.

👉 [www.healthystart.nhs.uk](http://www.healthystart.nhs.uk)



## Citizens Advice

Find free, impartial, and confidential advice on a wide range of issues including benefits, debts, housing, relationships and employment.

Citizens Advice is also a referring agency which means they can refer you to organisations that can provide further assistance including:

- Food Banks
- Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme, which helps people facing unexpected financial difficulties and hardship.

👉 [www.cambridgecab.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecab.org.uk)

📞 0344 848 7979

If you are put through to voicemail, they will get back to you. When leaving a message, be sure to share your name; how you can be contacted; and a brief overview of your issue.

## Additional support

### Citizens Advice Universal Credit helpline

📞 0800 144 8444

### Money Advice Service

👉 [www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk)

### National Debt Helpline

👉 [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

📞 0808 808 4000

### Step Change Charity

👉 [www.stepchange.org.uk](http://www.stepchange.org.uk)

📞 0800 138 111

### Pay Plan

👉 [www.payplan.com](http://www.payplan.com)

📞 0800 280 2816

# Sheltered estate officers

## Here to help.

You should have the contact details of your sheltered housing officer, but they are also available in your communal room.

Sheltered estate officers are not on duty 24 hours a day and cannot provide nursing or home care services. However, they can be contacted between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Each sheltered estate officer is responsible for several schemes and they divide their time between each scheme.

Your sheltered estate officer is there to provide you with support, deal with emergency situations and assist you to obtain and access other services you may require (such as home care, or the meals service).

## Who manages supported housing?



Shirley Stephen  
Community Impact Team Leader



## Here are some of the things the team gets involved in:

- viewings, sign-ups and inductions for new tenants and leaseholders
- six- and 36-week tenancy check visits
- addressing tenancy issues such as rent arrears, or neighbour disputes
- wellbeing checks
- risk assessments and assessing what support you may need – possibly referring to visiting support team
- installing lifelines, testing equipment and collecting equipment
- estate management, grounds maintenance concerns and improvements
- management of communal facilities
- facilitating activities for residents and older people in the community.

The sheltered estate officer can also offer advice to you and your family of other services and support that is available locally.

# Support services for sheltered tenants



## Visiting support service

Our visiting support service can help you to remain independent in your own home for as long as possible.

The team offers a flexible, practical service and provides emotional support. They can work with you to find solutions for personal care, cooking, laundry, shopping and gardening.

They can also offer advice on:

- debt and budgeting
- understanding and claiming your welfare benefit entitlements
- finding local groups and social clubs for you to join.

This is a needs-based service and all new referrals are visited in the first instance for a needs and risk assessment. They will assess the level and type of support needed.

📞 03450 450 051



## Community Lifeline

The Community Lifeline service provides a pendant alarm in your home, which when pressed contacts a response centre so that help can be raised.

The contact centre will arrange for the appropriate help and, in a crisis, the emergency services can be called.

### Help available in your home, at the touch of a button:

- trained operators can be contacted via the contact centre to assess your situation
- they will arrange for next of kin, neighbours, friends, or the emergency services to visit
- giving peace of mind to you and your family.

📞 01954 713 470 or 01954 713 370

✉ [lifelines@scams.gov.uk](mailto:lifelines@scams.gov.uk)



# Repairs service

Call our free repairs hotline on 0800 085 1313

## What you need to do to report a repair

When you report a repair please be ready to give us the following information:

- your name
- your property address
- dates and times when Mears can have access
- your contact telephone number
- your email address if appropriate
- full details of the repair being requested.

## Intentional damage

Where damage has been caused with intent, for example, vandalism or a burglary, you must first obtain a Police Incident Number before reporting the damage to Housing Services. This number is required at the time of reporting the repair.

## Accidental damage

In instances of accidental damage, for example, a cracked hand basin or broken toilet pan, it will be the tenant's responsibility to repair or renew.

## Repair response times

Emergencies:  
complete within 24 hours

Non-urgent repairs:  
complete within 35 days

An emergency is one or more of the following:

- a total loss of electric power or water supply
- uncontrollable water leak
- the only toilet being blocked, leaking or non-flushing
- a water mains leak
- an insecure ground floor window
- door or lock repair.

## Overseeing the repairs service are:

 Wayne Newman  
Operations Manager

 Alexandra Ellwood  
Asset and Compliance Manager





# Go green, save money

We are partnering with the award-winning LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership), to work to reduce energy usage in South Cambridgeshire homes through a range of free services to save you time, money and effort.



LEAP offers a completely free of charge telephone service to provide:

- energy advice
- support to switch – changing tariff can save on average £280 a year
- free easy measures posted to your home (including LED bulbs, draught proofing etc.)
- referral for further improvements such as loft insulation or a new boiler.

## Are you eligible?

If you have a low income, receive benefits, or have a long-term illness or disability you may be eligible.

☎ 0800 060 7567

🖱 [www.applyforleap.org.uk](http://www.applyforleap.org.uk)

## Green tips

There are some quick tips you can follow to use less energy at home and shrink your energy bills.



Keep your thermostat at 18°C. Turning the temperature down by only 1 degree and keeping warm by wearing a jumper instead could save you £85 a year.



Turn down the brightness of screens and turn them off when not in use (not on standby as that still uses power). This could save £30 a year.



When making yourself tea or coffee, fill the kettle with only what you need. It could save you up to £7 a year.



Turn off the lights when you leave the room. You will save more energy than it takes for the light to start up again and could save £15 a year!

# Recycling and waste



## Garden waste

We take your green bin waste and turn it into soil improver, which we offer to residents for free. The process to turn the waste into soil improver takes eight weeks. It's good for the environment and your garden. You are welcome to collect bags of soil improver for use in your garden from the Amey Waste Management Site in Waterbeach (it is open from 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays).



## Recycling

Last year we collected a whopping 24,000 tonnes of recycling from our blue bin collections. We recycle the vast majority of items that you put in your blue bin. But sometimes not all of it can be recycled, perhaps because items haven't been properly cleaned, or because they should have been disposed of another way anyway. These mistakes can cost the waste service £10,000 a month.

If you find you have too much recycling for your collection, the extra can be left in a transparent sack by your blue bin for collection. You can also order an extra blue bin free of charge. Simply complete the online form.

➤ [www.scams.gov.uk/bins/request-a-bin](http://www.scams.gov.uk/bins/request-a-bin)



## Assisted collections

If you are unable to take your bins out and you don't have a family member or neighbour to help, you can apply for our assisted collection service. Assisted collection means that your bins will be collected and returned to an agreed place which is:

- easy to access by the collection crews
- left unlocked and not obstructed by branches or shrubs
- easy for our crews to move bins out of.

You can apply through our website:

➤ [www.scams.gov.uk/bins/assisted-collections](http://www.scams.gov.uk/bins/assisted-collections)

☎ 03450 450 063

✉ [env.health@scams.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@scams.gov.uk)



# Where to get help and support

## How to contact the Council

- 🖱 [www.scambs.gov.uk](http://www.scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 500
- ✉ [scdc@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:scdc@scambs.gov.uk)

## Contact your housing officer

- ✉ [duty.officer@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.officer@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 051

## To make a Council Tax or rent payment

- ☎ 03450 455 218

## Rent

- ✉ [rents@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:rents@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 455 216

## Housing repairs (24-hour service)

- ☎ 0800 085 1313

## Housing Advice Service

- ✉ [housingadvice@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvice@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 051

## Help with benefits

- ✉ [benefits@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 061

## Report housing fraud

- ✉ [fraud@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:fraud@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 0800 731 1892

## Bins

- ✉ [refuse@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:refuse@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 063

## Environmental services

- ✉ [env.health@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:env.health@scambs.gov.uk)
- ☎ 03450 450 063

## Free online courses: applying for jobs, using a computer, staying safe online

### Learn My Way

- 🖱 [www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com)

### Cambridge Skills

- 🖱 [www.cambsals.co.uk](http://www.cambsals.co.uk)

## Employment support

### Advice and support on employment issues

- 🖱 [www.gov.uk/browse/working/finding-job](http://www.gov.uk/browse/working/finding-job)

### Youth Employment - help for 14-24 year olds

- 🖱 [www.youthemployment.org.uk](http://www.youthemployment.org.uk)



## Debt

### Money Saving Advice Service

🖱️ [www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

☎️ 0800 138 7777

### National Debt Line

🖱️ [www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)

☎️ 0808 808 4000

### Step Change

🖱️ [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

☎️ 0800 138 1111

## Benefits

### Government website explains

#### Universal Credit

🖱️ [www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk](http://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk)

### Learn My Way has an online 'how to' guide for applying for Universal Credit

🖱️ [www.learnmyway.com/courses/universal-credit-a-how-to-guide](http://www.learnmyway.com/courses/universal-credit-a-how-to-guide)



## Relationship support

### Relate

🖱️ [www.relate.org](http://www.relate.org)

### Women's Aid Cambridge, support for women (domestic abuse)

🖱️ <https://cambridgewa.org.uk>

☎️ 01223 361 214

### Men's Advice Line, support for men (domestic abuse)

🖱️ [www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

☎️ 0808 801 0327

### Galop supports lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people (domestic/sexual abuse)

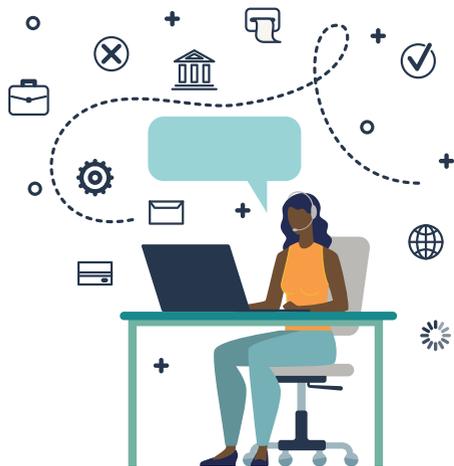
🖱️ [www.galop.org.uk](http://www.galop.org.uk)

☎️ 0207 704 2040

### Respect, helping abusers who want to change their behaviour

🖱️ [www.respectphoneline.org.uk](http://www.respectphoneline.org.uk)

☎️ 0808 802 4040



# Save time, check your information online

You probably already manage a lot of your accounts online, whether to check or update your details, or to see your latest bills from energy suppliers, mobile phone companies or broadband providers, for example. Why not add us to that list?

By creating an account in our online customer portal, My South Cambs, you can do a lot more of what you need to at a time that suits you, 24/7. Residents can already view Council Tax and benefits information through this secure online account.

Your account also remembers your information so, when you fill out a form, it will automatically populate your name and address so that you don't have to type it in every time.

It will save a record of any forms you complete too, so that you can keep track of what you've done. Plus, with some forms you submit, you can check back in your account to see the progress of your request.

## New Housing area to be added to the customer portal

During the autumn there will be a new dedicated Housing area added to the customer portal. This will enable tenants to do much more online in your secure account. For instance, if you create an account now, you will soon be able to apply for an alteration on your home, or to apply for a blue card through the customer portal.

### Register now

It's quick and easy to sign up to the customer portal. You'll find the link in the top right-hand corner of our website: [www.scambs.gov.uk](http://www.scambs.gov.uk)



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