

Open Door, Autumn/Winter 2020



For the tenants and leaseholders of Cambridge City Council

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Editorial

From David Greening, Head of Housing Services



Welcome to Open Door. This edition shows you how to access City Council services while Covid-19 is still with us, and where to get extra help and support if you need it. You can see how to use the [MyCambridge portal](#) on our website. And you can read about the plans we have in place for managing a [‘second wave’](#) in Cambridge if necessary.

We explain some of the help available if you are [struggling to pay rent](#). Please get in touch - housing staff can work with you to ensure you don't lose your home. Due to the pandemic and a rise in Universal Credit claims, we have invested in a dedicated officer to help you cope with the Universal Credit process. If you need assistance with that, please phone 01223-457070 and ask for Sarah.

Our map of the city shows where to get [hands-on help in your locality](#). These groups can assist with benefits, food and shopping, loneliness or accessing mental health services. [Hardship funds](#) are also available for those in financial difficulty due to being forced to self-isolate because they have, or might have, Covid-19.

Preparing for the colder months, we bring advice on [affordable warmth](#) and wellbeing in winter, while keeping utility bills down. You can read about the new [Breathing Space](#) programme for those with problem debts: it provides a freeze on interest and repayments, a break from creditors and professional support for resolving debts. Those in mental health crisis get special assistance from this new programme.

This edition shows the actions the Council is taking in solidarity with the [Black Lives Matter movement](#). It gives details of the local helpline for those experiencing [domestic abuse](#). In this edition you can see feedback from tenants on how we are [resuming repairs safely](#) during Covid-19. You can also read about the low-cost [24-hour care alarm](#) that the Council can install for people who need it.

You can read about Cambridge's innovations in [housing homeless people](#), and what to do if you see someone [sleeping rough](#) in the cold months ahead.

You can see how the Council has reinvested rents back into the housing service, and [compares council and open market rents](#) for value for money. And there are [grants for leaseholders](#) to adapt their homes for disabilities.

Out on the estates, the annual [Residents' Garden Competition](#) was a great success again: we show you some entrants' inspiring gardens. Our new regular page on the Climate Emergency shows actions you can take to reduce your own [carbon footprint](#). And we introduce the residents whom you recently elected to represent you on the Council's [Housing Scrutiny Committee](#).

Information in this edition was correct at time of writing, but government guidance around Covid-19 can change quickly. For the most up to date information on council services, please check the Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-changes-to-our-services

At www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus, there is general guidance for residents on Covid-19, a list of neighbourhood groups who can assist you, and NHS and government advice around the virus. We recommend you enter your email address at www.cambridge.gov.uk/subscribe-for-email-alerts to receive email notifications of any changes. With best wishes, David Greening

Receive Open Door by email

Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper? It's easy to read on any device with wifi, saving paper and carbon footprint. To receive it by email instead of post, visit <https://camcit.co/opendooremail>

One copy of Open Door is sent to each council home. To ask to receive a second copy for a joint tenant, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

A panel of council tenants and leaseholders help select and edit the content of every Open Door edition. To get involved, email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk

Email your photos of City Homes estates or green spaces to opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk



Services and support during Covid-19

Ongoing information on council services is available online. The City Council's information and guidance for residents on Covid-19 will continue to be updated in the months ahead. To be notified every time it updates, just enter your email address at www.cambridge.gov.uk/subscribe-for-email-alerts

MyCambridge services online

8,000 residents are already using the MyCambridge portal online. It's easy to register, at the top right-hand corner of the Council's website at www.cambridge.gov.uk

You can use it to access your Tenant and Leaseholder portal. You can also manage your Council Tax account, claim benefits, notify about a change of circumstances or request a new bin.

You can use it to easily report issues in streets or parks, like litter, fly-tipping, fallen branches or graffiti. You can even show the exact location: your report goes straight to council staff out in the community, ready to deal with it.

Soon you will be able to report things like problems with a sports pitch, damage to benches or bus shelters, any plant maintenance needed, issues at play areas or public toilets, and much more. You will also be able to track the response online, seeing when the action you requested will be completed.

Due to Covid-19, face to face meetings with council staff are now by appointment only. This is to minimise the risk of infection for customers and for staff who are needed to deliver council services. If you need to contact them, please check whether the service or information you need is available online. But if you have an essential need to meet staff in person, phone 01223-457000. You can make payments to the Council remotely, or via other organisations like the Post Office. For more information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk

Those without internet can still contact the Council by phoning 01223-457000.

Council services during Covid-19

The Council has had to deliver its services differently, to avoid infecting either customers or the staff who are needed to keep services going. The Council is prioritising services for those most in need, and who depend most on the Council. Physical receptions at Mandela House, Arbury Road and the Guildhall remain closed until further notice, except for pre-booked appointments at selected locations.

Hardship fund for those who have, or may have, Covid-19

If you are self-isolating or you are contacted via the NHS Test & Trace system and are told to self-isolate, there is help available. In Cambridge, trained staff are providing all-round support for people told to self-isolate due to Covid-19.

Those in trouble financially due to being diagnosed with Covid-19 or being told to self-isolate because they might be infected, may be eligible for a financial payment. (They will need to show a positive Covid-19 test or that they have been told to self-isolate by the Test & Trace system.)

Staff can also give other support or arrange for food to be delivered - whatever help is needed to enable people who may have the virus to self-isolate. For further information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help

Managing a 'second wave' in Cambridge

Staff across the City Council have worked closely with other district councils, public health and other health authorities and public agencies to create a plan for managing an outbreak of Covid-19, if one recurs in Cambridge or nearby.

In the event of a local outbreak, responsibility for managing it will lie with a number of agencies including Public Health England, Cambridgeshire County Council and Cambridge City Council. Once an outbreak is identified, the Councils will have a number of responsibilities for informing and reassuring communities, supporting self-isolations, reinforcing guidance, and helping to limit the transmission of infection.

The response of Cambridge City Council will be directed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Outbreak Control Plan. The City Council has planned for actions to prevent and manage an outbreak, using information from partner agencies and the community to decide how to make a rapid response. This will build on the very positive work that has been done in partnership with local communities during the

lockdown of Spring 2020. To prevent an outbreak in the city, Cambridge City Council is:

- taking action to prevent and manage outbreaks in settings and locations it is responsible for
- providing Environmental Health functions including preventative advice and enforcement measures
- providing a Contact Centre for those required to self-isolate, and support measures that enable communities to comply
- doing wider preventative work, through information sharing and proactive communications
- preparing a rapid response in the event of an outbreak or rising trends of infection
- ensuring facilities and services operating are Covid-secure

Council staff and managers have been prepared for dealing with a local outbreak in these ways. For more information, visit

www.cambridge.gov.uk/updates/2020/03/18/coronavirus-changes-to-our-services

Staying in the UK after Brexit



For the latest information about the EU Settlement Scheme or if you are an EU national wanting to apply, see the government's advice at www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families Advice is also available at www.cambridge.gov.uk/understanding-the-brexit-process-advice-from-the-government

For help submitting your application, phone 0333-344-5675.

Help with your finances



Struggling to pay rent?

If you are having problems paying your rent due to the Covid-19 crisis, please contact the Council as soon as possible to arrange a payment plan with them.

They may be able to agree a plan that spreads your rent payments over time. Or for those who have paid their rent regularly in the past, the Council may explore a few months' break from rent payments, which you pay back later.

You pay back the missing rent later in manageable 'catch-up' amounts spread over an agreed time. You pay them in addition to your normal rent at that time.

Or you might arrange to just pay a bit less rent for two or three months, and then make slightly higher payments over the following nine or twelve months, until you have made up the difference.

For example, if your normal monthly rent is £500 (£115.38 per week), the Council might offer:

Special arrangement, example 1

In November, no payment; December, no payment; January to October inclusive,

£500 rent + £100 extra, ie. £600 per month in all

Special arrangement, example 2

In November, £250; December, £250; January, £250; February to October inclusive, £583.31 per month

These are just two examples, but the Council can make an arrangement with you based on your individual circumstances. Get in touch right away to make a payment plan if you need one.

Please contact the team to discuss your circumstances by phoning 01223-457070. Or you can email incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk leaving your name, address and contact phone number, to be phoned back.

Meanwhile, if you are no longer working, or are self-employed but unable to work due to Covid-19, or your employer has temporarily ceased trading due to the virus, you should make a claim for Universal Credit benefit at www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit

If you are self-employed and affected by the Covid-19 crisis, you may be entitled to a government grant. See www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension

Benefits and financial help

To see the benefits that are available, visit www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support

You can use the City Council's online Benefits Calculator to see how much benefit you may be entitled to, at <https://cambridge.entitledto.co.uk/home/start>

For help budgeting or claiming benefits, email the Council's financial inclusion officers at incometeam@cambridge.gov.uk or phone them at 01223-457000.

And the Council's online tool can help you manage your finances at www.cambridge.gov.uk/advice-about-debt-and-managing-your-money

There is also a wide range of financial and other support available amidst the Covid-19 crisis. Ensure you use it if you need it. To see whether you may be eligible for financial assistance, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-financial-support-for-residents

Have your wages reduced or stopped?

If you receive housing benefit or Council Tax reduction, ensure you update your Benefits Account now. The Council will look at your current earnings and update your benefits as needed.

If you get the 80% furlough or back pay for this period, they will reassess your claims. Talk to your employer about furlough payments.

If you receive Tax Credits, let HMRC know your current situation. If you are not eligible for any of the above, you may need to claim Universal Credit.

For more information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-financial-support-for-residents

You can also get information about the financial support and benefits available by phoning Cambridge Citizen's Advice at 0344-848-7979.

How the City Council used tenants' rents in 2019/20



What was your rent spent on?

Average rent for a 2-bedroom council home in Cambridge was £101 per week

34% was spent by the Council on improving kitchens and bathrooms, building new homes, etc.

27% was spent on day to day repairs, repairing properties to relet, etc.

21% was spent on paying interest on the debt of the Housing Service

9% was spent on managing properties and estates and tackling anti-social behaviour

5% was spent on other costs in providing social housing as a Council

4% was set aside for building new council homes or repaying future debt

What value for money does Cambridge council rent give?

Average weekly rent for a 2-bed Cambridge council home is £101 per week

Average weekly rent for a 2-bed Cambridge home on the open market is £289 per week (from government statistics)

How was the budget of the housing service invested into homes?

71% was spent on building & buying more council homes

19% on 'Decent Homes' programme that improves kitchens, bathrooms, doors & windows

6% on other investments in homes

2% on improving sheltered housing

1% on IT, stores equipment, shared ownership repurchases & shops

1% on improving estates through the Estate Improvement Programme

Supporting communities locally



Help with utilities and debts

If you are struggling with energy bills due to the virus crisis, get help at www.ofgem.gov.uk/consumers/household-gas-and-electricity-guide/who-contact-if-its-difficult-paying-energy-bills

Those with a pre-payment meter can get help at www.energyhelpline.com/coronavirus-help/covid-19-measures-in-place-for-prepayment-energy-customers

By law, those using prepayment cards or keys will not be disconnected during Covid-19. If restrictions prevent you from topping up, phone your energy supplier. They must offer other options that avoid you being disconnected.

Your water bills: If you are on a low income, you should apply for Cambridge Water's Assure Tariff. You may get up to 60% off this year's water bill, and 40% off next year's. See www.cambridge-water.co.uk/household/my-bills-and-payments/my-bill-explained/other-charges-and-tariffs/assure-tariff

Set up online accounts: Set up online accounts for all your bills - water, gas, electric, etc. It makes it easier to monitor your payments, update meter readings and avoid falling into debt.

Your meter readings: Give updated meter readings to your energy supplier every month or two, to prevent them overcharging you.

'Breathing Space' from debts

A new government policy called Breathing Space means that many with problem debts can benefit from a 60-day 'freeze' on interest, repayments and contact with creditors. They can also receive professional support to help resolve problem debts.

Those receiving treatment for mental health crisis get particular help from the programme. For them, the 'freeze' on their debts can last until their treatment is complete.

People using the programme report improvements in their wellbeing, such as sleeping better and coping better with day-to-day life. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/breathing-space-to-help-millions-in-debt>

Cambridge Citizens' Advice can also help with any of the above over the phone at 0808-223-1133.

Black Lives Matter

After George Floyd's death at the hands of a policeman in Minneapolis, there were widespread protests as part of the Black Lives Matter movement across the world. This included peaceful demonstrations in Cambridge.

In July, Cambridge City Councillors expressed unanimous solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The Council acknowledged in a statement that racism continues to be a serious problem in the UK, and in Cambridge.

It committed to leading on tackling racism locally, including actions to tackle racial inequality and discrimination by working with partners in the private, public, voluntary and community sectors.

The City Council also provides a Racial Harassment Service to support anyone in Cambridge experiencing racial harassment. Racial harassment is any abuse due to skin-colour, race, nationality, or ethnic origin. It may be one incident or a series; may be verbal, written, or physical; and may be attacks on property or on people.

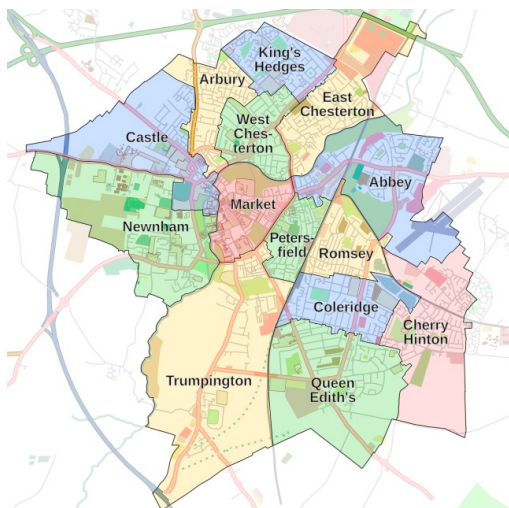
The Racial Harassment Service aims to see you within three days and will always respect your confidentiality. They will assess what you need, and the danger of further incidents. If necessary, they can take emergency action to increase your home's security. If you wish, they can contact witnesses and perpetrators. As needed, the Council can:

- liaise with police and take legal action
- take action to evict perpetrator tenants, or re-house harassed tenants
- seek injunctions to prevent further harassment
- remove graffiti, deal with damaged property and put in security measures
- refer you to counselling or further support

If you have any concerns about racial harassment, phone the Council at 01223-457967 or 07973-883261, email community.safety@cambridge.gov.uk or report it online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/racial-harassment

You can read about the Council's overall approach to equality and diversity at www.cambridge.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity

Local Focus - Support near you



If you are struggling as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, support is available. Local organisations, churches and mutual aid groups across the city are helping neighbours with day to day tasks such as friendly phone calls, help with shopping and dog walking, and even help to combat loneliness and isolation.

There is a local group near to you, so do look out for flyers and posters locally. Or use the relevant contact details in the map below to get in touch with your local support group.

If you are self-isolating or you are contacted via the NHS Test & Trace system and are told to self-isolate, there is also help available for this.

Those in trouble financially due to testing positive or being told to self-isolate by the Test & Trace system may be eligible for financial help. For further information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/coronavirus-ask-for-help

Arbury

Email communityresponse@arburyroadbaptist.org

Link Councillor: Carina O'Reilly

King's Hedges

Visit www.whatwillhelp.org/kings-hedges

Email covid19kingshedges@gmail.com

Phone 07764-613862

Link Councillor: Alex Collis

West Chesterton

Email mutual.west.chesterton@gmail.com

Phone 07593-354560

Link Councillors: James Dalzell & Mike Sargeant

East Chesterton

Email eastchesterton.mutualaid@gmail.com

Phone 07908-458034

Link Councillor: Gerri Bird

Abbey

Visit www.AbbeyPeople.org & Abbey People, Facebook

Email info@abbeypeople.org.uk

Phone 07526-761368

Link Councillor: Haf Davies

Romsey

Visit <https://overmillroadbridge.org.uk>

Email romsey.covid@gmail.com

Phone 07908-466257 or 01223-750170

Link Cllr: Dave Baigent

Coleridge

Visit <http://coleridgecommunityforum.org>

Email coleridgecovid@gmail.com

Phone 01223-641021

Link Cllr: Rosy Moore

Cherry Hinton

Visit www.whatwillhelp.org/cherry-hinton

Phone 01223-242954

Link Councillor: Russ McPherson

Queen Edith's

Visit <https://queen-ediths.info>

Phone 01223-641012

Link Councillors: Colin McGerty & Amanda Taylor

Trumpington

Visit <https://trumpington.info>

Email hello@trumpington.info

Phone 01223-662291

Link Councillors: Barbara Ashwood & Katie Thornburrow

Petersfield

Visit <https://petersfield.link/getting-help>

Email petersfieldma@romseymill.org

Phone 07933-671101

Link Councillor: Mike Davey

Market

Visit Facebook page Cambridge Market Ward C19 Mutual Aid

Email marketwardaid@gmail.com

Link Councillor: Katie Porrer

Newnham

Email sec.nnra@gmail.com (if north of Barton Road) or
newnhamcroft.ra@gmail.com (if south of Barton Road)

Link Councillors: Rod Cantrill & Lucy Nethsingha

Castle

Visit www.castlesupport.uk

Email help@castlesupport.uk

Phone 01223-750190

Link Councillor: Cheney Payne

Keeping well and safe this winter



Eight ways to avoid condensation and mould

Open windows after bathing, showering and cooking. Use trickle vents and extractor fans if you have them.

Heat your home a little more in cold weather, keeping a low background heat on all day, rather than short bursts of high heat.

Avoid using portable, flue-less bottled-gas heaters. They put a lot of moisture into the air.

Make sure doors are closed when rooms are not being used.

Resist the temptation to dry clothes over your radiators or storage heaters.

Dry clothes in a cool area of your home. Ventilate any rooms that clothes are dried in.

Cover pans while cooking, and do not leave the kettle boiling.

Vent tumble-dryers to the outside, never into your home (unless they're the self-condensing type). DIY kits are available to do this.

Five steps to keep warm for less



Step 1 - Keep heat in, cold out

The first step to lower bills is always to keep the heat in, and where it's needed.

- Draw curtains as soon as it starts to get dark, and tuck them behind radiators
- Thick, heavy curtains really block heat- loss through windows
- Keep furniture away from radiators
- Get or make a sausage-dog draught excluder for your front door

Step 2 - Tweak your controls

- Set your room thermostat to between 18 and 21 degrees

- Adjust each radiator's thermostat to cooler or warmer as needed in each room
- It takes more energy to heat moist air than dry air, so ventilate steamy rooms
- If your water is scalding hot, ask for the temperature to be lowered at the next boiler service
- Get a Smart Meter, to keep track of energy use as you go

Step 3 - Get the best tariff

You can save a lot of money with a better tariff.

- Check your bill to see your tariff, then use a price comparison website to find better value for money
- Pay by monthly direct debit, and have an online account – both these save money
- If you don't have a Smart Meter, give monthly meter readings so your bill is accurate

Step 4 - Apply for help or discounts

There is help available if you are struggling on a low income.

- A Warm Home Discount of £140 is available from your energy supplier if you meet certain criteria: check their website for details
- Emergency fuel vouchers are available if you are directly affected by the Covid-19 crisis and have a pre-pay meter
- For general help with your finances, contact Cambridge Citizens Advice at www.cambridgecab.org.uk, phone helpline 0344-848-7979

For more help or information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/home-energy-and-water-use or email the Council's Home Energy Officer at homeenergy@cambridge.gov.uk

Step 5 - Keep active and eat well

Wear several warm, light layers rather than one heavy one. Ensure you have one or two healthy, hot meals each day. And ensure you keep moving, even if you are limited to staying indoors.

Doing some home cooking or housework, walking upstairs or taking a walk, a stretch and some fresh air in the garden or outside your door will all help you keep warm and healthy in the colder months.

For more tips on winter wellbeing, visit www.keep-your-head.com/cyp or www.nhs.uk/change4life

Housing homeless people



Cambridge Next Steps tackles homelessness, providing new, one-person modular homes, with help from land and property owners. Designed by local housebuilder Hill, they give formerly homeless people a stepping-stone to a stable lifestyle. Hill have pledged to create 200 nationally.

The homes are delivered fully furnished with high standards of safety, security and insulation. The Council has provided land for the first three in Cambridge, and homelessness charities will support new tenants to integrate into the local community.

This is part of the Council's affordable housing programme, delivering over 500 new council homes, including specialist housing solutions. Since Covid-19 began, the Council has temporarily housed over 100 homeless people.

Cambridge also has a specialist Street Outreach Team. They talk to individuals who are sleeping rough and help them find emergency accommodation or support them to return to areas they have come from. See the article below for details.

Streetlink in the cold months

StreetLink is an online link-up that is helping to end rough sleeping. It enables you to bring an individual rough sleeper to the attention of local services who will help them.

To send support services to an adult whom you have seen sleeping rough, visit www.streetlink.org.uk This will send services to find the individual and give them the support they need.

If you think a rough sleeper is under 18, is in immediate danger or needs urgent care, phone 999 rather than contacting StreetLink.

Ideally, contact StreetLink via their website or mobile app. Otherwise, phone them at 0300-500-0914.

If you or anyone you know are faced with sleeping rough in Cambridge, contact the Council's Housing Advice Service at 01223-457918 or the Street Outreach Team at 01223-366292.

A 'Housing Custodian' speaks

Housing First is an internationally recognised method for helping former rough sleepers maintain a stable home from which to rebuild their lives. In Cambridge the Council intends to create 37 Housing First tenancies by 2022.

New tenants get intensive support, centred on their goals and strengths, to maintain their tenancy. Dean, a Housing First Custodian, says:

'As a live-in Custodian, I'm a contact between the new Housing First tenants, their support staff, and the wider community where they are housed. I help them settle in and integrate sustainably into this community. I'm pleased with how things have begun, and look forward to helping them engage with their support.'

As the first Custodian in Cambridge, I'll be able to share my experience as more properties become available. Residents report feeling more relaxed, knowing there is someone local who can offer reassurance both to them and their new community...'

For more information, email Andy.King@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-457918.

Progress against domestic abuse

During Covid-19, domestic abuse has increased. Cambridge Women's Aid offer a Live Chat service - free, confidential advice and support for women around domestic abuse. Chat with them online (Wed, 3pm-5pm or Fri, 11am-12pm) at www.cambridgewa.org.uk/livechat

Trained staff will offer practical options and ongoing help. But in an emergency, phone 999. The City Council and its Housing service work closely with them, and are accredited by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance. Visit www.cambridgewa.org.uk, phone 01223-361214 or email outreach@cambridgewa.org.uk

A new law enables you to ask the police online whether your partner has a history of violent or abusive behaviour. You will be told confidentially if there is reason for concern. To find out more, visit www.cambs.police.uk/apply/Clares-Law

Homes and services



Free food if you need it

Affording food has become a challenge for many in Cambridge due to loss of income during the Covid-19 crisis. Emergency food is being provided by the Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance - 25 organisations that are working together to tackle poverty in the city.

If you or someone you know is struggling to afford or access food, phone the Cambridge Food Poverty Alliance at 01223-967426 on Monday-Friday, 10am-2pm. Or fill in their contact form online at <https://cambridgesustainablefood.org>

They are coordinating free emergency food supplies, and providing a signposting service for people in need of food. For instance, residents in crisis can get a voucher for a food bank. This gives you access to receive basic store-cupboard foods up to three times over six months. Phone 01223-967426 for help to get a voucher to use a Food Bank.

Note that you can't use the Food Bank without first getting this voucher. And you must be infection-free, wear a mask and take your own bag.

Local hubs near you

Emergency food supplies and other support are also available in your locality if you need them, at community food hubs around the city. They are giving free food to those in need of it. To contact the outlet nearest to you, get their contact details from the [article on the subject](#) in this edition of Open Door.

You can also phone the helpline at 01223-967426, or see online at <https://cambridgesustainablefood.org/cfpa-covid-19>

These local hubs are also ensuring that vulnerable people locally get access to medicine, social support and other necessities.

Free school meals

Free school meals can be accessed by registering your child at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/freeschoolmeals or phoning 01223-703200.

Tenants' contents insurance

Cambridge City Council have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance Plc who provide specialist Tenants' Contents Insurance policies. All the City Council's tenants are eligible to apply.

It's a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for, in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one. There's no excess to pay if you make a claim. Terms and conditions, limits and exclusions apply.

A copy of the policy wording is available on request. For more information visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/home-contents-insurance, or phone Cambridge City Council at 01223-457070 or email housing.finance@cambridge.gov.uk

Thistle Insurance Services Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

New cleaning contractors

The process is underway to procure new contractors who will provide the communal cleaning and window cleaning service that is currently delivered on the Council's estates by Churchill.

Your elected resident representatives and volunteer resident inspectors are closely involved in designing new contracts, based on their insight into residents' needs.

Note that if you have a caretaker, these new contracts will not affect you - your caretaker's cleaning service will remain unchanged.

For residents who do receive the cleaning service, the new arrangements are expected to be put in place by April 2021. Until then, Churchill will continue to deliver the service.

Open Door will keep you informed, and will introduce you to the new providers of these services.

Tenants are happy with Covid-safe repairs



As you can see in the article below, tenants have been happy with the maintenance work carried out on their homes by the Council's contractors during Covid-19, like the new bathroom in the photo above.

The City Council uses TSG contractors to do planned interior maintenance on tenants' homes. It includes fitting new kitchens and bathrooms, but also essential health and safety work like fitting smoke and heat detectors, and testing electrics. It is essential that tenants let them in to do these works.

TSG will arrange an appointment at a time that suits you. If you are shielding due to Covid-19, inform TSG when they contact you. They will discuss what arrangements can be put in place to allow necessary work on your home to be done. If you find you can't keep an appointment, please contact TSG in advance to rearrange.

TSG follow all the government guidelines in relation to Covid-19. Staff doing the work wear all the necessary Personal Protective Equipment while in your home. In fact, tenants have been very satisfied with TSG's approach to works during Covid-19.

TSG are regularly receiving positive feedback from tenants, as you can read in the examples below.

'I needed a repair but with Covid-19, I was a bit apprehensive about having work done. I just wanted to say thanks. The repairs staff came yesterday and did it. They were very professional and polite, and everything was done very safely, with all the protection needed against the virus.'

A tenant in King's Hedges emailed their thanks for the work carried out at their property recently during Covid-19:

'I just wanted to email to say what a first-class service I received from the staff. They were so helpful. They went the extra mile to fit my appointment in and answer all the enquiries I made.'

The men who did the labour, as well as the man who disposed of the litter, were all very polite. The workmen worked non-stop and were very tidy. Well done to TSG! I was not looking forward to having this work done, but I am so glad now that I did get it done.'

For more information or to request a repair, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/housing-repairs-for-council-tenants or phone the City Council at 01223-457060.

Help at the touch of a button

The City Council's Community Alarm Service can install a pendant alarm for you in any Cambridge home. When you press it, it puts you directly in contact with a 24-hour response centre, any day of the year. The service costs approximately £5.92 per week.

The response centre staff are trained to assess your situation, and to make any necessary arrangements on your behalf. They can contact emergency services or a GP, a district nurse, your next of kin, or a named key holder to visit and help you.

If necessary, you can also have a key safe installed outside your home, allowing safe, instant access to appointed helpers in an emergency. A key safe is a small, wall-mounted key-storage system outside your home, that can hold up to five keys.

Key safes have a combination lock which you set to your own chosen code. This allows instant access to responding personnel in an emergency situation.

This care alarm service is excellent for people with long-term health needs, disabilities, restricted mobility, special needs, or who live alone.

Installation is free within the city boundaries, and can be done within days of requesting it. It also includes a free assessment to see if you need any other assistive equipment like fall detectors, sensor monitors or flood detectors.

You pay for the service quarterly by setting up a Direct Debit instruction or by calling the Council and making a card payment over the phone.

The quarterly charge for the care alarm service is currently £76.91 (about £5.92 per week). For a key safe, it's £3.30 per quarter (about 25p per week). For both together, it's £80.21 per quarter.

For information or to request a care alarm, phone the Council at 01223-457199, email independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk or follow Cambridge Older People's Housing on Facebook.

Over 75s on Pension Credit get free TV licence

If either you or your live-in partner are over 75 and receive Pension Credit, you can get a free TV Licence. If you had one up to August 2020, apply for a new one now. If you haven't had one before but think you're eligible, phone 0300-790-6117 to request an application form. Or apply online at www.tvlicensing.co.uk/over75 The free licence isn't granted automatically, so do apply for it.

Pension Credit is an income top-up for those of state pension age. For eligibility details or to apply, visit www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim

Note that if you are over 75 and live in a City Council sheltered scheme, you don't need to take any action - your TV Licence is already free.

Act on the Climate emergency

Cambridge's Climate Change Charter

You can now sign up to play your part in Cambridge's Climate Change Charter! It enables residents and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions, tackle climate change and help achieve a zero-carbon city.

Use the free Carbon Footprint Calculator online to calculate your own emissions. The site also gives easy, hands-on tips to reduce them, often saving money at the same time. Visit <http://cambridgecarbonfootprint.org/charter>

It explains lots of practical steps you can take around basics like home energy, transport, food, and shopping.

Home energy – The Charter offers advice on switching to renewable energy; improving or installing insulation; heating homes more smartly; and other small behaviour changes that reduce your energy bills.

Transport – You can reduce your carbon footprint by driving less (walking or cycling instead); joining a car-pool or an electric car club; working from home more; and reducing the number of flights you take.

Food – Your carbon footprint is reduced by eating less meat, swapping it for at least some vegetarian or vegan foods; eating seasonally and locally; and never wasting any food.

Shopping – Your carbon emissions reduce when you buy second-hand, borrow or swap; reduce packaging by getting refills; mend and repair items; or when you just avoid buying items at all and instead save your money!

The Council has cut its own carbon emissions (from its buildings, vehicles and services) by over 25% in the past 5 years. Coming editions of Open Door will update you on what the Council is doing to further reduce its own carbon emissions. And they will bring you lots of practical tips for reducing yours in the course of everyday life. For information, visit <https://cambridgecarbonfootprint.org/what-you-can-do>

Residents' chalklands revived

With help from residents, Fulbourn Road Green is now a beautiful haven for nature. On a chalk ridge with thin soils, it made an ideal wildflower meadow. The Council scraped it back to bare chalk in places that are now sporting native chalk grassland wildflowers like Kidney Vetch, Knapweed, Scabious and Lady's Bedstraw.

Lots of bumblebees and butterflies have arrived, including Meadow Brown, Large Skipper, Ringlet and Green-Veined Whites. Residents are giving very positive feedback, delighted with the abundance of new wildlife on their back doorstep.

Volunteers helped to plant natural hedgerows. A lovely path now goes round either side of the Long Grasses Green, so you can do a circular walk for free while still social-distancing, with tall grasses swaying in the breeze as you go.

Use the car less

Walking is of course a great option for shorter journeys. It's free, and excellent for both your physical and mental. Cycling is a low-cost, healthy form of transport that's ideal for Cambridge. Most people can comfortably cycle 4 miles in half an hour. And they usually arrive happier than they started out! You don't get stuck in traffic jams, and can carry quite a lot of bags or shopping on a well-equipped bike.

Cargo bikes let you safely transport children or heavy goods. And electric bikes will take you even further and quicker. For many, an electric bike can entirely replace a car: they're not cheap, but they're vastly cheaper to buy and run than a car! Most electric bikes travel 30 to 60 miles on 5p of electricity!

The occasional rain shower needn't be a problem either. Just have to hand a rain mac and waterproof trousers. There are also many options available for differently-abled people, such as tricycles, handcycles and cycles where you lie back. Visit these cycling resources for tips, ideas and bargains:

- the Camcycle website at www.camcycle.org.uk is a huge resource of advice and tips to boost your cycling in Cambridge
- at www.bike2workscheme.co.uk, this government scheme can save you up to 42% on a new bike for getting to work
- the School Run Centre off Mill Road is full of tips and bargains for various ways of cycling kids to school; visit online at <http://schoolruncentre.co.uk>

In congested Cambridge, it's often quicker to cycle or walk, taking advantage of car-free shortcuts. And for travelling into or through Cambridge city centre, buses are easier than cars. Public transport saves the hassle of finding and paying for parking and fuel. You can just relax, read or enjoy the scenery! For bus timetables and to plan your journeys, visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/buses/bus-timetables

Residents' Garden competition



Despite Covid-19, the Council's tenants and leaseholders entered lovely gardens for the annual Residents' Garden Competition, winning £400 worth of prizes. Some winners are pictured here.

Residents have realised that their garden can really support the environment. The city's nature-friendly gardens are now a lifeline for declining bees, birds and butterflies. As part of the Council's actions on the Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies, future Residents' Garden Competitions will look for environment-friendly practices in the gardens entered.

Nature-friendly gardens already provide a patchwork of biodiversity across the city. The Garden Competition aims for these to cover more and more of the Council's estates. With the simple, free steps below, residents can easily change their gardens to being nature-friendly. These steps also save money and effort!

Gardeners helping Nature

- Leave some natural areas to feed birds, bees, butterflies and other insects.

Dandelions, buttercups and nettles feed bees, birds and butterflies like Red Admirals and Tortoise Shells.

- Grow natural flowers with single blooms rather 'double' blooms that bees and butterflies can't feed from.
- Compost all your garden and kitchen waste for free fertiliser that improves your soil.
- Organic veg, herbs and fruit can be expensive: grow your own to save a lot of money and eat more healthily. Protect your fruit and veg from pests using physical barriers like fleece, rather than chemicals that poison other wildlife as well as slugs.
- Mulching protects your plants and reduces the need to water.
- Collect rainwater in a butt, to water your garden for free.

What not to do

1. Step number one is to stop using chemical pesticides, herbicides or fertilisers. As well as potentially harming human health, they can harm bees, butterflies and birds as well as the hedgehogs and toads who eat poisoned slugs.

2. Mow your lawn a lot less so that wildflowers like dandelions, daisies, buttercups and plantain come up through it to feed wildlife. Compost all cuttings.

Next spring, to request or download an entry form for the 2021 Residents' Garden Competition, you can visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-garden-competition, or email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk, or phone 01223-458323.

2020's Winning Gardens

Environmental ~ Neville Road

Nature & Wildlife ~ Bridewell Road

Community Garden ~ Hanover & Princess

Baskets ~ Borrowdale

Tubs ~ Wulfstan Way

Communal Garden ~ Fernwood

Established Garden ~ Mowbray Road

Tallest Sunflower ~ Hanover & Princess

Judges' Favourite ~ Ramsden Square

For leaseholders



Annual Consultation Forum

The annual Leaseholder Consultation Forum is an opportunity for City Council leaseholders to meet and discuss issues specific to them. City Council officers from housing, asset maintenance, resident involvement and the home-ownership team will provide updates on key service information, and how this has been impacted since the outbreak of the pandemic.

The elected Leaseholder Representative will also be reporting back on topical information from the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Due to government restrictions on meeting sizes, this year's meeting will be held online:

Date: Thursday 26th November

Time: 12.30-2pm

Location: Microsoft Teams - online

To find out more and receive a link to join the meeting, contact your Resident Engagement Officer on 01223-458323 or email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk For those unable to attend, the meeting will be

recorded and posted on the City Council's leaseholder webpage to view later. If you can't attend but wish to submit a question, please use the contact details above.

Subletting rules

Your lease agreement explains the rules you must follow if subletting your flat, including registering any sublet with the Council and paying a £50 fee. The Council recommends you get a solicitor to check your lease, ensuring your sublet complies fully with it. You must also ensure your insurance is in order for subletting.

Your lease states that you must 'use and occupy the flat solely and exclusively as a self-contained flat in one family occupation only'. You can only sublet to one person or family, not to a group of individuals nor as a holiday let. The Council has taken legal action against leaseholders breaching this clause. In this situation, the Council can apply to court to end your lease and repossess your property, with no compensation for you. You could lose all rights to the property.

For more information visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders or email leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-457835.

Grants for adapting homes

Cambs Home Improvement Agency, part of Cambridge City Council, can adapt homes for disabled children or adults, or older people who want to be able to live independently for longer. They explain:

'Leaseholders can be eligible for a grant. We can support you to move to a more suitable home. Last year we helped two families relocate to homes that work better for them.'

Do you need a level-access shower or an over-bath shower? That's the most popular adaptation that we do. Do you need an adapted kitchen or WC, or a stairlift or hoist? You may be eligible for a grant to have this done in your home.

Do you need help with access to your property? Last year we installed ramps and door entry systems to nine Cambridge homes. We also support customers needing adaptations who aren't eligible for grants. We can offer a staggered payment plan, with trusted support to organise the work for you.

Are you eligible for a grant? It's more likely than you might think! Homeowners, renters, people with savings and without, people on benefits and those who aren't - all could be eligible for grants to make adaptations to their home.'

For instance, homeowners Pam and Mick are in their 70s: 'We get £310 per week from pensions, and have £25,500 in savings. Yet we got a Disabled Facilities Grant from the Council and only had to pay £1,837 towards an adapted kitchen.'

June, in her 60s, lives in a housing association home: 'I have £222 per week from my pensions and £12,906 in savings, but I got a Disabled Facilities Grant from the Council that paid for my new access ramp.'

Homeowner Mina, 30s, lives with her daughter: 'My household income is less than £15,050 a year and I get Child Tax Credits, so I qualified for a Disabled Facilities Grant to pay for a ground-floor toilet.'

To find out how the Home Improvement Agency could improve the useability of your home, visit www.cambshia.org

Resident involvement

Your elected resident representatives



At the beginning of the year the Council encouraged residents to stand for election onto the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Five tenants applied for the five available tenant positions, so no tenant ballot needed to take place. Two applications were received for the one available leaseholder position, so a postal ballot took place for them.

We can now introduce your newly elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives. They are tenants Diana Minns, Christabella Amiteye, Lulu Agate, Colin Stevens and Mandy Powell-Hardy, and leaseholder representative Diane Best.

Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives are in a unique position to challenge, input and vote on decisions relating to your housing at the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee. They will champion your interests for the next four years, and will use Open Door to keep you updated on their activities. Decisions they influenced last year include:

- budgets for the Housing service

- consultations on the design, location, and delivery of new City Council housing developments and schemes
- evaluating large contracts for council estates, such as the new building cleaning contract
- overseeing a review of Housing's repairs and maintenance service
- overseeing the development of policies and procedures, such as policies on keeping communal areas clear, hoarding, local lettings and rechargeable repairs

At the June meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, your resident reps debated and voted on issues like the Housing budget, the repairs service review, building new social housing, and addressing homelessness during Covid-19.

Your resident representatives are available to listen to your concerns and questions. If you want to contact them, please send an email to hsc.residents@gmail.com, or phone 01223-458323 to leave them a message.

Give your feedback on services

Why not become a Resident Inspector for your local estate? It can take as little as one hour per month. Resident Inspectors play a crucial role in monitoring the delivery of estate services contracts, such as communal building cleaning, window cleaning and grounds maintenance.

The role involves independently inspecting areas around estates where these services are delivered, and marking the standards. The results are then used as performance indicators.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Resident Inspectors have adapted to the restrictions by inspecting only their own local estates. But more council estates

across the city need to be inspected. So why not join us and volunteer as a Resident Inspector for your local area? The kind of tasks required are for you to rate things like:

- the cleanliness of internal communal areas in blocks of flats
- the quality and standard of communal window cleaning
- the quality of grass cutting and maintenance of shrub beds

The inspections are conducted during the day at a time that suits you, all within a walkable distance around your estate. Full training and support will be provided, and no prior experience is required. Any expenses you might incur for undertaking the role will be reimbursed.

All City Council tenants and leaseholders are encouraged to take part. So if you are interested, get in touch by phoning 01223-458323 or emailing resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk for more information.

Consider too the information on the Residents' Panel in the article below. To have a positive impact on the quality of landlord services in your area, you could do one or both of these roles. To become a member of this Residents' Panel, please get in touch using the contact details above.

Residents' Panel drives improvements

The Residents' Panel brings tenants and leaseholders together as a collective independent voice. It provides two-way communication for consultation and insight between residents and Cambridge City Council. Due to Covid-19, the next meeting will be online. The date will be posted soon at www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement

The meeting will focus on some of the Housing service's key performance indicators. Panel members will be asked for their thoughts on the current effectiveness of services, and to suggest improvements from a customer point of view.

Various methods will be used to conduct this evaluation, like mystery shopping. Residents' feedback will be used to make customer-centred improvements to the way Housing deliver their day to day service.

Message from your Neighbourhood Police



'We, your Neighbourhood Policing Team, work closely with the City Council to help solve problems in your area. Recently we have increased our work around bike theft in Cambridge. A prolific bike thief has been sentenced to 28 weeks in prison for bike thefts and possession of cannabis. He also received a Criminal Behaviour Order preventing him from returning to the area where he stole the bikes. Reports from the public led to many stolen bikes being recovered, and two other bike thieves were arrested.

We have also been targeting dangerous and anti-social driving, with multiple vehicles seized and formal warnings issued to drivers. These warnings allow their vehicle to be seized if a second offence is committed within 12 months. We are particularly focussing too on moped drivers who put pedestrians at risk by driving on pavements and pedestrian areas.

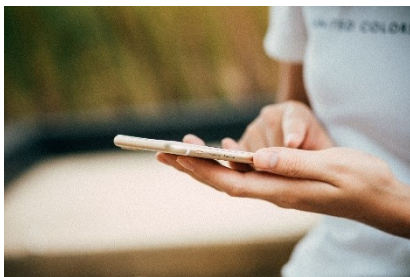
We are tackling drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour across the city and supporting other police teams in high-priority work such as burglaries, missing persons, child criminal and sexual exploitation, and exploitation of vulnerable people.

But all our work relies on you, the local community, telling us precisely where the problems are. If we don't know there is a problem, we can't do anything about it. So please report any problems to your local policing team by:

- phoning 101
- or reporting online at www.cambs.police.uk
- or reporting online anonymously at crimestoppers-uk.org

For updates on the policing work going on in your local area, follow us on Facebook at 'Policing Cambridge City' or via Twitter @cambscops'

Important contact information



Your MyCambridge account and your Housing Services account online

www.cambridge.gov.uk (top right corner)

Cambridge Virtual Community Centre
For support during the Covid-19 crisis

visit www.facebook.com/cambridgevcc

Domestic Abuse 24-hour Helpline

Tel: 0808-2000-247 (Freephone, no cost)

Visit: www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Council Payments by phone

Tel: 01223-457779, with bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings,

renting a council garage

Tel: 01223-457070

For garages, email cityhomesgarages@cambridge.gov.uk

For rents, tenancies or lettings, email housingofficer@cambridge.gov.uk

Repairs

Tel: 01223-457060; or 0300-303-8389 for out of hours emergency repairs

Council Tax

E: revenues@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457790

Housing for Older People, Visiting Support Service, Community Alarms

E: independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457199

Home-Link lettings

Visit www.home-link.org.uk

Tel: 01223-457918

Report tenancy fraud

E: fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 0800-328-0572 (confidential)

Freephone)

Report anti-social behaviour

E: asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457950

Housing & Council Tax Benefits

E: benefits@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457775

Bins, recycling, street-cleaning

<http://bins.cambridge.gov.uk> to request online any time; tel: 01223-458282

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours

Tel: 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

Noise complaints (reduced service)

E: env.health@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457900

Out of hours: 0300-303-8389

Council emergencies out of hours

Tel: 0300-3038389

General enquiries & complaints

E: enquiries@cambridge.gov.uk

Tel: 01223-457000 (9am-5.15pm, Monday to Friday)

Visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions.

Council's partners for housing

Mears gas servicing

Freephone 03332-070-766, including out of hours; (for leaseholders' gas emergencies, tel. 0800-111-999)

TSG Services

E: enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk

Tel: 01223-828777

Free Sign Language interpreter

Deaf residents can now contact the Council via a free online Sign Language service.

Register at <https://signlive.co.uk>, downloading an app if you wish.

The service is available Mon-Fri, 9am-5.15pm, via your own computer or smartphone. Once you are registered, when you phone the Council at 01223-457000, a live Sign Language interpreter will appear and interpret for you for free during the call.