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East Cambridgeshire
District Council

COUNCIL – 20 FEBRUARY 2024 – DECISION LIST

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
1.	-	Public Question Time	To answer questions from members of the public.	Three public questions were received and responded to as detailed at the end of the Decision List.	-
2.	-	Apologies for Absence	To receive apologies for absence from Members.	Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Horgan, Pitt, Shepherd, A Whelan, and C Whelan.	-
3.	-	Declarations of Interests	To receive declarations of interests from Members in respect of any items on the agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.	No declarations of interests were made by Members.	-
4.	-	Minutes – 19 October 2023	To receive the Minutes of the last Council meeting.	It was resolved: That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.	Democratic Services Manager
5.	-	Chairman's Announcements	Announcement of items of interest.	The Chair made the following announcements: 1. Investors in the Environment I am very pleased that the Council has received a Silver Accreditation from the Investors in the Environment demonstrating a commitment to reducing our environmental impact and to the continual improvement of our sustainability performance. The report highlights, the team at ECDC has maintained a good environmental management system and continued to drive down emissions in many key areas.	-

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				<p>East Cambs District Council has achieved an excellent reduction in paper use, driven by monthly updates, setting annual targets and champions within departments and the Green Team has organised Carbon Literacy training available to all members of staff which has increased engagement and empowered participants. I am extremely happy with the results, and I am especially grateful to our Green Team Members who have been so supportive and engaged throughout the year. A copy of the accreditation report outlining our achievements as well as the next steps is available from Emma Jane Danielsson, Climate Change and Natural Environment Senior Officer. Well done to all involved.</p> <p>2. Building Control I was extremely proud to hear Craig Smith and his Building Control team have received national recognition for their working relationship with Soham-based Building Control agent Andrew Fleet. Together they won “Best Partnership” at the Local Authority Building Control Awards, which recognise excellence in collaboration, communication and overall partnership working practices. A further thank you from the Chair to everyone involved for a very commendable performance.</p> <p>3. Chairman’s Events I, myself have been busy attending various Civic events; one of notable interest was a Holocaust Memorial Day hosted by Huntingdonshire District</p>	

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				Council which was a very moving event, at which I was proud to represent East Cambs District Council.	
6.	-	To Receive Petitions	To receive public petitions.	No public petitions had been received.	-
7.	-	Notice of Motions Under Procedure Rule 10	To receive and consider the received Motion:	No motions had been received.	-
8.	-	To answer Questions from Members	To receive questions from Members of Council.	Three questions from Members were received and responses given as detailed at the end of the Decision List.	-
9.	Y146	Independent Remuneration Panel	To consider the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) relating to Members Allowances.	It was resolved unanimously that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The recommendations of the IRP at Appendix A to the report be approved, to take effect from 1 April 2024. 2. The IRP comments at paragraph 6.3 to the report be noted. 	Democratic Services Manager
10.	Y147	Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review	To consider the outcome of the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations Review.	It was resolved unanimously that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. The current arrangements for the use of polling district/places/stations for future elections/referendums/polls, except the previous HI3 polling district and the Ely North ward be approved. II. Approval be given to the amalgamation of the previous HI3 polling district with the HI1 polling district III. The whole of Ely North ward be designated as a polling place, to provide flexibility for the Returning Officer to use any suitable building or area as deemed appropriate for relevant elections/referendums/polls. 	Chief Executive/ Electoral Team Leader

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				IV. The Returning Officer's use of suitable alternative polling stations should the need arise be approved.	
11.	Y148	Making (adoption) of Reach Neighbourhood Plan	Following the successful referendum on 1 February 2024, the Reach Neighbourhood Plan needs to be formally 'made' by East Cambridgeshire District Council and thereby be formalised as part of the Development Plan for Ease Cambridgeshire (alongside the 2015 Local Plan (as amended 2023) and other made Neighbourhood Plans).	It was resolved unanimously that: a) Reach Parish Council be congratulated on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and a successful referendum outcome, becoming the seventh Parish Council to do so in East Cambridgeshire. b) The Reach Neighbourhood Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report is formally made as part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire with immediate effect.	Strategic Planning Manager
12.	Y149	Pay Policy Statement	To present the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2024-25, a requirement under the Localism Act 2011.	It was resolved unanimously: That the 2024-25 Pay Policy Statement be approved and adopted.	HR Manager
13.	Y150	Recommendations from Committees and other Member Bodies	To consider and take decisions on items recommended from Committees and other Member Bodies.	1. Audit Committee – 16 October 2023 i) <u>Risk Management Policy and Framework Update</u> It was resolved: That the updated Risk Management Policy and Framework documents at Appendix 1 and 2 to the report be approved. 2. Finance & Assets Committee – 23 November 2023 i) <u>Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review 2023-24</u> It was resolved:	Director Finance

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
				<p>that the Mid-Year Review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.</p> <p>3. Finance & Assets Committee – 24 January 2024</p> <p>i) <u>2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy</u></p> <p>It was resolved: That approval be given to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy 2. The Annual Investment Strategy. 3. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement. 4. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators. <p>ii) <u>Bereavement Centre Full Business Case</u></p> <p>It was resolved that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Full Business Case as detailed in Appendices 1-4 of the report be approved. 2. A community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation up to £9.06m for the capital build be approved. 3. The Director Finance be authorised to secure alternative funding where CIL is not available, in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Assets Committee, as detailed in Section 5 of the report. 4. Provision is secured of a partner to manage fishing rights on the site as set out in Section 4.11 of the report. 	

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				5. The future operating model of the Bereavement Centre be approved as set out in Section 4.16 of the report.	

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14.	Y151	East Cambridgeshire Street Scene (ECSS) Management Fee	To consider a request from East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) Board, requesting an increase in Management fee for 2023/24 to meet the additional costs the Company has encountered in the current year.	It was resolved that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An additional management fee payment to ECSS in 2023/24 of up to £200,000 be approved. 2. The Director, Finance be authorised to make the payment, of up to £200,000, based upon an open book accounting approach, at the end of the financial year. 	Director Finance
15.	Y152	East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC) – Loan Deadline Extension Request	To consider East Cambs Trading Company's (ECTC) request for an extension to the loan repayment deadline from March 2026 to March 2027.	It was resolved that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) The ECTC request for the loan repayment extension from March 2026 to March 2027, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report be approved. ii) The Director Finance and Director Legal be authorised to amend the Loan Agreement and Debenture Agreement to implement the above. 	Director Finance And Director Legal
16.	Y153	Council Tax, Revenue and Capital Budgets	To consider the Council's proposed Revenue Budget, Capital Strategy, and required level of Council Tax in 2024/25.	It was resolved: <p>That approval be given to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculated the Council Tax requirement, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report. 	Director Finance

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) The draft revenue budget for 2024/25 and MTFs for 2025/26 to 2027/28, as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b of the report. iii) A Council Tax freeze in 2024/25. iv) The Statement of Reserves, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report. v) The Capital Strategy and financing, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report. vi) The 2024/25 Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report. vii) The extension of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure 75% Business Rate relief (and potentially other reliefs) (which would be fully funded by the Government through Section 31 grants), as detailed in Sections 6.6 to 6.8 of the report. 	
17.		Constitution Review Working Party Report	To consider the report of the Constitution Review Working Party (CRWP)	Resolution attached at Appendix 1 to the Decision List	Democratic Services Manager
18.		Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Update Reports	To receive the summary reports of Combined Authority Board and Committee meetings to the Constituent Authorities.	It was resolved: That the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's representatives be noted.	Democratic Services Manager
19.	Y155	Action Taken on the Grounds of Urgency	To note the action taken on the grounds of urgency in relation to changes to the ECTC and ECSS Board of Directors	It was resolved:	Democratic Services Manager

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			(Implementation from 1 November 2023)	The action taken on the grounds of urgency be noted.	

ITEM NO. 1 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Statement from Nicholas Acklam, a resident from the village of Reach

“My name is Nicholas Acklam. I have lived in Reach for 32 years and was involved in the production of the Reach Neighbourhood Plan. It has taken five years to get to this point and the journey has not always been smooth. I am therefore pleased that the Plan was strongly endorsed by my fellow villagers at referendum earlier this month, with a turnout of 58% and a vote in favour of 66%. The Reach Neighbourhood Plan usefully supplements ECDC’s Local Plan, identifying in detail those qualities that make Reach a special place and which residents wish to preserve, whilst enabling modest, appropriate, and sustainable development. The Plan also provides a foundation on which improvements to our neighbourhood, as identified by residents, can be implemented. One such example is the Reach Nature Recovery Plan which already forms part of the district’s nature recovery strategy, but which depends heavily on policies laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan. It follows that I commend the Reach Neighbourhood Plan to Councillors and ask that you formally adopt it as part of the Development Plan of the district.”

Response from the Chair of the Council

The Chair thanked Mr Acklam for attending Council and for his statement and welcomed Mr Acklam to remain for the debate at Item 11 which his statement referred to. Council Members were requested to take Mr Acklam’s statement into consideration in connection with Agenda item 11.

2. Question from Charmaine Switsur to the Leader of the Council - Read out by the Democratic Services Manager:

“I have read about the Bereavement Centre project, which I think is a good use of the land at Mepal and I wanted to give my thoughts to the Council about it. I believe that this will be a fantastic local facility for the families of East Cambs. I particularly appreciate that the facility is for all people from different faiths and no faith at all. The images I saw of the proposed building look dignified and the surroundings look beautiful and peaceful.

I really like the idea of a natural burials area and pet cemetery being included because many people would like to be buried near all their loved ones, including dearly treasured pets.

I also like the idea that my carbon footprint will be minimised even in my death with the electric cremators, renewable energy, and a shorter trip to Mepal. Older people trying to get to their friend's funeral often have to rely on favours from friends or family and with a local centre it will be much easier for people to get there. I really hope that this project gets the go ahead.

My question is:

Will the Council work with local people to ensure that the inside of the bereavement centre is special, that it reflects its surroundings, and that it offers the atmosphere and services that the people of East Cambs want to see?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"Thank you for your question and for your support of this project. Yes, we want to work really hard to make the Bereavement Centre special, to make it feel different, to respect and reflect its special surroundings and to deliver the services that local people want in the way that they want them. This is a community facility, it will belong to the people of East Cambs, and it's really important that they feel a sense of ownership and love for it. We will work with the public to understand this and to deliver a community facility and service that they, and we, can be proud of."

3. **Question from Peter D. Harvey to the Leader of the Council - Read out by the Democratic Services Manager:**

"Given a presumption in favour of commercial best practice; due diligence, can the Leader of the Council advise over what contingency plans are in place and/or have been considered in the event the speculative commercial venture, namely the proposed crematorium at Mepal, is unsuccessful?"

Response from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"I would like to start by reassuring you, and all the public, that extensive due diligence has been carried out on this project. The plans for the proposed Bereavement Centre have been developed over several years and we have worked with independent industry experts to produce a detailed business case which includes a needs analysis, a full competition appraisal and a cost appraisal for both construction and operating costs; the business case has been robustly tested and is positive. There are no borrowing costs in the plan. Because of this work, I do not consider this to be a speculative commercial venture whatsoever and it is not accurate to describe it as such. The plans we are considering this evening have been well thought out and carefully modelled to ensure that the Bereavement Centre is financially sustainable. The analysis that has been carried out demonstrates that, even with the prudent assumptions around the number of cremations and the lower charges compared with other crematoria, the proposed Bereavement Centre, which is a community facility, is financially viable and the business case is positive."

ITEM NO. 8 TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

1) Question from Councillor Lucius Vellacott to Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey, in her capacity as the Council's Combined Authority Board Member:

“The CPCA Mayor is set to raise the precept by 200%, and whilst a service linking Soham and Cambridge is welcomed, residents in Wicken will not see the benefit. Those living in the village need to access all their local services in Soham. With access to Soham train station, just one bus would link Wicken with the world, and the world with an internationally important Nature Reserve at Wicken Fen (and the excellent Maids Head pub).

Will the Leader of the Council push the Mayor to examine the viability of a two-hourly service linking Wicken and Soham in his new proposals?”

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey:

“Thank you, Cllr Vellacott, for your question. I did not support the Mayor’s precept when he introduced it in 2023, and I did not support the 200% increase to it this year. I note that, of the East Cambs residents that responded to the CPCA consultation on the precept, 66% were not willing to pay it to fund buses; in Fenland this figure was 77%. Perhaps this is because, despite the Mayor’s promises about levelling up public transport in the rural and deprived areas, he has made no progress on this to date. I’m afraid we are only in this position because of the chaos and dysfunctionality of the first two years of this current administration at the Combined Authority. All other Combined Authorities and dozens of other Transport Authorities got tens of millions, and some got hundreds of millions to improve bus services – CPCA got nothing in that round.

This failure is now being charged to local taxpayers. Devolution should be about receiving funding and powers down from Government, not a new excuse to tax local people, and it was unnecessary. Not least, the Mayor continues to support unsustainable bus routes, in one case costing the taxpayer a staggering £250 in public subsidy per return passenger journey, with promises that these high-cost routes will be improved to reach the benchmark level of £24 per return journey in public subsidy. However, the Labour and Lib Dem Board Members at the CPCA all supported the 200% precept increase and so now we must make the best of it. Three new routes are proposed for East Cambs from the precept increase as well as improvements on the B1102 corridor. In addition, there is also a plan to use some Government funding for a demand responsive transport pilot in East Cambs. Unfortunately, none of these proposals currently include Wicken, so I will of course take this up with the CPCA to see what is possible and report back. I do hope that the new funds raised through the Mayor’s precept are not simply swallowed up rescuing commercially run services but, with the recent announcement by Stagecoach to make significant reductions to their Littleport to Cambridge Number 9 service, things have not begun well and I fear we may see more of this to come. What new services East Cambs residents

actually get from this new local taxation remains to be seen; I will do what I can to make sure that Wicken is given proper consideration.”

2) Question from Councillor Cllr Bill Hunt, Stretham Ward, to Chair of F&A Committee Cllr Alan Sharp:

“At the meeting of the Finance and Assets Committee on 25th January 2024 doubt was cast on whether or not Stretham Parish Council had provided a letter of support for The Link project by Stretham and Wilburton Community Land Trust. Indeed, I noted that all the Liberal Democrats at that meeting, with the exception of one abstention, voted against providing funding for this project which includes a new GP Surgery. Can the Chairman of the Finance and Assets Committee confirm that Stretham Parish Council did in fact provide a letter of support for the project?”

Response from the Chair of Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Alan Sharp:

“Thank you, Cllr Hunt, for your question. Following meeting of the Finance and Assets Committee on 25 January 2024, and discussion regarding the Stretham Link Project Growth and Infrastructure fund application, the Council received a request from the Chief Operating Officer of Mereside Medical, that additional information be provided to Members of the Finance and Assets Committee to clarify their position regarding the new Stretham Link facility, including new GP premises for Stretham branch of Haddenham surgery. The information stated that the Chief Operating Officer of Mereside Medical had made it clear in her original email to Stretham Parish Council requesting in the letter of support that a key justification for new premises for Stretham branch being approved by the NHS is that it is integrated into community facilities that support wider health and wellbeing. The email from the Chief Operating Officer to Stretham Parish Council mentions the Stretham and Wilburton CLT and their work preparing a revised proposal and Planning application for the new community facilities in Stretham; which include new GP premises for the Stretham branch of Haddenham surgery; that the CLT has now taken on all responsibility and risk associated with delivering and maintaining the new facility; and states that Mereside Medical are working closely with them to secure the capital funding required to deliver the build. It is clear in the email thread that the Chief Operating Officer provided, that all Parish Councillors were copied in on the email and that the support letter provided, explicitly recognised that the GP premises would be embedded in such a community facility. She requested that the email thread and attached letter of support be shared with all of those who were present at the Finance and Assets Committee meeting so that there is no ambiguity to the ask that was made to Stretham Parish Council, as well as the essential nature of the proposal to securing the resumption of healthcare services in Stretham. This email was sent to all members of the Finance and Assets Committee.”

3) Question from Councillor Martin Goodearl to Councillor Anna Bailey:

“Myself and the residents of Littleport and in the wider area are upset to hear that Stagecoach are making large reductions to the No.9 bus service in April. This will mean a massive loss of service to the residents of Littleport especially those, who cannot drive,

requiring to get to an appointment at the walk-in medical facilities at the former RAF hospital or to access Ely for day-to-day tasks, as shopping or visiting friends and family. I am aware that Councillor Bailey has been in discussions with Officers at the CPCA. Can the leader of the Council please give us an update on what the CPCA is planning to do to restore the service for my residents and the residents of the other wards on this route?"

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"Thank you, Cllr Goodearl, for your question. I've met with Stagecoach about their proposed changes to the Number 9 service from Littleport to Cambridge, which will see a reduction of 3 buses to 1, the biggest impact for Littleport residents being the loss of most off-peak buses from Littleport to Ely. The changes are due to happen in mid-April. I have met with CPCA Officers about this and they have agreed to work up a plan and timetable for a service to be tendered by CPCA to work around the operating hours of the reduced Stagecoach service. This will need to be checked for legality and put out to tender. I have also raised the need for ticketing co-operation, if this goes ahead, to ensure that people can use their tickets interchangeably on the two services. I have not yet had any further information back from the CPCA but will keep local members updated when I do. Stagecoach is holding a public meeting at 6.00pm, tomorrow Wednesday 21st February at Ely Museum, so anyone wishing to hear more about the changes to the Number 9 can attend."

AGENDA ITEM 17

CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING PARTY

DECISION

It was resolved that:

- (i) The annotated version of Council Procedure rules (Appendix B1) be approved, confirming:
 - that non-gender specific language should be used throughout the Constitution and specifically, that the preferred title should be 'Chair' rather than Chairman.
 - the deletion of paragraph 24.2.4.4 (ref: 4(21)) requiring one day's notice for the appointment of substitutes to Planning Committee.
 - amend paragraph 13.1.2 (ref: 4(14)), specifically to remove the Chairman of Council from the process to assess Questions from Members.
 - that a point of clarification must be confined to same material part of a previous speech by him/her in meeting taking place (ref: paragraph 17.1 (ref: 4 (16))).
- (ii) The changes to the Constitution of the Council's Audit Committee be approved as set out In Appendix B1a and the 'modus operandi', specifically:
 - the appointment of one lay member without voting rights to the Committee.
 - clarification on the attendance of officers at Audit Committee, specifically, and in addition to the lead officer, report author and those required by the Constitution to attend in addition, an appropriate officer can be instructed to attend, by Committee resolution, in relation to a specified current or future agenda item.
- (iii) The guidance to members be amended in relation to the submission of written questions to officers, specifically to request that

written questions to officers be provided at least two working days in advance of a meeting.

- (iv) The financial regulations be amended (ref: Part 4 paragraph 6.2 p 4(30)), specifically to read:

“Scene Setting

The Finance & Assets Committee will receive a report to its September meeting, updating Committee with changes since the budget was approved in February and providing initial indications of how the future year’s budget will be constructed in advance of this being formally considered by Committee the following January. The Director, Finance will further share this report with all members of the Council.”

- (v) The changes to the Contract Procedure Rules be approved (ref: Part 4 paragraph 3.1.6 p.4 (75)), specifically to add contracts for agency staff as exempt.

- (vi) The changes to the Responsibility of Functions of the Constitution be approved, in relation to Operational Services and Finance & Assets Committee, specifically:

- ICT service plans and associated policy matters (ref: Part 3 section b(i) p3 (6- 13) be transferred from Operational Services to Finance & Assets Committee.
- Council’s Environment Plan and all climate change/natural environment strategic matters be transferred from Operational Services to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3).

- (vii) The addendum to the Delegation to Officers be approved in relation to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3 Section B (ii)), specifically:

Grants Determination of all grant requests under established grant schemes up to £50,000	Director, Community
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- (viii) The amendments (tracked below) to the Delegation of Officers be approved in relation to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3 Section B (ii)), specifically, ~~as set out in Appendix 2.~~

<p>To write off NNDR debt not exceeding £10,000 (Ref: Part 3 (ii) p 3(20))</p>	<p>Head of ARP or Operations Managers Head of NNDR, Recovery and Enforcement or Head of Benefits and Council Tax Billing</p> <p>With ARP, Operations Managers Revenues Recovery Managers write off debts below £1500 and Recovery Team Managers Revenues and NNDR Team Leaders or Senior Recovery Officer to write-off debts below £100 £150.</p>
<p>To write off Council Tax and Housing Benefit overpayments debt not exceeding £5000.</p>	<p>Head of ARP or Operations Managers Head of NNDR, Recovery and Enforcement or Head of Benefits and Council Tax Billing</p> <p>With ARP, Operations Managers Revenues Recovery Managers write off debts below £1500 and Recovery Team Managers Revenues and NNDR Team Leaders or Senior Recovery Officer to write-off debts below £100 £150.</p>
<p>To write off any individual debt which does not exceed £1000 £3000, after consultation with the Director, Legal, after ensuring that all action for recovery has been taken.</p>	<p>Director, Finance</p>

- (ix) The LGA Model Code of Conduct be adopted, together with a blanket policy to withhold the home address of Councillors, with Members having to 'opt in' to publish.