EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a remote meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee held at 4.30pm on Monday 25th January 2021.

P R E S E N T

Cllr David Brown (Chairman)
Cllr David Ambrose Smith
Cllr Ian Bovingdon
Cllr Charlotte Cane
Cllr Simon Harries
Cllr Bill Hunt
Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Gareth Wilson (Substitute for Cllr Alison Whelan)

OFFICERS

Emma Grima – Director Commercial
Jo Brooks – Director Operations
Ian Smith – Finance Manager
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager
Caroline Evans – Democratic Services Officer (Committees)
Richard Kay – Strategic Planning Manager
Nicole Pema – HR Manager
Anne Wareham – Senior Accountant
Karen Wright – ICT Manager

IN ATTENDANCE

Suresh Patel – Associate Partner, External Audit, Ernst & Young (EY)
Jacob McHugh – Account Manager, External Audit, Ernst & Young (EY)
Sgt Mark Rabel – Cambridgeshire Constabulary

98. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

99. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence had been submitted by Councillor Alison Whelan and Councillor Gareth Wilson was substituting on her behalf.

100. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

101. MINUTES

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020. A Member stated that Minute 82 should include Members' requests to provide information regarding the relationship between East Cambs CLT, Palace Green

Homes and East Cambs Community Housing, as well as information about how to become a member of East Cambs CLT.

It was resolved:

That, subject to the aforementioned additions in Minute 82, the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 26th November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

102. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- He welcomed Caroline Evans, Democratic Services Officer, to the meeting and reported that she would be taking over from Tracy Couper to service Finance and Assets Committee from the March meeting.
- The additional meeting of Finance and Assets Committee will take place at 4.30pm on Thursday 4th March. He apologised to the one member who was unable to make that date.
- To facilitate discussions, he had invited Sgt Mark Rabel from Cambridgeshire Constabulary to contribute as appropriate on Agenda Item 7 – On-Street Parking Enforcement.
- Members had received an email this week confirming that the Council passed the Housing Delivery Test. This together with our housing land supply position enables us to continue to protect our communities from unwanted speculative development.
- This week we launched the latest Government Business Grant Scheme which is aimed to support businesses that are closed during this lockdown period. In total we are administering 8 Government Grants to support businesses. He asked Officers to bring an update report to the next meeting.
- All members had received an update from Sally Bonnett regarding the Ely, Littleport and Soham Market Towns Masterplans. On behalf of the Committee he thanked her for the information. There will be a Member Seminar on the Masterplans on 8th February.
- There will be a meeting of the Bus Review Working Party on 28th January.
- Members can raise items for future meetings at Item 16 – Forward Agenda Plan.

A Member highlighted that the former Paradise Pool site was now advertised for sale and queried when the proposal to market the site was considered by either this Committee or Full Council. The Chairman committed to providing a response to all Members of the Committee on the issue.

103. EXTERNAL AUDIT – ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2019/2020

The Committee considered the Annual Audit Letter 2019/2020, previously circulated.

Jacob McHugh, Audit Manager, Ernst & Young (the Council's External Auditors) summarised the content of the Letter explaining that it included the key findings from the 2019/2020 Audit already provided to this Committee in the Audit Report presented at the meeting on 26th November. This Letter aimed to provide clear commentary on that work and highlight issues for the attention of

the Council and members of the public. The final conclusions were in accordance with that previous report. He drew Members' attention to the New Code of Audit Practice for 2020/21 mentioned on page 16 of the Letter, which would be presented in more detail at a future meeting, and the reference to Leases on page 17 of the Letter since there may be work for the Council to do in this area in order to be ready for the change to that reporting element in 2021/22. He reported that this had already been discussed with managers.

Suresh Patel, Associate Partner, Ernst & Young explained the new information on fees that was provided on page 19 of the report. This was the only new information since the Audit Report presented in November. He summarised the background to the additional fees and emphasised that the Finance Manager had been provided with a detailed breakdown of supporting data. He also highlighted the ongoing dialogue with the PSAA regarding scale fees.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the External Auditors and the Finance team for a positive final Audit Letter considering the current climate.

A Member expressed disappointment at the high level of additional fee costs notified so late in the audit process and commented that issues relating to the conduct of the audit could have been raised with the Finance team earlier in the year to attempt to reduce the additional work required and the resulting costs. The Member also queried why a substantive audit was conducted rather than a test audit. In response, Suresh Patel reminded the Committee that reliance on internal audit work was not permitted and therefore a substantive audit was the most efficient both for ECDC and the auditors and there was regular dialogue with the Finance Manager. He reiterated that this year's extra costs were mostly driven by the impact of COVID-19. Regarding the overall issue of scale fees, he referred to the outcome of the Redmond Review reported at the previous meeting of the Committee and highlighted again that scale fees were set each year by the PSAA.

Jacob McHugh responded to several Members' surprise that remote working had resulted in inefficiencies by explaining examples such as walkthrough processes which were very quick in person but take much longer remotely. Suresh Patel reassured the Committee that the External Auditors worked collaboratively with the Finance team regarding how to complete the audit remotely and they would be looking to improve efficiency for next year. Ian Smith, Finance Manager, commended Anne Wareham for being excellent in responding to the questions and extra issues caused by COVID-19 and also noted that elements had been added into the scope of the audit since the scale fees were set, so an increase was to be expected.

A Member queried the need for multiple large title pages in a comparatively short document, as well as the landscape format, and the Chairman asked Suresh Patel to take this into consideration for future reports.

The Chairman thanked Suresh Patel and Jacob McHugh for their work and presentation.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Annual Audit Letter be received.

104. ON-STREET PARKING ENFORCEMENT

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, regarding the exploration and implementation of initiatives to address on-street parking enforcement issues in East Cambridgeshire.

Jo Brooks, Director Operations, reported three corrections to the numbering of the report and apologised for the oversight:

- In paragraph 2.1 (iii) – "4.6" should read "4.4";
- In paragraph 4.4 – "4.2" should read "4.1";
- In paragraph 5.2 – "4.6" should read "4.4".

She then went on to explain the background to the report, reminding the Committee that a motion was passed at Full Council on 22nd October 2020 which instructed her to engage with Nick Dean, Chief Constable of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary, on matters relating to car parking enforcement and subsequently to report to Finance and Assets Committee in January 2021 detailing any legal and financial implications for consideration and decision on how to progress the matter.

She advised Members that, following conversations with the Chief Constable, making a financial contribution to the Constabulary to enhance police resources for car parking enforcement was not feasible at this time and so the report and subsequent recommendations looked at alternative solutions. She explained that Section 38 of The Police and Crime Act 2017 permits the Chief Constable to bestow powers to volunteers acting on their behalf to directly issue car parking enforcement Fixed Penalty Notices and that the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) is a scheme administered by the Police which allows the Chief Constable to bestow some Police powers onto accredited employees of partner organisations. Within the CSAS there are a number of powers available and that the Council could request all of them or just a few. She gave a broad outline of the range of areas which the CSAS can be used to tackle including begging, anti-social behaviour, cycling on footpaths, dog fouling, traffic offences, removing abandoned vehicles and breaches of fireworks curfew. The CSAS would enhance existing working practices and information sharing between organisations. If Members agreed to the proposals, some Council Officers could be trained by the Police for CSAS purposes. These could include Ely Riverside Officers, the Open Spaces Team, Waste and Street Cleansing Supervisors, Car Parking Officers, and Housing Officers. The costs of such training were estimated at approx. £100 per Officer. The Director Operations gave an example of another County where CSAS had been successfully implemented. Also, there was the longer-term possibility to extend the scheme to Parish Councils. She emphasised that although the CSAS could assist with parking issues such as providing advice to drivers of poorly parked cars as well as dealing with abandoned vehicles it does not allow for the issuing of parking tickets, which is where Section 38 of the Police and Crime Act 2017 could work in harmony with the CSAS. Adopting the Police's 4Es: 'Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce', could provide the mechanism to educate people to adopt better parking habits and give them advice, with enforcement taking place where required.

The Chairman thanked Jo Brooks and invited questions and comments from Members.

Regarding the personnel needed for this initiative, Members asked for a guide to the numbers of staff who would potentially be trained as CSAS officers and whether they had been consulted regarding their willingness. They also queried the impact on current duties if Council staff took on the extra duties associated with the CSAS. In addition, they queried how Parish Councils potentially could be involved.

Jo Brooks replied that initially the aim would be a maximum of 6-10 staff members and that some tentative preliminary discussions had been positive, with staff feeling the work could be done within the existing capacity. If the CSAS was implemented then Council staff would be involved first and Parish Councils invited to join in due course.

In response to another Member's questions, she clarified that CSAS accredited officers could work throughout the District, that Councillors would not be eligible to participate and that initially only Council staff would be involved. If Parish Councils joined at a later date they could twin together if they wanted to in order that the appointed people could work outside their home area to avoid potential embarrassment in carrying out their duties amongst their neighbours. Sgt Mark Rabel, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, later confirmed that the CSAS powers were designed for employees and not for elected councillors.

A Member stated his support for addressing illegal and unsafe parking on the District's streets but expressed concern that the proposal under consideration appeared to have broader content than the initial brief which had been requested. In particular, he felt the details provided in paragraphs 4.1 – 4.3 of the report were extra to what this Committee had been asked to look at and should instead be considered at Full Council. Some other Members agreed with his concerns and reiterated the opinion that anything wider than parking concerns should be considered at Full Council. Two Members expressed the opinion that since Section 38 gives powers to issue penalty notices the CSAS was not needed and the range of powers within CSAS not relating to parking issues were irrelevant and should not be explored.

Jo Brooks replied that the brief had asked for car parking enforcement options to be explored and that the District did not want to be heavy-handed in its approach; the CSAS enables conversations and engagement prior to, and instead of, fixed penalty notices thereby ensuring a complete and robust procedure not reliant on enforcement notices. She reminded the Committee that although the CSAS included a range of powers they could limit which ones they asked for.

In response to a Member's question regarding data security under the CSAS, Sgt Mark Rabel explained that there was already a large data infrastructure between East Cambridgeshire District Council and its partners using a secure platform and with formal information sharing procedures. Any data sharing was always appropriate and proportionate to the situation.

A Member questioned why the CSAS powers would be needed in order to talk to drivers about illegal or unsafe parking and Jo Brooks acknowledged that conversations could be had without the CSAS powers.

A Member raised the concern that under the Council's Constitution community safety falls under the remit of the Operational Services Committee and should not therefore be discussed or voted on in this Committee. It was subsequently agreed that the parking aspects of this report fell within this Committee's remit and the Community Safety aspects within Operational Services Committee.

A motion to vote on the recommendations was proposed and seconded. During the vote, two Members raised concerns about the constitutional validity of the vote since it had been established that Community Safety was not within the remit of this Committee. The Chairman called a brief adjournment before the vote had finished.

Meeting adjourned at 5:40pm
Meeting resumed at 5:42pm

The Chairman informed the Committee that having taken advice he proposed to amend recommendation 2.1(iii) by inserting "Recommend to Operational Services Committee to…" at the start in order to read:

> 2.1(iii) Recommend to Operational Services Committee to approve the implementation of CSAS in East Cambridgeshire and provide support to the Police as outlined at Section 4.4 of the report, subject to agreement by the Chief Constable, under S38 of the Police and Crime Act 2017, for ECDC to implement car parking enforcement.

After further discussion around the validity of continuing the paused and incomplete vote following the amendment to recommendation 2.1(iii), the original motion was withdrawn by the proposer and seconder.

A new motion to vote on the original recommendations 2.1(i) and 2.1(ii) and amended recommendation 2.1(iii) above was then proposed and seconded and upon being put to the vote was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

i) That the findings of options explored seeking to address matters relating to car parking enforcement in the District be noted.

ii) That Officers be instructed to engage with the Chief Constable and, if agreed by him, implement car parking enforcement under S38 of the Police and Crime Act 2017.

It was also resolved to RECOMMEND TO OPERATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE:

To approve the implementation of CSAS in East Cambridgeshire and provide support to the Police as outlined at Section 4.4 of the report, subject to agreement by the Chief Constable, under S38 of the Police and Crime Act 2017, for ECDC to implement car parking enforcement.

105. CLIMATE CHANGE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – DRAFT FOR ADOPTION

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, containing the final draft of the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which was proposed for adoption by the Council.

Richard Kay, Strategic Planning Manager, introduced the report by explaining that it was similar in process and documentation to that which he had presented to a previous meeting of this Committee. He explained that amendments had been made to the draft SPD taking care not to go beyond the legal ability of an SPD noting that some Consultation suggestions that were supported in principle couldn't be put into an SPD.

The Chairman thanked Richard Kay for his very comprehensive report and invited comments and questions from Members.

A Member commented in support of the SPD but felt that it highlighted the limitations of what could be achieved within the restrictions of the current Local Plan. In particular, that the Local Plan didn't allow for proper planning of building and development that doesn't damage the environment, so many of the good suggestions in the report could not be fitted within the constraints of the existing Local Plan. This view was echoed by another Member who added that the strategic overview of solar and wind farms needed to be balanced by consideration of their proliferation.

Richard Kay reminded the Committee that Full Council had considered the issue of the Local Plan in October 2020 and he referred Members to that report [V91] for further information on Council policy regarding the East Cambs Local Plan. A Member added that due to the Planning White Paper currently under consideration, it would be unwise to embark on a new Local Plan until the Government's position on that was clear.

Several Members commented that they were pleased to see a summary of the Consultation comments and the Council's responses to them. There was general agreement that there were many very interesting comments within the Consultation responses and it was suggested that they be retained for consideration or incorporation into a future Local Plan. Several Members reported disappointment regarding the negative comments from the Housebuilders Federation and individual developers.

In response to questions about the make-up of the list of consultees, Richard Kay explained that anyone could ask to join the Council's consultee database and all those who asked to join were added. Apart from a periodic review for GDPR purposes, there was no other editing of the content.

Members congratulated Richard Kay for a very clear and well-written report.

A motion to vote on the recommendation was proposed and seconded and upon voting was carried unanimously.

It was resolved:

That the Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) attached at Appendix 2 to the report be adopted as a formal SPD and brought into effect following the expiry of the Committee call-in period.

106. 2021/22 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT & ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, containing the 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy, the Annual Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.

Ian Smith, Finance Manager, introduced the report and summarised that the Council would continue to finance Capital Expenditure from internal borrowing and that with reserve levels, and therefore cash balances, relatively high it was forecast that no external borrowing would be needed in the near future. Despite historically low interest rates, every effort would be made to maximise interest receipts while maintaining the security of the capital.

Members commended Ian Smith and his team on their work regarding Treasury Management.

A Member drew the Committee's attention to the list of approved countries for investment (Section 5.4, page 35 of Appendix 1), she highlighted the policy of having a sovereign rating of AA- or higher but questioned the poor Human Rights records of some of the countries on the list and asked Members if the Council should be investing in those countries. Some Members agreed that it was important to consider carefully where Council money would be invested and there was general agreement that such a decision could not be rushed as many elements needed to be considered. Officers were asked to prepare a report regarding the Human Rights indicators in order to enable Councillors to make a fully informed decision. In response to a Member's question, Ian Smith clarified that the Council does not currently invest in any of the countries listed, apart from the UK, but approval of this strategy would allow such investments in future.

A Member queried the AA- rating of the UK in the afore-mentioned list of countries. Ian Smith responded that the list had been supplied by their advisors and he committed to checking it before submission to Full Council.

It was proposed to recommend the report to Full Council subject to the inclusion of a report on the Human Rights status and implications of the listed countries. The proposal was seconded and after voting was carried unanimously.

It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

That subject to a report to Council on the Human Rights status and implications of the countries listed in Section 5.4 "Approved Countries for Investments" on page 35 of Appendix 1 to the report, Council approve:

- **The 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy**

- **The Annual Investment Strategy**
- **The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement**
- **The Prudential and Treasury Indicators**

107. REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL STRATEGY & COUNCIL TAX 2021/22

The Committee considered a report setting out the Council's proposed budget, capital strategy, and the required level of Council Tax in 2021/22.

Ian Smith, Finance Manager, introduced the report by summarising that it showed a balanced budget for 2021/22 by using £2.137m from the Surplus Savings Reserve and a need to find savings of £58k in order to balance the 2022/23 budget. He highlighted that the report did not include finalised Business Rates figures which would be available later in the week, and the budget was modelled on the assumption of no Council Tax rise during the MTFS period. He also reported that there were currently two outstanding parish precept requests.

The Chairman then detailed a revised motion, proposed and seconded and circulated before the meeting, to refer the report to Full Council for decision. He explained that there were two reasons for the revised motion:

- Incomplete information in the report, especially with regard to NNDR, because of the timing of the meeting. He cited the importance of complete information before a decision could be taken, emphasising the rapidly changing situation in the country as a whole.
- The 2022/23 budget was not yet balanced and that must be addressed before Council Tax in 2021/22 and beyond could be finalised. He reiterated the view that a Council Tax rise would be a last resort for the current administration.

He recorded his thanks to Ian Smith and his team for their professional approach, excellent report, and for keeping the Council in a strong financial position despite all the problems faced during the course of the year. He then invited comments and questions from Members.

A Member expressed concern that by referring the report to Full Council without recommendation there was a risk that this Committee was stripped of its responsibilities. She suggested that a better course of action would be to have a deferred Committee meeting prior to Full Council to consider the budget more closely once further information was available. She also expressed the opinion that the proposed budget should be reviewed and revised before progressing further, in particular to address the budget gap as well as to address all of the economic, social and health challenges of COVID-19. She commented that the lockdowns of the pandemic had highlighted the importance of good housing and therefore investment in social housing should be included in the budget. She also requested that an Equalities Impact Assessment and a Carbon Impact Assessment should be provided before presenting the paper to Council.

The Chairman responded that a revised meeting date could face the same issue regarding incomplete information since the situation was changing so rapidly. He reminded Members that any alternative budgets needed to be submitted in advance of the Council meeting and could not be tabled on the day.

In response to a Member's queries about some perceived anomalies in the figures, Ian Smith explained that costs of staff in the Planning Department had increased over the course of the year; any income over expenditure on Travellers was put into a reserve for the maintenance of the site but corporate overheads would be allocated to the Travellers' budget before moving any surplus to the reserve; the variation in costs relating to the Corporate Management Team was due to two members currently being seconded to the Combined Authority so income would no longer be generated when that arrangement ended; and the predicted parking revenue for 2021/22 had been reduced due to the impact of the pandemic.

A Member spoke in support of the amended motion and expressed pride in the figures, particularly having regard to the fact that, despite the pandemic, there was a policy of no Council Tax rise and no increase in parking charges as well as only modest increases in fees and charges elsewhere.

A Member commented that although the implications of COVID-19 had been mentioned, Brexit had not despite prominent local businesses having received advice on how to work in future within the EU. He expressed concern that the Committee's task was to scrutinise the budget carefully and that they would not now have the chance to do so before Full Council.

The vote was taken, having previously been proposed and seconded, and was carried.

It was resolved:

That the Revenue Budget, Capital Strategy and Council Tax 2021/22 BE REFERRED TO FULL COUNCIL on 23 February 2021 for decision.

A break was taken at 6:36pm
The meeting was resumed at 6:45pm

108. EQUALITIES POLICY

The Committee considered a report, previously circulated, containing the final draft of the Council's draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

The Chairman thanked Emma Grima, Director Commercial, for having circulated the document prior to the Agenda papers being published in order to give Members early sight of it.

Nicole Pema, HR Manager, was invited to introduce the item. She reminded Members that they had approved the draft policy for public consultation on 24th September 2020. The consultation was then launched in conjunction with National Inclusion Week and ran from 28th September to 30th November 2020. 60 voluntary and community groups had been consulted as well as 35 Parish Councils. She reported that 20 responses had been received and considered, and where appropriate the responses had been reflected in the amended draft shown in Appendix 1 which Members were invited to formally adopt.

The Chairman thanked Nicole Pema and invited comments and questions from Members.

A Member commented that there was much to be commended in the report and thanked Nicole Pema for her hard work. She expressed disappointment that there was so little information on the consultation responses, although she understood the confidentiality issues, and asked for confirmation that the respondents had all received follow-up replies from the Council. She commented that she felt the Action Plan should include regular reporting to this Committee on the implementation and impact of the policy and that regular milestones should be in place towards the longer-term deadlines. She also requested an addition on page 13 of Appendix 1 regarding trans and non-binary genders.

Emma Grima and Nicole Pema explained that the survey was anonymous and not all respondents had provided contact details, so it had not been possible to respond to all contributors. However, Emma Grima reported that it would be possible to prepare a high-level summary highlighting where in the document changes had been made arising from the consultation.

The Chairman asked the Member to send him the additional wording she had requested and it would then either be added to the document or returned to the Committee, if full Committee agreement was felt to be necessary.

The motion to approve the recommendation in the report was proposed and seconded and when put to the vote was carried unanimously.

It was resolved:

That the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2021-2024 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report be formally adopted.

109. COVID-19 WORKING PARTY

(i) Impacts of COVID-19 ON ECDC BAME population.

(ii) Notes of Working Party Meeting held on 25 November 2020

The Committee considered the report on the findings of the East Cambs COVID-19 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) survey and the notes from the COVID-19 Working Party meeting held on 25th November 2021.

Lewis Bage, Communities & Partnership Manager, introduced the report by reminding Members that the Committee had requested that the COVID-19 Working Party produce and publish a report on the effects of the pandemic on the local BAME community. He explained that the Working Party had instructed Officers to undertake a survey and that the resulting findings, detailed in Section 4.2 of the report, had been shared with the Working Party at their 25th November meeting. A number of possible actions, outlined in Section 4.3 of the report, had arisen from the discussions in the meeting and Members were invited to approve them.

The Chairman thanked Lewis Bage and invited comments and questions from Members.

Some Members stated their concerns about what they felt to be the premature closure of the COVID-19 Working Party given that the pandemic was ongoing.

The Chairman of the Working Party responded that he felt the Working Party had been able to meet its remit and had done a good job . At the last Working Party meeting, it had been demonstrated that work was being taken forward by the Director Operations and her Officer Recovery Group. Another Member responded that since the situation changed so rapidly, as agreed by all in the discussion regarding the Budget in Agenda Item 7, he felt it erroneous to consider that all the work could be handed over by the Working Party to the Officer Recovery Group. He expressed the opinion that working groups were good non-political ways to contribute to policy on dealing with the pandemic, with their findings being considered by this Committee for passing on to Officers to execute. He questioned what forum could do that important work if the Working Group had been disbanded. The Chairman committed to discussing the issue outside of the meeting. He also asked that a report on the recovery work relating to COVID-19 be included in the 4th March Agenda item relating to the COVID-19 Business Grants, to supplement the regular email updates circulated to Councillors.

A Member noted that members of the BAME community appeared to be both more susceptible to the virus and possibly more reluctant to receive vaccination. Two Members welcomed that the Council were looking at how the various communities within the District were being looked after during the pandemic and recommended that individuals who were well-respected within their community should be approached in order to understand what help their communities needed and how best to provide it. They referred to an eloquent Muslim Doctor at a recent Planning Committee meeting regarding a proposed Community Centre in Ely and recommended that individuals like him who could be described as “community leaders” would be ideal people to approach.

Several Members recorded their thoughts and condolences with all those who had been ill, who continued to suffer with Long COVID, or who had lost someone in the pandemic.

A Member stated the importance of the work that the Working Party had instigated and the Officers had executed. He applauded the Officers for taking the District’s model to the County where it had played a major role. He recorded his thanks to Jo Brooks, Director Operations, and her team.

A Member echoed those thanks and proposed the motion which was duly seconded and upon completion of the vote was passed.

It was resolved unanimously:

(i) That the following actions which were agreed by the COVID-19 Member Working Party at its meeting on 25th November 2020 in response to the findings of the BAME survey be approved:

- To gather details of local and national support and information that is aimed at assisting BAME communities;
- Development of existing East Cambs COVID-19 Coordination Hub webpages to ensure that support and assistance is available to East Cambs BAME communities including information and links to internal and external support and services for BAME communities and access to information in a variety of languages and translation services;

- Compile a database of local networks available for BAME residents for engagement and signposting purposes including engagement with existing networks and Community Leaders, to further explore the issues raised via the survey.

(ii) That the Notes of the meeting of the Covid-19 Working Party held on 25th November 2020 be received.

110. CIL/S106 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE UPDATE

The Committee received a report relating to Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 income and expenditure.

Emma Grima, Director Commercial, explained that amendments to regulations now required Local Authorities to produce an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) and that this Council's first such IFS was provided in Appendix 1 of the report. She welcomed questions and comments.

Several Members recorded their thanks to the Director Commercial for the huge amount of work she had done on the Statement.

In response to a Member's question regarding the report layout and the apparent omission of some recently committed Funding, the Chairman reminded Members that the IFS covered the period 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020, so more recent items would be shown in the next IFS. Emma Grima clarified that the format and reporting style was due to the Government requirements and the figures had not been straightforward to collate.

A Member asked for clarification that Parishes with Neighbourhood Plans had received their higher level of funding and requested that for future reports, columns of numbers should be right-justified to improve clarity. Emma Grima confirmed that all Parish Councils had received payments in line with their Neighbourhood Plan status and noted the formatting request.

A Member requested that the next IFS be reported at a Finance & Assets Committee meeting before publication, accordingly the Chairman asked for it to be added to the Forward Agenda Plan.

The Chairman recorded that he had received a telephone call thanking the Council for the Burwell PC Recreation Ground project which was referred to in the report.

It was resolved:

That the publication of the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

111. FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received a report providing Members with budget monitoring information for services under the Finance & Assets Committee and then, as part of its corporate remit, for the Council as a whole.

Ian Smith, Finance Manager, introduced the report and invited comments and questions from Members.

A Member questioned whether some reported savings were true savings or more to do with accountancy timings. She suggested that more information about services delivered would be helpful in understanding the figures. In response, the Chairman encouraged the Finance Manager to discuss with Corporate Management Team consistent reporting practices across Committees.

Two Members raised concerns that savings should not be achieved by slow appointment to necessary staffing roles when a vacancy arises, since such a situation would put undue pressure on existing staff. Ian Smith responded that a full staff complement was budgeted for but recruitment could be a lengthy process, for example where the incoming staff member has a long notice period to serve, and therefore savings occurred by circumstance.

It was resolved:

That the following be noted:

- That Finance and Assets Committee has a projected yearend underspend of £224,000 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £5,021,167.
- That overall the Council has a projected yearend underspend of £428,500 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £13,644,206.
- That this Committee has an expected underspend of £500,000 when compared with its approved capital budget of £8,048,680.
- That the overall position for the Council on Capital is a projected outturn of £8,715,060, which is an underspend of £3,155,950 when compared to its revised budget of £11,871,010.

112. ARP JOINT COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Committee received the Minutes of the Anglia Revenue and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee meeting held on 8th December 2020.

A Member asked how much of the estimated £1.5m of fraud was thought to be genuine fraud rather than mis-accounting and another Member questioned whether the single person discount may have been affected by COVID "bubbles" and restrictions causing some people to potentially spend longer than intended in second homes. Ian Smith committed to investigating both points.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the ARP Joint Committee held on 8th December 2020 be noted.

113. FORWARD AGENDA PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Agenda Plan for this Committee. The Democratic Services Manager explained that some items due to be considered at this meeting had been postponed to the newly-arranged meeting on 4th March and therefore the Plan had been amended in light of that.

A Member commented that the need for the early March meeting underlined the volume of work this Committee was trying to cover, and suggested that Full Council should review the remits of the Committees. She also asked that the Forward Agenda Plan be completed on a rolling year basis, whether or not future dates had been set, in order to ensure that all business would be covered.

It was resolved:

That the Forward Agenda Plan be noted and a report on COVID-19 Business Grants be added to the Agenda Plan for 4th March meeting.

114. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESS

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1 & 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

115. APPOINTMENTS, TRANSFERS, RESIGNATIONS

The Committee considered an exempt report detailing staff appointments, transfers and resignations for the period 1st August to 31st December 2020, together with a summary of Exit Questionnaire responses.

Members commented positively on recent appointments and discussed the importance of ensuring staff welfare.

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

116. EXEMPT MINUTES

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee held on 26th November.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

The meeting concluded at 7:44pm.