



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of
East Cambridgeshire District Council held at
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE on
Thursday 20th October 2022 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor David Ambrose Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor Alec Jones
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor Alan Sharp (Chairman)
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Amy Starkey
Councillor Charlotte Cane	Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Paola Trimarco
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Lis Every	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Mark Goldsack	Councillor Christine Whelan
Councillor Simon Harries	Councillor Gareth Wilson

3 members of the public were in attendance.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chairman delivered a tribute and a minute's silence was held as a mark of respect following the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

31. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

32. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Matthew Downey, Daniel Schumann, Joshua Schumann, and John Trapp.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

34. MINUTES – 14th JULY 2022

It was resolved:

That, subject to the correction of “funding” to “finding” in the last paragraph of page 10, the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 14

July 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

35. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed Members that he had attended the High Sherriff's Justice Service on 16th October on behalf of the Council.

36. PARKING ENFORCEMENT

Council received an update from Superintendent James Sutherland, Cambridgeshire Police, regarding the development of a new police service volunteer role of Road Safety Officer. He reminded Members that he had presented the concept to the Council in October 2021, and stated that he had spent the intervening months addressing some of the searching questions that had been asked of him.

The volunteer Road Safety Officer role would be focussed on improving safety, especially regarding speed, and would include parking enforcement within its remit. Details of the legal elements (Section 38 of the 2017 Police and Crime Act) enabling the formation of the role were given, and it was explained that the role would be closer to that of the special constabulary than that of the existing community speedwatch. No similar schemes had been identified elsewhere in the country, although in Essex similar powers had been conferred on a Community Speedwatch Enforcement Group. The experts who had delivered the legal advice and training on Section 38 powers in Essex had tentatively agreed to provide training for the Road Safety Officers. No examples of the use of Section 38 powers for parking enforcement had been found, but in most areas parking was no longer a police matter. However, this should not preclude the introduction of such a role to meet the circumstances within this District.

Successful field tests had taken place for a new generation of hand-held speed guns that removed the need to stop vehicles at the roadside and therefore would reduce the risk of conflict. Based on information from another police force with a different volunteer role, senior officers had broadly supported plans regarding a proposed uniform and headgear (smart and visible while clearly identified as volunteers), and access to body armour and police radios. There was no suggestion that the volunteers would be able to use any equipment such as handcuffs, batons or sprays. Volunteers could have access to unmarked police vehicles due to the need to travel around the whole District, but they would not be permitted to use marked vehicles or lights and sirens, nor would they have any of the police exemptions for driving.

The Vision Zero Partnership consisted of all organisations involved with the shared strategy of reducing death and injuries on the roads of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Superintendent Sutherland would be discussing funding for the scheme at their next meeting. The County Council provided much of the training and education for the Partnership, were supportive of the proposed new volunteer role and were willing to provide some of the training

regarding educational outreach. The tactical training elements would be provided by the police. All of the training would be a mixture of weekend sessions with experts and agencies, and online training.

The volunteers would have a range of powers including the ability to enforce parking infringements, speeding enforcement, and potentially also some powers regarding mobile phone usage and the wearing of seatbelts (without the need to pull over vehicles).

However, a significant issue was the need for the potential volunteers to receive a level of vetting similar to that required for police officers (due to the access to secure radios and ICT equipment). Due to the huge numbers of applicants for the national police uplift programme, and the need to prioritise the vetting of new officers and re-vetting of existing officers, the current waiting time for the vetting of potential volunteers was very many months. Therefore, the police did not want to recruit volunteers who would then be likely to lose interest when faced with long delays before they could start training, so it was intended to start recruitment in 2023 after the national police uplift programme had finished in March and the vetting associated with that should have finished. This would also give time to fine-tune the proposal and training.

In response to questions from several Members, Supt Sutherland provided the following additional information:

- It would be unlikely for another police force to adopt a similar scheme including parking enforcement since in the majority of areas parking was not a police matter.
- The constabulary had funds for the provision of police service volunteers and, with the exception of the speed guns, the suggestions for the scheme were of a low cost nature that could be funded. He was optimistic that funding for the speed guns could be provided by the Vision Zero Partnership.
- The use of CCTV for road enforcement matters had technical and legal restrictions and he was only aware of its use in applications such as the monitoring of bus lanes and box junctions. He did not envisage that its use for parking enforcement would be possible, in part because there were various legal defences (such as displaying a blue badge) that could only be ascertained by seeing the vehicle in situ.
- He recognised the disappointment regarding the time taken for the system to be implemented, and would ask his special constabulary colleagues to undertake some parking enforcement in Forehill, Ely, and around Soham in the interim.
- Six volunteers would be an initial realistic minimum number for economic and viability reasons.
- The time commitment for each volunteer would be modelled on that of the special constabulary – an average of 4h/week or 16h/month.
- Volunteers would be sought from existing contacts such as speedwatch groups, retired police officers and other retired professionals with relevant interests, and were likely to be picked up from media/social media postings as well. The selection process was likely to take a few

weeks and, although the training programme remained under development, he envisaged it taking approximately six weeks over weekends and evenings. Since training and equipping the volunteers would take place after the vetting process, he anticipated that the volunteers could be deployed approximately six weeks after completion of the vetting.

The Chairman and Members thanked Supt Sutherland for his update, and marked their appreciation with a round of applause.

37. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

38. MOTIONS

a) Cost of Living

The following previously-circulated altered Motion was proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Huffer (when compared to the original Motion published in the agenda papers, additions are in italics and deletions are crossed through):

East Cambridgeshire District Council is determined to ensure the protection of the residents of East Cambridgeshire from the cost of living challenge driven by Covid and Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine, the combined effects of which have led to rising energy prices and residents facing significant cost of living pressures.

This Council is thankful for the significant work by the Government to support the residents of East Cambridgeshire. It notes the benefit of the ~~two-year~~ energy price guarantee and the certainty it will give to residents across the district as well as the enormous help that the £400 energy bill discount will provide to every household.

It further notes the additional support of the £650 cost of living payment for those in receipt of means-tested benefits, £300 for pensioner households and £150 for recipients of disability benefits in East Cambridgeshire and thanks the Government for providing equivalent support for those not on the mains energy grid. It also notes the protection of jobs in East Cambridgeshire that the six-month protection for businesses will provide.

East Cambridgeshire District Council welcomes the plans by Government to secure long term energy independence for the country by maximising domestic energy production through North Sea oil and gas, as well as nuclear and renewables.

This Council is also doing its part to protect our residents from the cost of living challenge, specifically, it:

- Continues to invest in our Housing and Community Advice Service fully utilising our Housing and Community Advice Bus, Community Hubs and advisors at The Grange;
- Supports the provision of warm hubs in the District;
- Works with partners in Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) to help residents with energy bills and obtain EPC reports;
- Provides advice to residents through our Energy Advice Officers to access grant funding to undertake energy efficiency measures;

Furthermore, Council approves:

- *the immediate allocation of £10,000 to a “Cost of Living Support Fund” to be managed by the Council’s Housing & Community Advice service. The criteria for the award of funds to be agreed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of Operational Services Committee.*

Council notes:

- This Council has frozen its share of Council Tax bills for the last 9 years, the only district, unitary, or county council in the country to have done so;
- This Council has a long track record of having a balanced budget for 2 financial years at a time;
- This Council has no external borrowing;
- This Council has a prudent level of reserves in the General Fund equivalent to 10% of our operating budget.

Therefore, this Council ~~resolves to freeze its share of Council Tax for 2023/24 for a tenth consecutive year.~~ *is minded to freeze its share of Council Tax for 2023/24 for a tenth consecutive year, subject to final decision following the Government budget on 31st October.*

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey referenced the current high inflation and the global issues that were impacting the economy, and she highlighted the steps that had been taken by the UK Government since 2021 to help the poorest members of society. At a local level, the Council now had a Cost of Living webpage detailing the Council’s short- and medium-term projects and directing readers to all of the help available to them, and the Housing and Community Advice Team were also increasing their support available to local residents. The Motion included a new £10k of additional funds to be allocated to help those most in need and the proposed Council Tax freeze would add a modest but cumulative contribution to help local residents. She remained proud of the support provided by the Government, and of the Council’s Officers for all of their work in the area.

Several Members criticised the UK Government's recent actions and economic policies and the Motion's support for Government policy and for maximising fossil fuel use. They did not consider that the Motion was an appropriate response to residents' worries about rising costs. A Member stated that the proposed Council Tax freeze would be a negligible monthly saving when compared to the increase in cost of food and other essentials. Another Member cautioned against complacency and a lack of in-depth analysis of policies and actions. A further Member criticised the previous closing of the Citizens Advice Bureau in Ely that had provided a vital service and stated that the Housing and Community Advice Bus was not following its published timetable.

Other Members stated their pride in the Council for helping local people *via* its policies and the work of its staff. They highlighted the importance of focussing on helping local residents with their immediate needs.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Huffer stated that Members should look after East Cambridgeshire's residents, rather than focussing on national politics, and stated that the Council continued to look for ways to help vulnerable residents whilst remaining financially prudent.

Responding to some comments raised in the debate, the proposer stressed the importance of the UK rapidly reaching energy independence, including the use of fossil fuels if necessary, and highlighted the country's lead in the use of renewable energy sources. She detailed previous and ongoing work in the District regarding energy efficiency measures and reiterated the work of the Community Advice service. She urged all Members to vote in favour of the Motion, and argued that those voting against it would be voting against the creation of immediate practical financial support in the form of the new Cost of Living Fund.

At the request of Cllr Dupré, a recorded vote was taken on the altered Motion:

FOR: (15) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovington, Brown, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Webber.

AGAINST: (8) – Cllrs Cane, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson.

ABSTENTIONS: (1) – Cllr Trimarco

The Motion was declared to be carried.

b) Cost of Living Emergency

The following altered Motion was proposed by Cllr Inskip and seconded by Cllr Cane (when compared to the original Motion published in the agenda papers, additions are in italics):

This Council notes that:

- Annual price inflation is at a level not seen for 40 years.
- On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the energy price cap by 54%.
- On 1 October 2022, energy prices increased by a further 27%.
- Over a period of just over six months the average standard tariff has increased by £1,222 to £2,500 for the average household.
- The Government suspended the pensions 'triple lock' for 2022/3, meaning East Cambridgeshire's 18,000 pensioners have seen a rise of 3.1% this year (instead of 8.3% under the triple lock formula). This will cost pensioners in East Cambridgeshire hundreds of pounds.
- In 2021/22 Foodbanks in East Cambridgeshire distributed 2,981 food parcels (Trussell Trust, 2022).

In addition, people living in rural areas such as East Cambridgeshire are disproportionately affected by fuel price increases because of poor public transport and longer distances to reach work, education and health services.

This Council therefore declares a 'Cost of Living Emergency' and asks the Chief Executive to write to relevant government ministers and our local MPs to ask for urgent action to relieve the cost-of-living crisis through such measures as:

- Provide immediate financial support for consumers of heating oil, bottled gas, solid fuels, those reliant on generators for electricity and those on prepayment meters.
- Consider reducing VAT to 17.5% putting money back into the pockets of average families, boosting the economy and helping to support local retailers
- Deliver a real and immediate increase in investment in UK renewables and an energy plan for the UK which reduces costs for the end user and leads to the decarbonisation of the UK energy network in the long term.

Council also resolves to ask the Chief Executive to develop proposals to:

- Expand the East Cambridgeshire Council Tax Reduction Scheme to reduce the tax burden for lower income households
- To protect and expand funding for partnership grants delivering advice services to residents in next year's budget and future years
- Work with partners to improve access to affordable food across East Cambridgeshire.

Furthermore, the Council approves:

- *The immediate allocation of £20,000 to a "Cost of Living Support Fund" to be managed by the Council's Housing & Community*

Advice service. The criteria for the award of funds to be agreed by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of Operational Services Committee.

Finally, Council calls for an East Cambridgeshire Cost-of-Living Emergency Summit, with stakeholders, including all tiers of local government, Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Local Trades Unions, and Chambers of Commerce along with local Members of Parliament.

7:35-7:46pm the meeting was adjourned while copies of the altered Motion were printed and circulated.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Inskip stated that the purpose of the Motion was to recognise the impact of the cost of living emergency and to identify practical steps to address it. He detailed evidence of the cost of living crisis and outlined the measures in the Motion that could be taken at a national and local level to mitigate its effects, including the allocation of £20k to a Cost of Living Support Fund.

(Responding to a Member's Point of Order questioning whether the Motion would be procedurally correct since it rescinded the previous Motion's approval of a £10k fund by creating a £20k fund, the Democratic Services Manager explained that the principle had been established in the previous Motion and the current proposal, if approved, would enhance rather than rescind it.)

Several Members criticised the late alteration of the Motion to include a Cost of Living Fund only after it had been proposed in the altered Motion from Cllrs Bailey and Huffer, and commented that additional funds above the approved £10k could be found, if deemed necessary. A Member suggested that actions were more important than letter-writing and the Council was already working with partners to tackle the issues, therefore the summit detailed in the Motion was unnecessary. The forthcoming cost of living drop-in event was evidence of partnership working in action, and had been developed by Officers over many weeks.

Other Members spoke in support of the Motion, stating that it offered practical ways for Council Members to work together for the good of the community. By bringing relevant people together a co-ordinated response could be developed with the best chance of workable solutions and, whilst recognising the benefits of the cost of living drop-in event, a summit would serve a different purpose by bringing together the local resources and power, including the MPs, to agree further actions. A Member stated that, following the logic of the proposer's arguments for the previous Motion, voting against the current Motion would be voting against the allocation of £20k to support those most in need.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Cane expressed disappointment that many Members had spoken against the Motion since it sought to provide for local residents, in part by recognising that the Council could not solve the issues alone but could be a catalyst for change, including by writing to the

Government regarding issues such as VAT and decarbonising the energy network. The £20k fund was proposed in a cross-party spirit of recognising a beneficial action but considering that it did not go far enough. The Motion focussed on addressing the cost of living crisis for the District's residents, and the earlier speaker's suggestion was reiterated that voting against it would be voting against financial support for residents.

Summing up as proposer, Cllr Inskip urged Members to approve the increase of the Cost of Living Fund to £20k and the declaration of an emergency in recognition of the severity of the situation. Addressing earlier points from the debate, the importance of gathering powers together in a summit was reiterated, and Members were reminded that many rural residents relied on energy sources such as oil or bottled gas, which were not included in the Government's six-month assistance, hence their inclusion in the Motion.

At the request of Cllr Inskip, a recorded vote was taken on the altered Motion:

FOR: (8) – Cllrs Cane, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson.

AGAINST: (16) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Brown, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber.

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Motion was declared to be lost.

39. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Questions were received and responses given as follows:

i) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Julia Huffer:

"I note from a statement from the Leader of the Cambridgeshire County Council on 30th September 2022 that she thanks Mayor Nik Johnson for his swift response to the cancellation of numerous bus services in our District. Can the Leader of the Council provide clarity to one of my residents who has information that Stagecoach had made numerous attempts to speak to Mayor Johnson and his team about this situation as far back as May 2022 and, having failed to get a response, subsequently informed the Combined Authority in August 2022 of their intention to cancel routes which affect my residents in Fordham, Isleham and many others in the District. Can she please give an update on what is happening with the bus services in Cambridgeshire and can she also clarify the situation regarding the various funding sources from Central Government and the success or otherwise of the Combined Authority in obtaining such funds for local transport services?"

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

“It is my understanding that the Mayor and CPCA staff were made aware of the issues being reported by Stagecoach back in May of this year. The first public signs of distress in the bus network surfaced in the form of the issues with the Ely Zipper and the Wisbech 68 service in April and May of this year. This Council had to step in to ensure there was no loss of service for Ely Zipper users. It is a matter of huge regret that the CPCA failed to secure any of the £millions allocated to other areas for their Bus Service Improvement Plans, and that it was not part of the list of CAs granted Sustainable Transport Settlements. Some areas got hundreds of millions. Following receipt of the External Auditor’s letter to CPCA citing concerns about conduct of the Mayor’s Office and Governance issues, Government has been withholding funding from the CPCA, so we shouldn’t really be surprised that it wasn’t on the list.

I am pleased to report the successful outcome of yesterday’s CPCA Board meeting where all but one of the 18 axed Stagecoach routes and the 5 routes earmarked for changes in the amber list have been successfully retendered. Residents will need to study timetables and routes carefully when the information is released on Monday, as not everything will be an exact like for like. One problem, with the 39 service between March and Chatteris remains, but it is a work in progress. This stabilises the situation until the end of March next year. The Ely Zipper and the 68 are also now being supported by the CPCA until the same time, so that decisions about their future can be taken alongside the rest of the network.

The Mayor has put bus services front and centre of his emerging Local Transport Plan and has particularly stated his intention to improve rural bus services. Unfortunately, with all the turmoil at the CPCA, the work on franchising has stalled in the last 18 months, and now needs to be expedited, but this will take several years to make progress and is far from easy.

The Greater Cambridge Partnership proposals to fund services through a Congestion Charge are enormously unpopular and are not the answer, but it will be up to the Lib Dem led County Council to decide on the imposition of Congestion Charging next year.

I suspect what residents will see, come January 2023, is a Mayor rushing to impose a precept on all households and a County Council moving to impose Congestion Charging. These things would not have been necessary if the CPCA hadn’t been in turmoil and had secured central Government funding, and these things are still not necessary. What we should be doing is reviewing the CPCA’s revenue budget to free up money, we need to articulate what a good service will look like in a county wide Bus Strategy - this Council has already provided information about that for our patch - we need to massively and rapidly

build on our new found relationship with the providers in a new 'strategic partnership', we need to put forward credible bids for future rounds of bus service improvement monies, and we need to rapidly move on with the case for franchising. All these things are possible with a high functioning CPCA. None of them require taxing residents through a precept or a Congestion Charge."

ii) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Lis Every:

"Can the Leader please provide an update on progress with the planning application for new homes, including affordable homes, at the former MoD site in Ely?"

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

"Just by way of background I would remind Members that it was a requirement of the contract that we entered into with the MoD that we seek planning permission for infill housing. We were effectively required to 'test' the Local Plan to establish the extent of what was deliverable in terms of numbers of houses. That is exactly what has taken place. And it was the right thing to do – it has brought the empty homes back into use and revitalised the whole site, it has enabled 15 of the refurbished homes to be brought forward as Shared Ownership properties for people with ties to the local area, it has facilitated the land swap with the NHS to support the redevelopment plans by them and the County Council – and I understand that the land swap deal actually completed yesterday, which is excellent news – and now it is going to deliver new homes including affordable homes with the open green space remaining intact.

Earlier this month the planning application for 27 new homes, including 33% affordable homes was, cross-party and unanimously granted permission. Plans will come before Council in the future to increase the percentage of affordable housing on the site – a promise we made once planning permission had been secured. I want to thank Officers and all the staff at Palace Green Homes for their stewardship of this project."

iii) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Ian Bovingdon:

"Can the Leader please give Members an update on the Crematorium project?"

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

"Last week the application for the Crematorium off the A142 near Block Fen was granted planning permission – with almost unanimous cross-party support – for an eco-crematorium, to include natural burials, a memorial garden and a pet cemetery. The plans include on-site electricity generation expected to deliver 70% of the energy needed.

Of course we understand the strong feelings about the old Mepal Outdoor Centre which was a much loved facility for years. I loved it

too. We tried very hard – cross party – to get it back up and running for outdoor activities, we tendered it twice, including on one occasion with no restrictions on its use, but sadly it just wasn't deemed to be viable.

Since then, there are now nationally important and protected species using the site such as water vole, otters and a rare pond species – a cause for celebration! The Wildlife Trust requires that the use of the wider site therefore is restricted to 'passive use' ie dog walking (on a lead), bird watching and fishing. It is them that is advising the Council on the extent of what is and isn't possible there.

Work is now progressing on the funding strategy which will come to Finance and Assets Committee with the final business case coming to Full Council next year.

Given that the old use of the site is not compatible with the biodiversity needs of the site, I am delighted that this alternative use has been granted permission and hope that we can bring this new facility forward which is needed in our district. It's been a long-held ambition of the administration to provide a District crematorium and facility, to try and keep costs low for people, be competitive to other facilities that people have to travel extensively to get to at the moment, and I think it will be a fantastic and nurturing location for people in a time of upset and need."

iv) Question to the Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee from Cllr Mark Inskip:

"Last month the government announced a reckless mini-budget with £45bn of unfunded tax cuts which led to chaos for new homebuyers. Hundreds of fixed-rate mortgage products were withdrawn over the space of a few days, before lenders returned with significantly more expensive deals. Mortgage payers are seeing their monthly payments increase by hundreds of pounds. Even though virtually all the mini-budget tax cuts have been reversed following a massive u-turn this Monday, the premium on mortgage interest rates remains.

The rise in the cost of mortgage payments is a bitter shock to many East Cambridgeshire residents, already facing rising costs from the cost of living crisis. It is also a significant concern for commercial property development companies with the implications from slowing sales and the downward pressure on new property prices.

What actions have been taken to analyse the increased risks to East Cambs Trading Company business plan from the government's economic mismanagement? What are the risks to East Cambs council taxpayers should ECTC now fail to deliver on its business plan?"

8:35pm – Cllr Every temporarily left the Chamber.

Response from the Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr David Brown:

“ECTC is responsible for managing the increased risk. The Cost of Living is a risk identified in its risk register.

The Property element of the Business Plan for 2022/23 focuses on completing the sites at Ely and Haddenham and progressing plans to build out the former Paradise Pools site and MOD Phase 2.

Completing the sites in Ely and Haddenham:

Completion of these sites is closely monitored by the ECTC Management Team. All remaining properties are now being marketed for sale. Two houses have sold, with mortgage offers in place, in the past week.

Progressing plans to commence new sites:

The ECTC Director Property & Commercial is working with the ECTC Finance Manager to develop the full business case to progress the Former Paradise Pools site. The business case will include sensitivity analysis that will factor various risks, including the impact of increased mortgage rates.

The same approach will be taken at the appropriate time for MOD Phase 2.

The ECTC Board will make the decision as to whether to progress a site if and when it is satisfied that a robust business case is in place.

8:39pm – Cllr Every returned to the Chamber.

The Council's MTFS doesn't assume any dividends from ECTC. The Council has security in the form of a debenture over all of ECTC's unsecured assets. In the unlikely event that ECTC defaults on its loan, which is due for repayment in March 2026, the Council can exercise its rights under the debenture.”

v) Question to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group from Cllr Anna Bailey:

“Does the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group support the introduction of a Congestion Charge for Cambridge? Yes or No?”

Response from the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Lorna Dupré:

“To be clear, I support the provision of reliable, convenient, affordable, and attractive public transport that meets the needs of local residents and helps reduce congestion and carbon emissions. I support the provision of services that enable residents who cannot drive, or cannot

afford to buy and insure a car, to access education, employment, health care, leisure and more.

Recent data shows that Cambridge is the most congested UK city outside London; and indeed the forty-sixth most congested city in the world.

The recent actions by Stagecoach, and the resulting losses of service, are the clearest possible evidence that we need root and branch reform of the way public transport outside London is delivered. The deregulation of public transport by Margaret Thatcher in 1985 was an unmitigated disaster and has led to the situation whereby commercial operators can cherry-pick routes that profit their shareholders and abandon the rest.

I would very much welcome a move towards franchising of bus services, ensuring unprofitable but socially necessary routes continue to be delivered alongside those that can run profitably without public subsidy.

For this to happen, a source of sufficient, reliable, and regular funding needs to be found. The options for this are, to say the least, constrained.

Earlier this year the Government rejected a bus improvement funding bid from the Combined Authority. A report to the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee earlier this week from Conservative county councillor Anne Hay of Chatteris said that two causes of this rejection had been discovered. The first was that the Department for Transport had applied a deprivation score, which did not help our cause as a high growth area. The second was the Government's view that the application had shown insufficient commitment to bus priority schemes, active travel and—interestingly—road charging.

Meanwhile the current Chancellor of the Exchequer is looking for £60 billion of cuts to clear up the previous Chancellor's mess—a package which will make austerity under George Osborne look like a Roman emperor's banquet.

Without Government support, it is unclear how the increases in public transport we need will be funded other than locally. And without attractive public transport options, it is unclear how traffic congestion and carbon emissions will be tackled.

The proposal from the Greater Cambridge Partnership is currently out to public consultation. I would strongly encourage residents in East Cambridgeshire to read the consultation materials, attend the drop-in at Ely Library on the morning of Saturday 29 October, consider what the

proposals mean for them, and respond by the deadline of 23 December.”

vi) Question to Cllr Charlotte Cane from Cllr Alec Jones:

“At full Council on 14th July, it was suggested that the Lib Dem Group should seek advice from Councillor Cane about possible uses of the site of the previous Mepal Outdoor Centre. Could Councillor Cane please explain why she has not provided such advice?”

Response from Cllr Cane:

“Thank you Cllr Jones for your question.

I remind Council that I have declared an interest in the plans for a crematorium. I am answering this question because it has no bearing on the decisions Council may make. I am reading the answer so as not to stray into the debate.

I had frequently asked questions about Mepal Outdoor Centre at Finance & Assets Committee, most notably on 20 June 2020 when I sought to have a report brought to the Committee on 23 July 2020 and was told that the Officer was too busy to prepare such a report for that meeting, not least because they were focussed on Covid-19.

Just a few weeks later at a Special Meeting of the Council on 31 July 2020 members were informed of the plans for a Crematorium and Pet Cemetery on the site. A project on which expenditure started in 2018/19. Nobody from the administration corrected the misleading statement given to me by the Officer on 20 June 2020, even though the Officer, the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council must have known it was untrue and I assume the Chair of Finance would have known also, as significant funds were already being spent on the project.

Once I knew the Council’s plans for the site, I decided I had to declare an interest.

I have asked the Planning Department what advice the organisation for which I work has given. There were 2 emails on the planning portal and one which was not on the portal because it was marked ‘sensitive’. I cannot see the advice to which Cllr Bailey refers – I think she may be thinking of the Ecological Assessment Report written by Syntegra Consulting. This report was commissioned by the Council, as the applicant for the crematorium.

The ECDC Planning department has explained to me that the organisation for which I work does not provide statutory advice, as asserted by Cllr Bailey. They provide advice to the Council under a Service Level Agreement because the Council do not have an ecologist within the Council.

This organisation is not 'my organisation', as asserted by Cllr Bailey. It is a registered charity which belongs to its members, who elect Trustees to run the organisation on their behalf. Those Trustees employ staff to carry out the day-to-day activities – I am one of those employees.

It would seem that Cllr Bailey was being disingenuous in both her words and deeds and was apparently more interested in political point scoring than facts.

Having declared an interest in the matter, I have taken no part in discussions of the plans at Council or its Committees. As I hope all members understand, if a member has declared an interest, they should not take part in any discussions of the matter with fellow Councillors. I must say, I am rather surprised that Cllr Bailey, as Leader of the Council which is the applicant for planning permission for this site, felt able to speak so forthrightly about the uses of the site just weeks before it came to this Council's Planning Committee for consideration.

In summary, the reasons I have not shared the advice with the Lib Dem Group are:

1. It would be improper to take part in the discussions; and even if it was proper to share it
2. I have seen no evidence that the organisation for which I work has given the advice which Cllr Bailey claims and I have asked the Planning Department to provide me with all the advice which that organisation has given to the Planning Department."

40. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Council considered report X92, previously circulated, detailing recommendations from the Finance & Assets Committee as follows:

1. Finance & Assets Committee – 4 October 2022

a) Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) Review 2023/24

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed that the Council retain the 8.5% Council Tax reduction scheme, i.e. the maximum reduction for a working age claimant would remain at 91.5% for the 2023/24 financial year. He stated his belief that the previously-approved Cost of Living Support Fund would provide more targeted support than a 100% reduction of Council Tax. The Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Bovingdon, seconded the proposal.

Cllr Dupré proposed an amendment previously proposed at the 4th October Finance & Assets Committee meeting, seconded by Cllr C

Whelan, to revise the LCTRS by adopting a 0% reduction scheme such that the maximum possible reduction would be 100% in order that the lowest income households would not need to pay any Council Tax during the cost of living crisis. The total income reduction of approximately £210k of which a comparatively modest ~£15k would be the responsibility of the District Council.

A Member commented that the arguments regarding the Amendment had been well-rehearsed at the 4th October Finance & Assets Committee meeting and the principle of paying Council Tax was an important one. Helping residents was the focus and there were many ways to support people, including the excellent Housing and Community Advice Service. The Council Tax in the District was already the lowest in the County and the 8.5% reduction scheme was generous, together with other support schemes such as the Cost of Living Support Fund.

Other Members agreed that helping residents was the most important focus, but argued that a 100% reduction in Council Tax would be the quickest and simplest method of helping those on the lowest incomes and demonstrating to them that the Council understood their plight.

The seconder, Cllr C Whelan, stated that the 100% reduction would be a small price for the Council to pay to help the poorest in the District, and urged all Members to support the Amendment.

Upon being put to the vote the Amendment was lost.

Returning to the Motion, Cllr Bovingdon as seconder reiterated that the issue had been debated at length in the 4th October Finance & Assets Committee meeting.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was passed.

It was resolved:

That the 8.5% reduction scheme be retained, i.e. the maximum reduction for a working age claimant remains at 91.5% for the 2023/24 financial year.

b) Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed that the Council approve the increased premiums chargeable on long-term empty properties, seconded by the Committee's Vice-Chairman, Cllr Bovingdon.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the increased premiums chargeable on long-term empty properties, as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of report X66, be approved.

c) Compulsory Purchase Order of Land at Lode Road, Bottisham

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed the compulsory purchase, on behalf of Bottisham Parish Council, of land at Lode Road, Bottisham, for the construction of a new cemetery. The Committee's Vice-Chairman, Cllr Bovingdon seconded the Motion and Cllr Cane also indicated a willingness to second it. Cllr Brown stressed that all parties involved were happy with the proposal and that, in order to sell its land, the National Trust required a compulsory purchase order to be made.

A Member explained that Bottisham Parish Council had worked on the proposal for a long time, had widely consulted on it and would be paying the costs.

It was resolved unanimously:

1. That use of the District Council's compulsory purchase making powers pursuant to section 125 of the Local Government Act 1972 be authorised to acquire land on behalf of the Parish Council to allow for a new cemetery to be constructed.
2. That the Director Legal Services be given delegated authority to:
 - (a) take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO, including the publication and service of all relevant notices and to support the presentation of the Parish Council's case at any local public inquiry;
 - (b) serve a requisition for information (in accordance with section 16 Local Government Act 1972) on the reputed owner and other parties that may have an interest in the land as part of the preparatory steps associated with the making and promotion of a CPO;
 - (c) approve terms for the acquisition of legal interests by agreement, either on behalf of the Council or in conjunction with the Parish Council, including for the purposes of resolving any objections to the CPO;
 - (d) take all necessary steps to resolve any compulsory purchase compensation claims, including, if necessary, by

making (or responding to) a reference to the Upper Tribunals (Lands Chamber);

(e) enter into a suitable agreement with the Parish Council regarding reimbursement of all costs incurred by the District Council regardless of whether or not the CPO proceeds to completion;

(f) transfer the relevant land to the Parish Council if the CPO proceeds to completion via a back-back sale, subject to reimbursement of purchase costs and all other relevant expenses and the inclusion of a restrictive covenant in the transfer to prohibit development or uses other than as a burial ground.

41. THE MAKING (ADOPTION) OF THE HADDENHAM AND ALDRETH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Council considered a report (X93, previously circulated)

The Director Community introduced the report requesting the formal adoption of the Haddenham and Aldreth Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire. The outcome of the recent referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan had been that 90% of votes cast were in favour, therefore it had the required majority support and the final step of the process was the formal adoption by the Council.

Cllr Wilson moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Cllr Sharp. Cllr Wilson commended the two years of hard work by the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk and many residents. He referenced the green spaces and affordable homes in the parish, especially the success of the CLT development, and stressed the importance of the Neighbourhood Plan in terms of future decisions about where new properties could, and could not, be built.

9:11-9:13pm, during Cllr Wilson's speech, Cllr Stubbs briefly left the Chamber.

Several Members congratulated all those who had been involved with the development of the Haddenham and Aldreth Neighbourhood Plan, commenting that it was an excellent document which, with others, could be used as inspiration for Neighbourhood Plans in other parishes.

It was unanimously resolved:

a) That Haddenham Parish Council be congratulated on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and a successful referendum outcome, becoming the fifth Parish Council to do so in East Cambridgeshire.

b) That the Haddenham and Aldreth Neighbourhood Plan, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, be formally made part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire with immediate effect.

42. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – BURROUGH GREEN / WESTLEY WATERLESS PARISH BOUNDARY

Council considered a report (X94, previously circulated)

The Electoral Services Officer introduced the report recommending that the parish boundary between the parishes of Burrough Green and Westley Waterless be amended in accordance with the original Community Governance Review. Members were also recommended to approve a formal request to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for a related alteration to the District Ward boundary between the wards of Bottisham and Woodditton, to align it with the new parish boundary. Boundary changes usually took several months to complete but the expectation, without guarantee, was that both changes could be in place in time for the May 2023 parish and District Council elections.

Cllr Sharp moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Cllr Cane. Both commented on the incongruous nature of the existing boundaries and commended the Officer for all of the work undertaken.

It was unanimously resolved:

a) That the parish boundary between the parishes of Burrough Green and Westley Waterless be amended in accordance with the original Community Governance Review.

b) That the additional boundary change suggested by Burrough Green Parish Council not be approved.

c) That the Community Governance Order, as shown at Appendix 3 of the report, to amend the parish boundary between Burrough Green and Westley Waterless, be approved.

d) That a formal request be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for a related alteration to the District Ward boundary, between the wards of Bottisham and Woodditton, to align it with the new parish boundary between Burrough Green and Westley Waterless.

43. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORT

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority's Audit and Governance Committee (30th June and 29th July 2022),

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (25th July 2022) and Board (27th July and 31st August 2022).

There were no comments or questions.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's representatives be noted.

44. ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY – COVID-19 ADDITIONAL RELIEF FUND

The Council received report X95, previously circulated, detailing the action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency regarding the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund.

There were no comments or questions.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9:21pm

Chairman.....

Date.....