



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of
East Cambridgeshire District Council held at
The Maltings, Ship Lane, Ely, CB7 4BB on
Tuesday 22nd February 2022 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

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

1 member of the public was in attendance for Minute 48.

48. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

At the invitation of the Chairman, two questions were asked by members of the public, which the Chairman invited the Leader of Council to respond to. The questions and answers are detailed below:

a) Question from East Cambridgeshire Climate Action Network's Co-Chair, Jethro Gould:

"In light of the council's stated recognition of the climate emergency and financial risk posed by stranded assets associated with oil, coal and gas, will East Cambridgeshire District Council follow Cambridge City Council in publicly stating their support for divesting the Cambridgeshire local authority pension fund from fossil fuels instead of the current passive approach to slowly de-carbonising the fund? And if not, why not?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"Thank you for your question.

The Cambridgeshire Pensions Fund is managed by Cambridgeshire County Council which received similar questions at its meeting in December 2021. At that meeting, which was chaired by County Cllr

Alison Whelan who also sits on this authority, the Pensions Committee also considered a revised Responsible Investment (RI) Policy that was the culmination of over a year of deliberation and has been subject to consultation with each scheme employer in the Fund and tens of thousands of scheme members. I am told that the Committee's approach, which is one of engagement over blanket divestment of any sector or region, is entirely consistent with the Paris Agreement.

This is a complex area and is not one that elected members or officers at this authority are involved in or have experience of. It is for the County Council to manage the fund and oversee its investment decisions."

b) Question from Ely resident, Peter Bates:

(Read aloud on his behalf by the Democratic Services Officer.)

"Decarbonisation of transport is a critical aspect of mitigating climate change. This involves actively encouraging car owners to change to 100% powered electric vehicles. A critical aspect of encouraging this change is for ECDC to proactively promote reliable public and privately-owned electric vehicle charging points across the District. However, according to UK Government statistics of January 2022 there are only 20 EV charging points per 100,000 of the population in East Cambridgeshire which is below the average for the whole of the East of England which is 29 per 100,000 of the population.

It is also noted that currently, in the District two charging points at a co-op in Sutton don't appear to have been working properly since May 2021 and a Petrol Station north of Soham appears to have six EV charging points that have not been working since December 2020 when it opened. Both are managed by a major National company that it is understood that ECDC plans to enter into a partnership with for the installation of EV Charging points in Ely Car parks. In addition, One Supermarket in Ely only has a slow EV charging point and another in Ely has recently had installed four free fast EV charging points and one Rapid EV charging point. But this has not been working for over two weeks. How is the Council going to proactively encourage and ensure the widespread installation of accessible and well positioned rapid (>50kw) and fast (7kw) EV Charging points across the District working with companies that will provide reliable EV Charging points with good customer service? How will the tender process for council managed charging points be undertaken? And when will these be delivered?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"Thank you for your question.

The East Cambridgeshire Environment Plan 2021-22 includes a commitment to progress the delivery of Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs) across the district, through the direct delivery of new EVCPs in at least one of our public car parks during 2021/22, and through working with the Combined Authority on a county-wide strategy to support the mainstream roll out of EVCPs.

The Planning Team encourage developers to include EV charging points in their applications, the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy that requires provision.

In December 2021, the Building Regulations were updated with a new Part S being added which addresses infrastructure for charging electric vehicles. These regulations will come into effect in June 2022 and will require the provision of charging points in both residential and non-residential new developments. This should help drive increased levels of private and public charge points, without intervention from councils.

The Council is working with the CPCA and New Anglia LEP to produce an Alternative Fuel Strategy and Action Plan for East Anglia, considering both Electric and Hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicles. The key objectives of the Alternative Fuels Strategy and Accompanying action plan are to provide:

- An understanding of the current policy and funding landscape for alternative fuels at local and national level
- An evidence base of likely alternative fuel uptake and best practice policy for supporting this uptake
- A costed and deliverable programme of measures to address barriers to uptake, which reflects the specific challenges and opportunities of the region

Where it is proposed that charging points are installed on Council-owned land, the intention is to grant a licence for an operator to install, own, operate and maintain the Charging Point at the Premises in accordance with a licence agreement.

ECDC will ensure that any licence includes clear and robust service level standards, including customer service measures.

Work is already progressing to deliver Electric Vehicle Charging Points in a number of the Council's car parks in Ely. The Council is working with the operator to complete the necessary licences that will include the customer service and operational standards that we are seeking."

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr David Brown.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

51. MINUTES – 21st OCTOBER 2021

Council received the Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 October 2021.

A Member raised a Point of Order regarding a public question taken at the meeting from the partner of a Member, which the Member raising the issue considered to be offensive and slanderous, and that had been published in full in the Minutes thereby becoming, in their opinion, libellous. The Member questioned what legal advice had been sought by the Council prior to publication of the draft Minutes. On the invitation of the Chairman, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that no legal advice had been sought.

Cllr Inskip then proposed the following Motion, seconded by Cllr Dupré:

To add the following note at the end of Minute 32:

Minute 32 iii) repeats in full, defamatory statements made during Public Question Time. It is regrettable that such statements were allowed to be made in contravention of Council Procedure Rule 8.1.2 which is intended to prevent offensive or slanderous questions from being tabled.

Several Members questioned the appropriateness of considering the Motion since it did not concern the accuracy of the Minutes. Others stressed that the particular situation merited debate.

The Chief Executive explained that the Minutes should be an accurate and balanced reflection of proceedings at the meeting. Regarding the Motion, the Council could either debate the appropriateness of the proposal or the Motion could be put to the meeting. The Chairman stated that discussion relating to accuracy, and a vote on the Motion, would be permitted on this basis.

A Member requested that their deep concern regarding the Motion be recorded and raised a Point of Order as to whether the insertion of a footnote into the Minutes would be in accordance with Local Government meetings law and practice and Council Procedure Rules. The Democratic Services Manager explained that Council Procedure Rules permitted Council to amend the Minutes regarding a point of accuracy *via* a Motion and that this could take the form of a footnote. The issue was whether the Minutes were an accurate record of the actual proceedings at the meeting and it was for Council Members to consider and vote on whether the proposed footnote was acceptable in this context.

Following a request from a Member, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:

FOR: (10) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

AGAINST: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Motion was declared to be lost.

Cllr Bailey then proposed that the Minutes be confirmed as a correct record and Cllr J Schumann seconded the Motion. In response to a question from a Member, the Chairman confirmed that the Minutes published on the website were the draft version and were not adopted as a correct record of the meeting until they had been approved at the next meeting.

Following a request from a Member, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:

FOR: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

AGAINST: (10) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

52. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman noted the excellent work of the Viva Theatre Group whose newly-opened theatre in Soham had been partially funded by the Council. He also informed Members that he had represented the Council at the Remembrance Day Service in Ely and at a service in Ely Cathedral on 6 February to mark the 70th anniversary of Her Majesty The Queen's accession to the throne.

53. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

54. MOTIONS

a) Adherence to COVID-19 Public Health Regulations and Guidance

The following Motion detailed in the Agenda summons was proposed by Cllr Inskip and seconded by Cllr Harries in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.3:

Council notes the exemplary behaviour of East Cambridgeshire residents in respecting and abiding by COVID-19 rules since March 2020, particularly during periods of lockdown, as well as the excellent community spirit demonstrated by volunteers helping those most in need.

Cambridgeshire recorded one of the lowest rates for the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued for breaking COVID-19 rules in England with a rate of 111 FPNs issued per 100,000 people between 27 March 2020 and 19 December 2021.

Council believes that all of those in public office, particularly during a public health pandemic, have a responsibility to provide leadership in both the promotion and demonstration of adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals.

Council shares the severe disappointment of many East Cambridgeshire residents that this leadership and responsibility has not been demonstrated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

While residents of the district obeyed the lockdown rules, often at huge personal cost, missing funerals, cancelling weddings and saying goodbye to dying loved ones on video calls, the Prime Minister was acting as if the rules did not apply to him.

Council affirms its commitment to continue to demonstrate leadership in adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals, as well as to promoting that approach to the residents of East Cambridgeshire.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Inskip then explained that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6 and with the agreement of the seconder, the Motion had been altered by him to incorporate some elements of Cllr Bailey's subsequently circulated and published amendment, which he considered had improved upon the original version. The altered Motion had been tabled at the meeting as follows:

Council thanks East Cambridgeshire residents for their efforts in respecting and abiding by COVID-19 rules since March 2020, particularly during periods of lockdown, and notes the excellent community spirit demonstrated by volunteers helping those most in need.

Cambridgeshire recorded one of the lowest rates for the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued for breaking COVID-19 rules in England with a rate of 111 FPNs issued per 100,000 people between 27 March 2020 and 19 December 2021.

Council believes that all of those in public office, particularly during a public health pandemic, have a responsibility to provide leadership in both the promotion and demonstration of adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals and thanks all those in public office and leadership positions that worked hard to lead by example.

Council shares the severe disappointment of many East Cambridgeshire residents that this leadership and responsibility has not been demonstrated by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

While residents of the district obeyed the lockdown rules, often at huge personal cost, missing funerals, cancelling weddings and saying goodbye to dying loved ones on video calls, the Prime Minister was acting as if the rules did not apply to him.

Council affirms its commitment to continue to demonstrate leadership in adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals, as well as to promoting that approach to the residents of East Cambridgeshire.

Council also notes the work being done both nationally and locally to support businesses and communities as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted and we move to a focus on recovery from the pandemic.

Cllr Inskip highlighted the unprecedented demands that had been placed on the population as a result of the public health regulations that had been imposed since the first lockdown 23 months earlier. He emphasised the huge personal costs and trials that had been experienced day-to-day and the exemplary behaviour of the majority of people, who had obeyed the rules both to protect themselves and to protect others. Community groups had formed quickly to help others and locally the leadership, support and assistance at Parish and District level had been excellent. Nationally, there had also been examples of strong leadership, most noticeably from Her Majesty The Queen who, despite her grief at the loss of her husband of over 70 years, sat alone at the funeral of her husband. However, public leadership had not been universally good at a national level with, in particular, allegations and evidence appearing since November 2020 to indicate that the Prime Minister and those at 10 Downing Street had not complied with the restrictions imposed on the population. Many local residents had expressed their anger about this to Cllr Inskip and the purpose of his Motion was to recognise the sacrifices made by local people and to reject the notion that there was 'one rule for most' and another for the Prime Minister.

The following Amendment was then proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr J Schumann:

Council thanks East Cambridgeshire residents for their efforts in respecting and abiding by COVID-19 rules since March 2020, particularly during periods of lockdown, and notes the excellent community spirit demonstrated by volunteers helping those most in need.

Cambridgeshire recorded one of the lowest rates for the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued for breaking COVID-19 rules in England with a rate of 111 FPNs issued per 100,000 people between 27 March 2020 and 19 December 2021.

Council believes that all of those in public office, particularly during a public health pandemic, have a responsibility to provide leadership in both the promotion and demonstration of adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals, and thanks all those in public office and leadership positions that worked hard to lead by example.

Council affirms its commitment to continue to demonstrate leadership in adherence to the law and to guidance from health professionals, as well as to promoting that approach to the residents of East Cambridgeshire.

Council also notes the work being done both nationally and locally to support businesses and communities as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and we move to a focus on recovery from the pandemic.

Speaking on the Amendment, Cllr Bailey stated that the Council was focussed on delivering for local residents and as the country emerged from COVID-19, thanks to the vaccine programme, it was right to thank all those in the District, including those in public office, for their collective efforts throughout the pandemic. The Council would move forward, focussing on supporting local communities, residents and businesses, and the proposed budget to be discussed later in the meeting would detail ways in which the Council intended to do so. She encouraged all Members to support the amendment in united appreciation for the residents of the District.

Following a Member raising a Point of Order, the Chief Executive confirmed that the published Amendment remained procedurally correct since, despite the altered Motion incorporating some of the changes proposed in the Amendment, they had not all been included. Cllr Bailey clarified that the Amendment removed paragraph 4 of the altered Motion.

During debate on the Amendment, many Members recalled individual personal experiences, emphasised the enormous sacrifices that had been required of the population over the previous two years, and commended the work of healthcare professionals and others throughout the very difficult times.

Some Members were of the opinion that the pain of the sacrifices made by many individuals had been made worse by the realisation that the Prime Minister and his staff had not adhered to the same restrictions. A Member considered that, by removing the paragraph referring to the Prime Minister, the Amendment had the effect of not only tolerating the behaviour but also endorsing it.

Other Members commented that matters of national government were outside the remit of the Council and therefore were inappropriate for debate at the meeting. However, a Member asserted that controversy in national politics had the effect of creating distrust and disillusionment in the wider population and it was therefore important to make clear the separation between local and national politics.

Speaking as seconder of the Amendment, Cllr J Schumann echoed other Members' support and praise for the work of residents, NHS workers, other services, and the Council's Officers and senior management. He considered it an inappropriate use of time to debate national politics in a District Council meeting and commended the positive message of the Amendment. He stated his condemnation for any behaviours, at a local or national level, in breach of national rules.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Inskip highlighted that the majority of changes proposed in the Amendment had already been included in the altered Motion. As a result, the Amendment only sought to erase the references to the Prime Minister and this had not been addressed in the majority of speeches during the debate. He therefore believed that the vote on the Amendment provided a choice between condemning or condoning the Prime Minister's behaviour, and between acknowledging or ignoring the anger felt by local residents.

Upon being put to the vote, the Amendment was carried with 16 votes in favour, 10 against, and 1 abstention, and thus became the Substantive Motion.

There were no further comments on the Substantive Motion.

On being put to the vote, the Substantive Motion was carried unanimously.

55. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Questions were received and responses given as follows:

i) Question from Cllr Lorna Dupré:

Of the Additional Restrictions Grant Round 8 funding:

- What was the total amount available to be allocated?

- How many applications were successful and how much money was allocated to them?
- How many applications were unsuccessful, and what was the total amount of the unsuccessful claims?
- How many unsuccessful applications were turned down because they failed to meet the criteria, and what was the total value of these applications?
- How many unsuccessful applications were turned down because they met the criteria but the money had run out, and what was the total value of these applications?
- How many hair salons occupying business premises with fixed costs applied in this round, how many of those were successful, what was the total value of the successful applications, and what was the total value of the unsuccessful applications?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"The ARG Round 8 closed on Friday 11 February 2022.

The total amount to be allocated is £171,696.12.

The applications are still being assessed. At the time of closing the Council received 58 online applications.

A briefing note, answering all of the questions that have been posed will be circulated to Members once the grant applications have been determined."

ii) Question from Cllr Mark Inskip:

"What has this Council identified as the short- and medium-term risks arising from the loss of the Persimmon appeal at Soham, and what action is it proposing to take to mitigate these?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"I am sure Members will appreciate that this matter is complex and one that requires careful consideration.

Officers are currently assessing current pending planning applications and the applications that are already going through the appeal process to assess what impact, if any, this recent decision has on those applications.

The Director Commercial will provide a full briefing note which will include any identified risks for all Members as soon as practicable following the review that is being undertaken"

iii) Question from Cllr Simon Harries:

"How is the Council managing the conflicts of interest of its Director Commercial being seconded to the East Cambs Trading Company?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

“The Chief Executive will present a report to Council on 21 April 2022 to request the appointment of a new replacement Board Director for East Cambs Trading Company.”

56. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

Council considered a report (W141, previously circulated).

The HR Manager introduced the report and explained that the Pay Policy Statement had been updated for the new financial year, as required by the Localism Act 2011, and was included as Appendix 1 of the report. Section 3.2 detailed the pay for the six Chief Officer posts. The salaries would be updated once the April 2021 Pay Award had been negotiated by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and the trade unions. The salary of the lowest paid employee remained unchanged at £17,842 (£9.25/h) and the ratio between the highest grade and the lowest grade also remained unchanged (7.1:1 at the scale minimum, 7.4:1 at the scale maximum). The National Living Wage was due to increase to £9.50/h on 1 April 2022 and therefore, in the absence of the pay award for 2021, the necessary steps were being taken to increase the pay to £9.50/h for employees on points 1 and 2 on the Council's pay scales until a settlement was reached.

Cllr J Schumann moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Cllr Goldsack.

Council thanked the HR Manager and team for their report.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the 2022-23 Pay Policy Statement be approved and adopted.

57. SCHEDULE OF ITEMS RECOMMENDED FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Council considered report W142, previously circulated, detailing recommendations from three Committees as follows:

1. Audit Committee – 22 November 2021

PSAA – Appointment of External Audit

It was unanimously resolved:

That the Council opt-in to the appointing persons arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external audit.

2. Finance & Assets Committee – 25 November 2021

Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review

A Member referenced the earlier public question regarding divesting the pension fund from fossil fuels, and asked about the Council's investments in terms of fossil fuels. The Leader stated that the S151 Officer had recently confirmed that there were no investments in fossil fuels, and the S151 Officer added that all investments were based in money markets.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix B1 of the report, be noted.

3. Finance & Assets Committee – 24 January 2022

a) Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) 2022/23

It was unanimously resolved:

That the changes detailed in the submitted report be approved and thus the East Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23 be amended by:

- Reducing the capital threshold from £16,000 to £10,000 and abolishing tariff income;
- Introducing a fixed rate reduction of £7.40 per week for non-dependents;
- Further streamlining the claim process;
- Increasing the tolerance for Universal Credit data re-assessments from £65 per month to £100 per month.

b) 2022/23 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy (AIS)

It was unanimously resolved:

That approval be given to:

- The 2022/23 Treasury Management Strategy
- The Annual Investment Strategy
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement
- The Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

7:27-7:35pm the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break.

58. 2022/23 COUNCIL TAX, REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Council considered a report (W143, previously circulated) setting out the Council's proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required level of Council Tax in 2022/23. The report also assessed the robustness of the budgets, the adequacy of reserves, and updated the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Finance Manager and S151 Officer introduced the report as follows:

"Firstly, I understand that there is a motion and an amendment in relation to this matter, but as an introduction to the original report in your agenda papers, Council is asked to approve the Council Tax Resolution as detailed in Appendix 1 and the Council's budget as in Appendices 2 to 5 of the report.

The Council Tax Resolution was circulated to Members after the original dispatch of the agenda, as we did not have the information from all of our preceptors at the time the agenda was dispatched.

When the draft budget report was presented to Finance and Assets Committee on the 24th January, we were still waiting for the final Local Government Finance Settlement from Government and the Business Rates information from the NNDR1; this information is now available and is included in the papers now in front of you. I have also made a few other minor changes as additional information has come to light between the two meetings.

This updated information, especially that in relation to Business Rates, in net terms has made a positive difference from the position reported to Finance and Assets Committee. The Surplus Savings Reserve requirement to balance the 2022-23 budget reducing from £1.427 million to £1.066 million.

The Council, via the use of its Surplus Savings Reserve, has a balanced budget for 2022-23 and 2023-24 and thus does not need to make any immediate changes to service delivery.

However, the Council does continue to have a significant savings requirement in 2024-25 and future years of the MTFS, so does need to be considering how this gap is to be bridged in order to achieve a balanced budget for those years.

Members will have noted throughout my report the uncertainty of funding beyond 2022-23, with the Local Government Fair Funding Review now expected to be implemented from April 2023. The budget presented details a reasonably prudent view of the possible outcome of this exercise, but with no certainty it is possible that 2023-24 could be better or worse than detailed in these papers, I will of course be monitoring this

situation during the coming months and provide members with up-dates as new information becomes available.”

The Chairman then invited Cllr Bailey to propose and speak on the previously-published Motion, as follows, which was seconded by Cllr J Schumann:

Full council is asked to approve:

- The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in revised Appendix 1;
- The draft revenue budget for 2022/23 and MTFs for 2023/24 to 2025/26 as set out in the revised Appendix 2(a) & (b);
- A Council Tax freeze in 2022/23;
- The Statement of Reserves as set out in revised Appendix 3;
- The 2022/23 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 4;
- The Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 5.
- To approve the Business Rate reliefs detailed in Section 6.7 of this report.

And also to instruct the Chief Executive to bring forward proposals to the Finance and Assets Committee for the establishment of a £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund to be funded from the Cambridgeshire Horizons reserve account.

Cllr Bailey made the following speech to propose the Motion:

“As we emerge from the pandemic, I am certain we all recognise its lasting impacts on health, on businesses and on our public services as well as the impact on our national finances and the personal finances of our residents, further exacerbated by the cost of living increases.

Our Council is focussed on delivering for our residents, our communities and our businesses here in East Cambs.

Today we are announcing the launch of our £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund. We are, once again, freezing the East Cambs element of Council Tax. And we are making new money available for sports and leisure facilities and for community led housing projects.

A new £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund will support and secure the sustainable growth of the District and could be used to complement, or add to, what we already set out to achieve through our CIL Infrastructure list.

This new capital fund will play a part in continuing to build the infrastructure we need particularly in our growth areas, such a fund could support:

- Community and sports facilities
- Increasing biodiversity and space for nature

It could also potentially provide supplementary funding for:

- New and/or extended cycleways
- Road improvements
- Rail improvements

This is in addition to over £10m invested to date in infrastructure projects across our District since we adopted the Community Infrastructure Levy, as well as £3.8m that's gone directly to our City, Town and Parish Councils. These funds have helped to build and improve leisure centres, recreation fields, country parks, village halls, GP Surgeries, car parks, youth centres, new roads, and cultural facilities such as Ely Museum and the fantastic new Viva Mill.

We're freezing Council Tax for the ninth year in a row – we are the only District or County Council in the country to have achieved this. This is not because we are ideologically welded to doing so, but because we have taken steps to create the environment where we can – and one where we are still delivering great services and new community facilities and infrastructure. It is pleasing to see support from the Liberal Democrat Group for this Council Tax freeze in their budget amendment. All other local authorities in Cambridgeshire, with the exception of Fenland, are increasing their Council Tax by the maximum amount possible. At a time when household costs are rising so rapidly – because we can – it is important that we do our bit to help, modest though that may be.

We have a balanced budget for the next two years - I will not raise Council Tax in order to put money into the East Cambs bank account.

We are also making new money available for Leisure Centres and community-led housing projects. This fulfils our promise, following delivery of The Hive, to support other Leisure Centres in our district and will help them to make improvements to run sustainably. We are also providing new funds for community-led housing projects to help them carry out necessary investigations and preparatory work to develop their projects and ultimately to deliver affordable homes reserved for people in their own community.

We have no external borrowing. We behave commercially for community benefit. We make good use of our own reserves to forward fund projects and activities that deliver benefits to our communities and that provide a return for the Council that far outstrips that available

through normal investment. The effort and investments that we have put into East Cambs Trading Company alone has provided over £3.6m financial benefit to this Council since it began, with more to come over the next few years.

We have the lowest management costs of all the District Councils in Cambridgeshire, by some considerable margin.

As ever, I pay tribute to all our officers who help manage the budgets of this Council and deliver services to our residents, and I particularly want to thank Sally Bonnett for her careful stewardship of the Covid grants over the last two years, and of course our S151 officer Ian Smith for his careful approach to managing the Council's finances.

So, in summary, Chairman, Members, a new £2m Growth and Infrastructure fund, a Council Tax freeze for 9 years, a balanced budget for the next two years, new money for Leisure Centres and community led housing projects, no external borrowing and low management costs all go to show one thing. That this is a well-managed Council, a Council that is delivering for its residents.

To our colleagues in the Independent and Liberal Democrat Groups - you can have every confidence in voting for this carefully considered, financially responsible, well managed budget that supports and delivers for our residents, our businesses and our communities.”

On the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr Dupré then proposed the previously-published Amendment, seconded by Cllr Cane, as follows:

Full council is asked to approve:

- The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in LD Revised Appendix 1;
- The draft revenue budget for 2022/23 and MTFS for 2023/24 to 2025/26 as set out in LD Revised Appendix 2(a) & (b), specifically to reflect the following proposals:
 - a) Delete the post of Community Led Development Advisor (£38,000) from 2022/23;
 - b) Delete the CLT pre-development finance support (£100,000);
 - c) Delete increase in PR expenditure (£25,000) from 2022/23;
 - d) Allocate £10,000 to investigate Civil Parking Enforcement options;

e) Devolve the 2022/23 Rural Services Delivery Grant to parish councils (£169,000);

- A Council Tax Freeze in 2022/23;
- The Statement of Reserves as set out in LD Revised Appendix 3;
- The 2022/23 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 4;
- The Capital Strategy and financing as set out in LD Revised Appendix 5.
- To approve the Business Rate reliefs detailed in Section 6.7 of this report.

And also to instruct the Chief Executive to bring forward proposals to the Finance and Assets Committee for the establishment of a £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund to be funded from the Cambridgeshire Horizons reserve account which includes a specific allocation of £500,000 as a capital contribution to the A10 BP Pedestrian and Cycle Crossing.

Cllr Dupré made the following speech to propose the amendment:

“I move the budget amendment from the Liberal Democrat group. Our amendment is intended to alter the proposals from the Conservative group in a number of significant ways:

Firstly, our amendment deletes the post of Community Led Development Advisor and the £100,000 of CLT pre-development finance support. Put very simply, and in terms no-one will misunderstand, we don't trust this administration and its version of community-led development as far as we can throw them.

Every other district in the County is part of the community-led development offer by Cambridgeshire ACRE through the Combined Authority. We see no reason why any authority seeking to be transparent, inclusive, and genuinely respectful of the voice of local communities would not want to do the same.

Secondly, our amendment deletes the increase of £25,000 in the cost of the Council PR budget. There is no excuse for increasing the size of the Council administration's self-promotion spend by one-third and we will not support it.

Thirdly, we would use some of this saving on a one-off spend of £10,000 to investigate options for introducing Civil Parking Enforcement. By the end of this year we will be able to count on the fingers of one hand the number of councils where on-street parking is still enforced—or

realistically not enforced—by the police. And East Cambridgeshire will be one of them. It's time to look at ways in which we can join the rest of society while achieving our own local objectives.

Fourthly, we would delegate the £169,000 Rural Services Delivery Grant to parish and town councils, with a view to them spending that money on environmental or biodiversity activity, or actions to help mitigate development in their communities.

Fifthly and finally, we would commit an initial £500,000 from the new Growth & Infrastructure Fund as matched funding towards a safe crossing for pedestrians and cyclists at the A10 BP crossing in Ely. This is something residents have been crying out for ever since the roundabout was reconfigured under the cheerleadership of the Leader of the Council, to exclude safe travel on foot or by bicycle.

I commend these proposals to this Council.”

During debate on the Amendment, several Members addressed the proposed spend regarding Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). Some Members referred to the previous Council meeting, at which a proposal to investigate CPE had been defeated, therefore in their opinion funding for CPE should not be included in the budget for the next financial year. However, others argued that in the intervening months the parking situation had not improved and therefore a feasibility study would be beneficial in helping to address residents' regular concerns regarding parking in the District. £10k had been proposed since that was the cost of the feasibility study conducted for Fenland District Council.

A Member commented that Parish Councils were better placed to address climate change actions and biodiversity at a local level, hence the proposal to devolve the 2022/23 Rural Services Delivery Grant to Parish Councils.

Several Members stressed the importance of freezing Council Tax whenever possible, and that the balanced budget and significant reserves enabled that to happen for 2022/23. Some Members contrasted this with the County Council's recent decision to raise Council Tax by the maximum permissible amount that did not require a referendum, although others highlighted the differences in reserves between the two councils which impacted the County Council's ability to freeze Council Tax.

Some Members criticised the proposal to remove the post of Community-Led Development Adviser and the CLT pre-development finance support, and cited this as evidence of a lack of support for CLTs. Others questioned the purpose of the financial support and the adviser since other CLTs had been successfully established without those in place. A Member also argued that the Council's methods of working with CLTs were at odds with other Councils' processes and that overall the policy was not delivering sufficient housing and was disrupting some communities.

The allocation of £500k as a capital contribution to the A10 BP pedestrian and cycle crossing was criticised by a Member due to insufficient information about the scheme, and the Member's belief that any funding for such a scheme should come from elsewhere.

The proposal to remove the increase in PR expenditure was defended by some Members on the grounds that an increase was unjustified, although another Member argued that the additional costs were essential since they would be used to promote the Council's climate change agenda and to engage with the public.

As seconder of the Amendment, Cllr Cane commended the balanced budget amendment and repeated the proposer's comments regarding the scheme run by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, facilitated by Cambridgeshire ACRE, in support of CLTs. She emphasised that CLTs should be from and for the community and that, rather than withdrawing support from CLTs, the intention was that they should be supported through ACRE, in common with CLTs in other Local Authorities. The proposed £10k to investigate CPE, and £500k contribution to the A10 crossing, recognised the everyday inconvenience faced by local residents due to parking infringements throughout the District and the lack of a safe cycle/pedestrian crossing on the A10 at the BP roundabout. The Council had supported the changes at the roundabout which had resulted in a more dangerous situation for pedestrians and cyclists, and should therefore be part of the solution to the problem. Regarding the Rural Services Delivery Grant, the provision of funds for Parish Councils to allocate to community groups had been undertaken by the Council several years previously and the budget amendment sought to re-establish that.

As proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey criticised the proposal to make the position of Community Led Development Adviser redundant and remove the CLT pre-development finance support. She stated that similar support was not available *via* the Combined Authority and, following the closure of the Community Housing Fund, CLTs needed to be able to access funding. Regarding the Rural Services Delivery Grant, the situation had been different when the Council last delegated the money to parish councils and was not comparable to the present day. Parish councils now had access to funding *via* their own CIL funds or the District Council's CIL list and it would not be prudent for the Grant to be devolved. The Amendment also sought to remove the additional funding for PR, which would be essential in promotion of the climate emergency and net zero messaging; and to provide unnecessary funds to investigate CPE which had previously been refused by the Council as shown in the Minutes of the previous meeting. The proposal to provide £500k towards the A10 crossing was also ill-timed since work was ongoing with the Combined Authority Mayor to provide a business case for a crossing, and once that was in place then the Council could consider options for contributing to the cost, for example using S106 or CIL funding.

In accordance with the requirements of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the Amendment:

FOR: (10) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

AGAINST: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Amendment was declared to be lost.

During debate on the Motion there was general support for the freeze on Council Tax. A Member raised the issue of spending on The Hive Leisure Centre, stating that it would be important to ensure that the facility was of a high standard when the operating contract was re-tendered. Another Member spoke in favour of the whole proposal, citing the Council's sound management as having enabled a further year of no Council Tax rise as well as continuing to increase services to residents. Successes from the previous year were highlighted, including the COVID-19 responses, the new Community Bus, the successful bids to the Combined Authority for Market Towns funding for Ely and Soham, and the Youth Strategy.

As seconder of the Motion, Cllr J Schumann urged all Members to support the proposed budget due to its freeze on Council Tax and the £2m of funding for communities. The proposer, Cllr Bailey, reiterated that the budget was balanced for two years with no external borrowing, there would be a Council Tax freeze, money for leisure centres and community-led housing projects, and a new £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund would be launched.

In accordance with the requirements of The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion:

FOR: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

AGAINST: (10) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to:

- The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculated the Council Tax requirement as set out in revised Appendix 1 of the report;
- The draft revenue budget for 2022/23 and MTFs for 2023/24 to 2025/26 as set out in revised Appendix 2(a) and 2(b) of the report;
- A Council Tax freeze in 2022/23;
- The Statement of Reserves as set out in revised Appendix 3 of the report;
- The 2022/23 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 4 of the report;
- The Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 5 of the report;
- The Business Rate reliefs as detailed in Section 6.7 of the report.

It was further resolved:

That the Chief Executive be instructed to bring forward proposals to the Finance & Assets Committee for the establishment of a £2m Growth & Infrastructure Fund to be funded from the Cambridgeshire Horizons reserve account.

59. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Council considered a report (W144, previously circulated) proposing amendments to the Council's Constitution.

The Democratic Services Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report and explained that the suggested amendments to the Constitution predominantly formalised the policy changes regarding Agenda despatch/publication timings: namely that Agendas for Full Council, Finance & Assets Committee, Operational Services Committee, and Audit Committee would be despatched/published seven clear working days in advance of the meeting, rather than the statutory minimum of five days. There was also a necessary revision as a result of restructuring at Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) and clarification on some issues as well as correction of anomalies.

Cllr Bailey, seconded by Cllr J Schumann, moved the previously-published Motion, which revised the recommendations in the report, as follows:

That Council approves the proposed amendments to the Constitution namely:

- (i) Note the change to the period for Agenda despatch/publication to 7 days for Council, the 2 Policy Committees and Audit Committee as

detailed in 3.2 below and amend the Access to Information Procedure Rules as set out in Appendix 1;

(ii) Amend Council Procedure Rules 6 & 10.1 to reflect the move to 7 clear working days for the despatch/publication of the full Council Agenda as detailed in 3.3 below;

(iii) Amend Council Procedure Rule 8.1.2 to designate the Monitoring Officer (Deputy Monitoring Officer in absence) as the responsible officer in relation to Public Question Time as detailed in 3.4 below;

(iv) Amend Council Procedure Rule 8.1.4 (Questions from the Public) to include all Members to which a public question can be put as detailed below:

8.1.4 (Revised)

The question is to any Member of the Council. They may give a verbal answer or undertake to provide a written answer to the question as soon as possible (such reply to be circulated to all Members) or they may decline to answer (for example, on the grounds that the information requested is confidential);

(v) Consider the existing Council Procedure Rule 24.1.3 for calling of Special Meetings as set out in 3.6 below and the amending of the Procedure Rule in accordance with Option 1 Appendix 2 (ref: 24.1.3, Section 4, Page 15);

(vi) Amend the officer delegations as set out in 3.8 and Appendix 1;

(vii) Amend Council Procedure Rule 13.1 (Questions from Members) to enable a Member to ask any question to any Member as detailed below:

13.1 (Revised)

A Member of the Council may ask any Member of Council a question either:

13.1.1 by giving the question in writing to the Chief Executive not less than 24 hours before the Council meeting; or

13.1.2 with the prior permission of the Chairman of the meeting itself on a matter of urgency which could not reasonably have met the rule under 13.1.1 (in this case Members should ensure that copies of the question are available for distribution at the meeting).

Provided always that such questions may be rejected by the Chief Executive or Chairman, if they are matters for which the authority has no responsibility or which does not affect the District; is substantially the same as the question which has been put to

Council in the last 12 months; or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

13.2 (Deleted)

And that the Legal Services Manager and Democratic Services Manager be authorised to make any consequential changes to the Constitution arising from the agreed amendments.

Cllr Bailey welcomed the proposal to provide Members with more time to study the agenda papers prior to meetings and explained that the Motion also sought to improve public access by providing a forum in which members of the public could ask a question of any Member. Members would have the right to provide a written response after the meeting, if they preferred. The Motion would also permit Member to Member questions, and both of these changes were intended to maximise the accessibility and accountability of the Council and all of its elected Members.

Some Members welcomed the clarity and openness that they believed these changes would bring. They stressed the importance of accountability to the public and the ability for members of the public to ask any individual Member a public question since the responsibilities of power lay with all elected Members, not just with the Administration. A Member also welcomed the opportunity for Member-to-Member questions, for example to seek clarity if one Member had made public comments about another Member.

Other Members supported the recommendations in the report but disagreed with the revisions made in the Motion. They asserted that the purpose of both "Questions from the Public" and "Questions from Members" was to hold the decision-makers to account. They therefore welcomed the addition of the Leader of the Council to those who could be questioned, but considered it inappropriate to permit questions to all Members. Accountability in both question times would be diluted if open to all. Members of the public were already able to question and hold to account all Council Members *via* many methods including in-person at monthly surgeries, and by telephone, email, or social media. A Member considered the proposal to be ill-timed, following the tone of part of the Public Question Time at the previous meeting.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr J Schumann suggested that members of the public may be more inclined to attend Council meetings in future if they were able to put questions to any of their elected representatives. He commented that many Members represented the Council on Outside Bodies and should be able to be publicly questioned in connection with those roles. Regarding the suggestion that the purpose of question times was to hold the Administration to account, he stressed that all Members were elected to the District Council, not just for their own Ward, and that, as decisions taken by the Council affected all residents, all Members should be accountable to all residents.

Summing up as the proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey stated that the Public Question Time at the previous Council meeting had shown that there was interest in questioning individual Members, and she considered that all elected Members should be willing to answer questions from the public.

9:14 pm Cllr Simon Harries left the meeting and did not return.

Following a request from a Member, the Chair stated that three separate votes would take place on the Motion:

- a) the entire Motion excluding sub-sections (iv) and (vii);
- b) sub-section (iv) – taken as a recorded vote;
- c) sub-section (vii) – taken as a recorded vote.

a) Upon being put to the vote, the Motion excluding (iv) and (vii) was unanimously carried.

b) Upon being put to the vote, sub-section (iv) was carried as follows:
FOR: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovington, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

AGAINST: (9) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

c) Upon being put to the vote, sub-section (vii) was carried as follows:
FOR: (17) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovington, Edwards, Every, Goldsack, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

AGAINST: (9) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

It was therefore resolved:

That approval be given to the following proposed amendments to the Constitution:

- The 7-day period for Agenda despatch/publication for Council, the two Policy Committees and Audit Committee, as detailed in section 3.2 of the report, be noted, and the Access to Information Procedure Rules be amended accordingly as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- Council Procedure Rules 6 and 10.1 be amended to reflect the move to 7 clear working days for the despatch/publication of the full Council Agenda as detailed in section 3.3 of the report;

- Council Procedure Rule 8.1.2 be amended to designate the Monitoring Officer (Deputy Monitoring Officer in absence) as the responsible officer in relation to Public Question Time as detailed in section 3.4 of the report;
- Council Procedure Rule 8.1.4 (Questions from the Public) be amended to include all Members to which a public question can be put, as follows:

8.1.4 (revised)

The question is to any Member of the Council. They may give a verbal answer or undertake to provide a written answer to the question as soon as possible (such reply to be circulated to all Members) or they may decline to answer (for example, on the grounds that the information requested is confidential);

- Council Procedure Rule 24.1.3 for calling of Special Meetings be amended in accordance with Option 1 of Appendix 2 of the report as follows:

The Chairman of the Committee, Sub-Committee, Panel or Working Party or the Chairman of the Council may call a special meeting of the Committee, Sub-Committee, Panel or Working Party at any time. A special meeting shall also be called on the requisition of half of the whole number of the Committee, Sub-Committee, Panel or Working Party, delivered in writing to the Chief Executive. The summons to the special meeting shall set out the business to be considered thereat, and no business other than that set out in the summons shall be considered at that meeting.

- Officer delegations be amended as detailed in section 3.8 and Appendix 1 of the report.
- Council Procedure Rule 13.1 (Questions from Members) be amended to enable a Member to ask any question to any Member, as follows.

13.1 (revised)

A Member of the Council may ask any Member of Council a question either:

13.1.1 by giving the question in writing to the Chief Executive not less than 24 hours before the Council meeting; or

13.1.2 with the prior permission of the Chairman of the meeting itself on a matter of urgency which could not reasonably have met the rule under 13.1.1 (in this case Members should ensure that copies of the question are available for distribution at the meeting).

Provided always that such questions may be rejected by the Chief Executive or Chairman, if they are matters for which the authority has no responsibility or which does not affect the District; is substantially the same as the question which has been put to the Council in the

last 12 months; or requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

13.2 (Deleted)

It was further resolved:

That the Legal Services Manager and the Democratic Services Manager be authorised to make any consequential changes to the Constitution arising from the agreed amendments.

60. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORTS – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2021

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority’s Audit & Governance Committee (17th December 2021), Overview & Scrutiny Committee (25th October, 22nd November and 13th December 2021), and Combined Authority Board (27th October and 24th November 2021).

There were no questions for the constituent Council representatives.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the Combined Authority update reports be noted.

61. ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY

The Council considered report W145, previously circulated, detailing the actions taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency with regard to the Additional Restrictions Grant Round 8 and the COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund.

A Member asked for an update on the Internal Audit review of COVID-19 grants, having been informed at a previous meeting that it would be taking place. On the invitation of the Chairman, the Finance Manager committed to providing an answer to all Members outside of the meeting.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9:25pm

Chairman.....

Date.....