



# East Cambridgeshire District Council

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee**

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30pm on  
Thursday 28 November 2024

### **Present:**

Cllr Ian Bovingdon (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Lorna Dupré  
Cllr Anna Bailey  
Cllr Mark Goldsack  
Cllr Bill Hunt  
Cllr David Miller  
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chair)  
Cllr John Trapp  
Cllr Mary Wade  
Cllr Alison Whelan  
Cllr Christine Whelan

### **Officers:**

Sally Bonnett – Director Community  
Maggie Camp – Director Legal Services  
Kieran Carr – Economic Development Manager  
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager  
Jane Webb – Democratic Services and Elections Manager  
Ian Smith – Director Finance

### **In attendance:**

Nigel Ankers – ECTC Finance Manager

## **43. Public Questions**

The Chair confirmed a question had been received from a member of the public, Cameron Martin of Stuntney, Ely:

“I am a resident of Stuntney, though I write this question on behalf of a wider working group of Stuntney residents determined to make a proper and safe walking and cycling path from our village to the edge of Ely happen. There is just one single path, which is narrow, in poor condition, unlit, and immediately adjacent to the A142 road. Residents must not only battle to cross the A142, but then endure around a 1-mile cycle or walk while lorries and other traffic hurtle towards us at over 50mph and pass us literally centimetres away. Such lorries create huge wind vortexes, pushing and pulling you away from the road. Put simply, cycling is dangerous. Walking is deeply unpleasant.

For years, both the district council and the county council have repeatedly recognised that a proper cycle path needs to be put in place. The path is repeatedly included in action plans and programmes, so many so that we have lost count. Yet nothing has happened. The residents of Stuntney can no longer sit back and wait decades more for something to happen. We need ECDC to turn its nominal support for such a scheme into real delivery support. We don't want the idea of a path repeatedly included in plans and strategies. We want ECDC, with the county council, to go about putting together funding and deliver on its promises.

We accept it will cost money.

But it is noted on your agenda today, for example, at Item 12, the considerable multi-million-pound sums collected via the Community Infrastructure Levy process, a considerable amount of which is not allocated for spending. Some of that CIL money is from the considerable development in and around Stuntney in recent years, such as new homes and Ben's Yard. Yet we have seen no spend for us.

In October, a packed village hall meeting unanimously agreed that we, as a Stuntney community, will do all we can to assist delivery of a proper path and pressure all those who need to play their part to make it happen. At that meeting, we perhaps uniquely had 4 layers of elected representatives, all of whom backed the proposal: a Councillor from the City of Ely, a Cllr from ECDC, a Cllr from the County Council, and our local MP. We also had the local landowner who owns the farmland adjacent to the A142, and he openly said he was willing and supportive of using a strip of such land to help deliver such a path.

But we need ECDC assistance and support to make this happen. Without ECDC support, this path will never happen. It will remain a proposal on the dusty shelves of The Grange. We urge you to back this proposal beyond action plans and move it to a delivery phase.

We therefore ask the Chair whether he will agree to the following:

That a Director of ECDC is asked to prepare a paper for the next Finance and Assets meeting in January 2025 which sets out:

A summary of the status of the Stuntney to Ely cycle path, including where it is referenced in associated action plans, studies, and CIL spending lists.  
A realistic set of potential funding pots to deliver such a cycle path,  
An update from the county council in terms of its delivery plans for the path;  
and a clear recommendation to the Committee of how best the proposal could be progressed, including timescale and funding proposals.”

The Chair gave the following response:

“The Council has long championed to improvement of the East Cambridgeshire strategic cycle and footpath network and adopted an East Cambridgeshire Cycling and Walking Routes Strategy in November 2021. A Bus, Cycling, and Walking Cross Party Working Group was set up in 2021, which I chaired, and we are keen to bring these to fruition.

Following this work, the Council commissioned [Sustrans](#), the charity making it easier for people to walk and cycle, to produce feasibility studies to better understand the factors that need to be considered to deliver the cycle routes and an estimate of the cost.

One of the studies explored was the Ely to Soham route, including options via Stuntney. The Sustrans study can be viewed on the cycling and walking page of the Council's website.

Stuntney to Ely is one of the cycling routes identified in Cambridgeshire's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) which the County Council produces.

It is also identified as a community priority in the Stuntney vision section of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan and 'Wicken-Soham-Ely Cycle Path' is included on the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Infrastructure List.

Officers are working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Cambridgeshire County Council Cycling Team to secure funding for further development of this route study. This work is at an early stage and more information will be shared with Members and the public when available.”

Cameron Martin asked the following supplementary question:

“They were familiar with the history and the documented studies that Cllr Sharp had mentioned but with Ben's Yard now being a place with festivals, and the increasing community, there was a necessity to have a safe standardised route in from Ely. The majority of the cut-throughs from Ely to Bens Yard and the wider community is within a 20mph speed zone which is effectively a 500-yard piece of pavement that is the main focus area, and it is recognised that there is still work to be done on this and recognised the plans that have already been drawn up which we are keen to see progress. The landowners are also linked in and there are suggestions for a Plan B which could be a more cost-effective solution that should be considered. They were keen to see this not fall by the wayside and recognised that a cycleway from Ely to the allotments had been achieved and this needed to be carried through to the remainder of the route from Ely to Stuntney.”

The Chair stated he was willing to move this forward with Members and thanked Mr Martin for asking his question.

#### **44. Apologies and substitutions**

It was noted that since the last meeting:

- Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith had been readed as a substitute.

No apologies were received.

#### **45. Declarations of interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

#### **46. Minutes**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 26 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

#### **47. Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

#### **48. Service Delivery Plans – 6 Month Performance Update**

The Committee considered a report, Z104 previously circulated, that detailed an update on the Service Delivery Plans 2024/25 that were approved by Finance & Assets Committee on 28 March 2024.

The Director Community presented the report and Members made comments and asked questions.

Members requested that further detail be added to the target columns of future Service Plans to explain why and how a target was under or over. The Director Community would review and respond to the questions raised, after the meeting:

- P19 – Should there be a number in front of '% Elector communications' in the target column?
- P33 – The performance measure at the bottom of the page – please can you provide a breakdown for each of the priority levels.
- P34 – The 2 off-target STNN targets – what is being done to address these being behind the target?

Members resolved to **NOTE** the report.

## 49. Economic Development Funding Update

The Committee considered a report, Z105 previously circulated, for the allocation of £867,822 Littleport Market Town Fund towards the delivery of a new community building in Littleport.

The Economic Development Manager presented the report, and Members commented and asked questions.

Cllr Miller proposed the recommendations in the report and Cllr Sharp seconded the recommendations.

Cllr Dupré was concerned because a large amount of money was being allocated, but there was only a short report with no extra information. This lack of background papers or appendices made it difficult to make a well-informed decision. The Economic Development Manager stated they were working on a detailed plan to present to the Combined Authority. The Plan included using £1 million from Section 106 funds and £1/4 million from CIL Funds. Littleport Town Council will oversee the running of the building and will need to add a community building to deliver the e-space project.

Members were in favour of the report but were sympathetic that there had not been the opportunity to include the necessary information. The Director Community explained this had been due to an issue with timing of committee report deadline and those for the required documents for the Combined Authority, but officers were working with Littleport Town Council to produce the business case and assured Members that if there were any issues or concerns, these could be brought back to this committee.

Members recognised this was a fabulous project that would provide more than a meeting venue, offering office space and space for outreach clinics; several Members felt uncomfortable having to vote on the presented report and asked for further assurance.

Cllr Miller proposed the recommendations in the report stating this was an excellent use of funds and that Littleport had a solid history of delivering projects but agreed that it would have been preferable to have received supporting documentation. Cllr Bailey, the Leader, clarified that this was CPCA funding and did not belong to ECDC, therefore the Council were “giving their blessing.”

Members discussed the wording of the recommendation and agreed to an amendment to use the word “use” instead of “allocation.”

Members unanimously resolved to:

Recommend the use of £867,822 Littleport Market Town Fund towards the delivery of a new community building in Littleport to the CPCA Investment Board.

## 50. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme Policy Review

The Committee considered a report, Z106 previously circulated, detailing the annual review of the LCTRS scheme for 2025/26 and options for scheme amendments and review and amend the Council's rules around Council Tax Premiums for long-term empty properties and second homes. The report proposed one change to the current scheme, which was, that DWP passported benefit status for LCTRS assessments will be disregarded where the Local Authority was satisfied that the LCTRS Assessment was incorrect because of information obtained by the Local Authority Fraud Investigation Team and that changes in Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes and the exemptions to the premiums as detailed in the report are approved.

The recommendation was proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Bovington.

Councillor Dupré proposed, and Councillor Alison Whelan seconded the following amendment:

To replace one change with two changes in the report, the second was to decrease the minimum contribution to 0%.

A Member acknowledged the amendment, however, believed in the principle that people should contribute something towards their Council Tax and thought the 8.5% contribution was reasonable, bearing in mind the other support options available for those on low incomes impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. Other Members concurred with this view.

A Member stated it would be interesting to know the cost of recovering unpaid Council tax.

As the seconder of the amendment, Cllr Alison Whelan highlighted that lowering the minimum contribution to 0% would help the lowest-income families.

A vote was taken on the amendment, as follows:

FOR: (5), AGAINST: (6), ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Amendment was declared to have fallen.

The Leader reiterated that the Council worked hard to keep the cost of the Council Tax as low as possible, having managed to keep it frozen for the last 11 years. Further support was available from the Council, Housing and Community Safety Teams to help residents.

Members resolved to approve:

- The annual review of the LCTRS scheme for the 2025/26 year, making one change to the scheme, that being, that DWP passported benefit status for LCTRS assessments will be disregarded where the Local Authority is satisfied

that the LCTRS assessment is incorrect because of information obtained by the Local Authority Fraud Investigation Team.

- The changes in Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Properties and Second Homes as detailed in Sections 4.5 to 4.7 and the exemptions to these premiums as detailed in sections 4.8 and 4.9.

## **51. Finance Report**

The Committee considered a report, Z107 previously circulated, detailing budget monitoring information for services under the Finance & Assets Committee and then, as part of its corporate remit, for the Council as a whole.

Members expressed gratitude to the Director Finance for the report and enquired about the monetary impact of the out-of-service car-parking machines on the Council. The Director mentioned he would investigate this issue and provide a response after the meeting.

Members resolved to note:

- That this Committee has a projected yearend underspend of £746,000 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £7,016,768.
- That overall, the Council has a projected yearend underspend of £477,000 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £18,840,342.
- That the overall position for the Council on Capital is a projected outturn of £5,708,033, which is an underspend of £1,972,508 when compared to the revised budget.

## **52. Treasury Management Update**

The Committee considered a report, Z108 previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on the Council's 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy.

Cllr Sharp proposed the recommendations in the report and Cllr Bovingdon seconded the recommendations.

Members unanimously resolved to:

- Recommend to Full Council that the mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted.

## **53. Assets Update**

The Committee considered a report, Z109 previously circulated, which provided Members with an update on Council-owned assets. The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager presented the report and highlighted that three new water drinking fountains had been installed within the public toilets in Ely and Newnham Street Carpark and would now be resurfaced in the New Year.

Members resolved to:

- Note the update on Council owned assets.
- Note the expenditure tracking sheet at Appendix 1.

## **54. Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement**

The Committee considered a report, Z110 previously circulated, which contained information relating to Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 income and expenditure.

Members resolved to:

- Note the Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 1, which will be published in December 2024.

## **55. Whistle Blowing Policy Update**

The Committee considered a report, Z111 previously circulated, to approve the revised Whistleblowing Policy.

Cllr Sharp proposed the recommendations in the report and Cllr Dupré seconded the recommendations.

Members commented on the helpful use of the added track changes and requested these be used when updating future policies and supported the policy expressing that it was a good piece of work.

Members unanimously resolved:

- That the revised Whistleblowing Policy be approved.

## **56. Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its Forward Plan.

Members resolved to:

- Add an item to the January meeting – Constitutional Update – Contract Procedure Rules
- Note the forward agenda plan.

## **57. Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was resolved unanimously:

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



**58. ECTC Management Accounts Q2 2024/25**

Members resolved to Note the contents of this report covering the six months to the end of September 2024.

**59. Exempt Minutes**

Members resolved that the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 6:30pm

Chair.....

Date.....

