

## **AGENDA ITEM NO. 5**

Minutes of a meeting of the Operational Services Committee  
held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 4:30pm

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Julia Huffer (Chairman)  
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith  
Cllr Lis Every  
Cllr Simon Harries (as a Substitute)  
Cllr Mark Inskip  
Cllr Joshua Schumann  
Cllr Paola Trimarco  
Cllr Jo Webber  
Cllr Christine Whelan

### **OFFICERS**

Lewis Bage – Communities & Partnerships Manager  
Tracy Couper - Democratic Services Manager  
Emma Grima – Director, Commercial  
James Khan – Head of Street Scene  
Liz Knox – Environmental Services Manager  
Victor Le Grand – Senior Leisure Services Officer  
Angela Parmenter – Housing & Community Safety Manager  
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer  
Anne Wareham – Senior Accountant

### **OTHERS PRESENT**

Carol Eagles – Citizens Advice West Suffolk  
Granville Hawkes - Voluntary Community Action East  
Cambridgeshire (VCAEC)

#### **17. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions.

#### **18. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Ambrose Smith and John Trapp. Councillor Simon Harries substituted for Councillor Trapp.

#### **19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lis Every declared an interest in agenda item 8, as she was the Chairman of the VCAEC.

#### **20. MINUTES**

The Chairman pointed out that the three references to 'Sub-Committee' should read 'Committee' and it was agreed to amend the minutes accordingly.

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021, as amended, be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

21. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

22. **PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

The Chairman proposed that this Committee referred agenda item 6 'Parking Enforcement' up to full Council on 21 October for decision. This was duly seconded. The Chairman explained that this issue could affect each and every Members' wards and could have a significant impact on the Council's budget. Officers would be able to get the fullest information on this proposal, reflect on other options and better understand the practicalities of the Police Pilot Scheme to enable Members to take an informed decision. It, therefore, deserved the scrutiny of all Members.

Members were in support of the motion but a Member had submitted a number of questions relating to the report, prior to the meeting. The Chairman assured Members that those questions would be given due attention and the Director Operations would prepare responses in full.

It was resolved:

That agenda item 6 'Parking Enforcement' be referred up to full Council on 21 October for decision.

23. **CITIZENS ADVICE WEST SUFFOLK**

The Committee received a presentation by Carol Eagles, of Voluntary Citizens Advice West Suffolk (CAWS).

The Committee was advised that CAWS offered free advice to everybody on a wide range of topics and also empowered people to solve their own problems. It provided its service through an Advice Line, by an email service and via webchat. Face-to-face meetings were only held as needed. CAWS had a set of 70 volunteers, equating to nearly £70k worth of value.

Statistics from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> August this year gave a snapshot of the level of service provided and showed an increase in help given. The largest group of enquiries centred around benefits and tax credits, debts, employment and relationships.

The Service Level Agreement with this Council related to assisted advice and amongst the team of volunteers there was expertise in a number of areas, such as finance, benefits, employment, immigration, child maintenance and consumers. In addition to the core functions of CAWS there were a number of

funded projects, including supported advice for mental health, applying for Universal Credit, energy and multiple sclerosis.

The Newmarket branch of Citizens Advice had merged with West Suffolk 18 months ago. This had led to a bigger and more resilient workforce, more opportunities for staff to grow, more specialist advice available, the appointment of a trainer and greater access to future funding.

In answer to the Committee's questions, the Committee was informed that this Council funded CAWS for around £23k per year. This funding was under review, so future funding was uncertain. West Suffolk Council were also reviewing their funding, though funding from the Government lottery, for 2 years, and Suffolk County Council, for 1 year, had been secured. This uncertainty made it really difficult to run the business.

It had recently moved to Foley House and had committed to remaining there for 5 years. People could reach the service via the national or local Advice Lines, or could use emails or the website.

All East Cambridgeshire citizens could receive help from any Citizens Advice Bureau, as they all worked together. CAWS was heavily audited on leadership, client feedback, governance and the advice it provided. It had been graded as 'green' as the quality of the advice given was so good.

#### **24. VOLUNTARY COMMUNITY ACTION EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE UPDATE**

The Committee received a presentation by Mr Granville Hawkes, of Voluntary Community Action East Cambridgeshire (VCAEC).

The Committee was advised that VCAEC provided the infrastructure to support voluntary organisations in East Cambridgeshire. It helped run projects with volunteers, who were signposted to connect with people looking for help. The level of volunteers was currently in a state of flux, as many were supporting the National Health Service and its vaccination process due to the COVID pandemic, though some volunteers had been reluctant to get involved due to their concerns over COVID. The situation was fluid, as some volunteers were now returning to their work and were unavailable for volunteering. Post-COVID the intention was to re-build the numbers of volunteers, though it was accepted that some people would not be available after COVID. Interviews would be held with potential new volunteers and followed up so they were not lost.

The East Cambridgeshire Support Group consisted of 50 potential, irregular, volunteers and this database could be used when resources were needed and this would be promoted to other groups.

The car sharing scheme run by VCAEC was the largest in the county and the number of journeys and mileage were getting back to pre-COVID levels. There was a significant backlog, between 4 to 5 weeks, on the gardening scheme. VCAEC had offered community support, through the Parish Forum, for mutual aid to deal with COVID issues. It met regularly at the Forum with parish councils and community groups. This provided good feedback between VCAEC and the

various groups and aided the other projects in the district, such as Community Catalysts (a care project) and Primary Care Networks.

Memberships of VCAEC consisted of 145 member organisations, which was close to the pre-COVID figure, and an exercise would be undertaken to re-establish contact with the remaining groups. A website was being developed to encourage people to apply directly, but the timescale for its delivery had slipped due to some technical issues. It was hoped that it would be up and running by mid-October.

VCAEC would review what it did and how it could be done, to ensure the projects were sustainable. Scoping work would be done through the Parish Forum, followed by developing income streams to become more sustainable.

The new Service Level Agreement was currently out to tender.

## 25. **SERVICE PRESENTATION – COMMUNITIES & PARTNERSHIPS**

The Committee received a presentation by the Communities and Partnerships Manager on the work of the Council's Environmental Services.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager advised the Committee that the department was part of the Council's COVID recovery group. This group ensured that the Council remained engaged with the community using a number of different methods. This included maintenance of a webpage, offering referral pathways, providing local support grants, undertaking community surveys, and taking part in district-wide multi-agency events.

A Tourism Strategy and Action Plan had been developed to promote tourism, to establish and develop a district-wide brand and create a website. The Department monitored the mooring along Ely riverside and logged any issues discovered, to ensure the area was fit for purpose. It also worked alongside the Open Spaces Team on the Ely Country Park all year round, making sure the car park met visitor needs, to garner improvements and to gain accreditations. A Youth Strategy was also being developed and was in the process of being implemented. It focused on a number of areas and objectives to engage and empower young people. Service Level Agreements were in place with VCAEC and CAWS to ensure residents were supported.

Last August it became part of the Department's remit to become responsible for community safety. This involved engagement with parish councils and community organisations. Last year's Action Plan had finished, so now a new one was being developed to address current community issues and to seek accreditation. This included raising awareness of those issues in partnership with relevant organisations. The Department was also involved with Parish Council Conferences where relevant themes were discussed.

Community grants were managed by the Department and were available via the Community Fund, facilities improvements grants, Section 106 grants and local support grants. Assets of community value were managed alongside the

Planning Department to judge whether properties were suitable to go on the register, so their value to the community would be maintained.

In response to the Committee's questions, the Communities & Partnerships Manager revealed that the Department was in the process of getting some value from the conferences and would be looking at how climate change initiatives could be of value to parish councils. Some consideration on what time of day the conferences would be held, as some people could not attend during the daytime.

## 26. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered a report, W648 previously circulated, which provided details of the financial position for services under the Operational Services Committee during the first quarter.

The Senior Accountant advised the Committee that the revenue budget variances mostly related to a re-charge in Community Infrastructure Levy income and increased Planning applications. Overall it was expected that the revenue budget would meet its planned budget.

The overspend on the travellers' sites was due to rent arrears, as the cash collections had been suspended because of the COVID situation. However, it was projected that the capital budget would meet its revised budget.

The recommendations within the report were proposed and duly seconded.

A set of questions had been provided prior to the meeting from Members and these, along with answers provided by officers, was set out in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

Members thought the financial position looked positive and some figures just related to a timing issue. Concern was expressed over the situation involving the Planning department and the Committee agreed to a request to receive a presentation, on the situation about staff retention and its effect on service delivery, at its November meeting. The Committee were also concerned about the lack of service plan updates, so it had lost track of how the departments were doing and whether they were under stress due to the current circumstances.

It was resolved:

- (i) That this Committee was not currently projecting an end of year revenue variance, when compared to its planned budget of £5,800,107 be noted;
- (ii) That the Committee had a projected capital programme outturn of £4,167,244, in line with its revised budget, be noted.

## 27. YOUTH ACTION PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee considered a report, W65 previously circulated, which noted the progress made against Key Performance Indicators and targets set out in the East Cambridgeshire Youth Action Plan 2021-24.

The Communities & Partnerships Manager advised the Committee that the progress on the approved Youth Strategy against its key performance indicators was shown in the report. As COVID could affect the Strategy a consultation exercise had taken place to assess any changes. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the progress made with the Strategy. The current consultation demonstrated that the methods of engagement were appropriate, as this included use of the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). The Climate Change Partnership had been invited to join. Webpages were being developed working with the YAB. There was now a comprehensive database of youth clubs in the district, voluntary initiatives, transport, health facilities, signposting for jobs and financial support. This information was shared with parish councils.

The recommendations within the report were proposed and duly seconded.

A set of questions had been provided prior to the meeting from Members and these, along with answers provided by officers, was set out in Appendix 2 to these minutes.

In reply to the Committee's questions, it was revealed that the safeguarding training would depend on the role of the officers involved. Initial training was completed first, with three yearly refreshers and all training was recorded by Human Resources. This could change, as the officers were doing more so it could be better to refresh these yearly. Other free training was also available for all staff.

The website would pinpoint where young people could access help with mental health issues. This included relevant contacts and signposting to appropriate resources. Members thought the website should be easier to find and made more prominent, with a link to the Youth Strategy.

Members appreciated that the officers had undertaken a significant amount of work, particular the good work with parish councils. A Member seminar was scheduled for November, which could provide an insight into that work. There was now great support for youth provision and this could be enhanced through the County Council's co-ordinators, who worked with youth group to generate more ideas. All needed to work together so the district had suitable provision.

It was resolved:

That progress made against the Key Performance Indicators and targets set out in the East Cambridgeshire Youth Action Plan be noted.

## 28. **OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES & PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a report, W66 previously circulated, suggesting the adoption of the principles arising for the Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategy.

The Senior Leisure Services Officer advised the Committee that the review of relevant facilities had to be thorough, to reveal the current situation. The report captured the key points from the review and showed that most outdoor facilities were owned, managed and improved at a local level. This Council's role was to support those facilities and work with them to provide resources. It also could use the results of the audit carried out to help secure replicated facilities distributed across the district. This distribution had to make sense so that any gaps identified could be provided with suitable facilities.

The work undertaken had been scoped by Sport England and aimed to achieve a robust and sustainable outcome. Consultation had also been undertaken with sports bodies, organisations and clubs but the response had been uneven, so the information gathered was incomplete. The activities that would be suitable for the district as a whole had been considered, with some specific activities looked at separately. Overall the provision of relevant facilities approximately fitted in with requirements but potential growth had to be considered.

The Principles within the Strategy would allow engagement with partners, assist in formulating Section 106 agreements and would help inform and evaluate prospective new projects.

The recommendations within the report were proposed and duly seconded.

It was noted by the Committee that there were a number of errors in the report, so Members should be approached to review the report where it concerned their areas and advise of any minor amendments that needed correcting. There also appeared to be no consideration taken on how the facilities would impact carbon emissions nor on biodiversity issues.

It was explained that there had been a few oversights but this Strategy sought to establish the principles to be used when measuring the benefits of existing or future facilities, and would be used as a baseline.

Councillor Joshua Schumann proposed an additional recommendation: To circulate the Strategy to all Members and request any factual discrepancies or errors in the details of the report be changed by the Senior Leisure Services Officer in consultation with the Chairman/Vice Chairman. This was duly seconded and unanimously approved.

Councillor Mark Inskip then proposed a further additional recommendation: That the Council work with parish councils and local support organisations to develop local action plans based on the actions identified in the Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies and to review and report back progress to the Operational Services Committee on an annual basis. There were a number of proposals in the Strategy and a few data shortfalls that would be useful to look

at annually in conjunction with parish councils and other relevant bodies to offer them support. This proposal was also duly seconded and unanimously approved.

Members considered the Strategy a useful exercise, although one or two areas were not quite accurate. The Strategy could be used to inform parish council policies and Section 106 agreements could be used to tackle the shortfalls in provision.

Upon the proposals, including the additions, being put to the vote:

It was resolved:

- (i) That the Outdoor Sports Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategy as outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 be noted;
- (ii) That the use of the Outdoor Sports Facilities & Playing Pitch Strategies be agreed as an evidence base for securing provision, improvement and maintenance of outdoor sport and playing pitches across the district;
- (iii) That circulate the Strategy to all Members and request any factual discrepancies or errors in the details of the report are changed by the Senior Leisure Services Officer in consultation with the Chairman/Vice Chairman;
- (iv) That the Council work with parish councils and local support organisations to develop local action plans based on the actions identified in the Outdoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies and to review and report back progress to Operational Services on an annual basis.

*Councillor Joshua Schumann left the meeting at this point, 6:25pm.*

29. **QUARTER 1, 2021/22 PERFORMANCE FOR THE WASTE AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICES**

The Committee considered a report, W67 previously circulated, which provided Quarter 1, April to June 2021, performance information for the delivery of the waste and street cleansing services by East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS).

The Head of Street Scene advised the Committee that COVID had heavily affected services, as there had been an increase in staff absences. All employees would be supported through the COVID situation. Despite this the service's targets had been achieved.

In addition to normal services, Street Scene had been involved with the 2021 University Boat Race and the Great British Spring Clean. Working with community groups had presented opportunities for future working and promotion of the service.

This year the service had worked with new key performance indicators, which had been substantially increased since last year. Unfortunately, some of the new targets had not been met, due to staff pressures. This would be addressed to help continue provision of all current services.

The recommendations within the report were proposed and duly seconded.

In response to the Committee's queries, it was revealed that there was a national shortage of heavy goods vehicle drivers (HGV) and it had been a struggle to retain drivers, as they were not the highest paid employees. Some drivers were coming to the end of their careers and Brexit and COVID had created other issues. A number of vacancies had not been filled, though they had been open for some time. Although the Company could not compete with other companies on salaries, the drivers tended to be very loyal and dedicated. To help tackle the shortfall, the Company had ramped up its driver training programme but this was also difficult as the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency was suffering backlogs. The Government was being lobbied to add HGV drivers to the essential workers list. The upcoming Careers Fair at Ely Cathedral would also be used to promote working for the Company.

Though some other local authorities had suspended some of their services, staff sickness and holidays were being managed to try and ensure that the best possible services were provided. This was monitored daily and, to help, driver allocations were programmed a fortnight in advance.

The Committee appreciated the difficulties the service was facing and for the frankness of the replies. It did not take for granted the efforts of the staff and stated that the Head of Street Scene should come back to the Committee if additional resources were required and to find practical solutions to the problems.

It was resolved:

That the performance of service delivery, for the first quarter of 2021/22 be noted.

30. **ANGLIA REVENUES JOINT COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP) Joint Committee of 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

The Director Commercial agreed to take back to the Council's representatives a question relating to the potential knock-on effects on Council Tax from the £20 reduction in Universal Credit.

31. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Committee received its forward agenda plan.

The meeting concluded at 6:46pm.

**AGENDA ITEM 10  
BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

---

Question from Councillor Inskip

<p><b>The table on Appendix 1 provides the profiled budget for the first financial quarter of the current financial year for each cost centre. can you provide the profiled budget for all four financial quarters for the current year?</b></p>	<p>The Finance Manager is considering this request.</p>
<p><b>40.5% of the annual IT budget has been spent in the first quarter. Given the recent email related IT issues, do officers have good confidence that any additional measures needed to address these issues can be accommodated in the remainder of the planned expenditure for the year?</b></p>	<p>Quarter 1 includes the cost of a significant portion of the annual licences, including Microsoft Office 365.</p> <p>The solution to the recent email outage is in progress and it is not anticipated that this will place undue burden on the existing budgets. However, where there is any necessary spend that is not within the existing budget, this will be reported to Members through the monitoring reports.</p>
<p><b>Appendix 2 shows expenditure in the current financial year of £2m for new Refuse &amp; Cleaning Vehicles. Will a report be coming to committee with details of the planned purchases and when is this report expected?</b></p>	<p>The amount of expenditure forecast matches the approved budget. Detailed plans are still being determined with regard to replacing the waste fleet.</p> <p>The Director Operations will consider what reports to bring to Members at the appropriate time.</p>
<p><b>Appendix 2 shows expenditure in the current financial year of £845,950 for the Depot. Will a report be coming to committee with details of the planned works and when is this report expected?</b></p>	<p>Officers are currently assessing the level of improvement work that needs to be undertaken at the Depot.</p> <p>As the Depot improvements are an asset matter, a report will be presented to the Finance &amp; Assets Committee at the appropriate time.</p>

**AGENDA ITEM 11  
YOUTH ACTION PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT**

Questions from Councillor Inskip

<b>How do visitors to the ECDC website locate the Youth Strategy?</b>	The Youth Strategy is currently available on the ECDC policies page with other strategies and will also be available via the ECDC Young People's webpages when they are live (scheduled for March 2022)
<b>What engagement has there been online with the Youth Strategy, in particular how many unique visitors have viewed the strategy on the website?</b>	ECDC's web team is in the process of gathering this information and a response will be provided to Members in writing by the end of this week.
<b>How many users have returned to the website to view the Youth Strategy for a second or subsequent time?</b>	ECDC's web team is in the process of gathering this information and a response will be provided to Members in writing by the end of this week.
<b>How have users navigated to this page? For example, from another webpage on the ECDC website or from an external website, via a search engine or from social media?</b>	ECDC's web team is in the process of gathering this information and a response will be provided to Members in writing by the end of this week.

Questions from Councillor Christine Whelan

<b>The conclusions state that no financial implications arise from the report's recommendations. I am somewhat surprised at this as the report states that 100% of staff will be trained in safeguarding. P28. This training is carried out by professional staff and therefore will incur a cost for the training. If there is no cost to this as stated, then what level of training is being given?</b>	<p>ECDC officers receive safeguarding training during their induction, then refresher training on a yearly basis rather than every 3 years.</p> <p>Free training courses are provided by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. These are sent to Angela Parmenter who forwards them on to all ECDC staff.</p> <p>There may be opportunities for local organisations to provide training to local volunteers.</p>
<b>What qualifications or certificates are being given for this?</b>	All courses are run and certified by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board.

<p><b>How often is the training being given? (This should be done every 3 years with yearly updated training)</b></p>	<p>ECDC do this on a yearly basis as a refresher for staff, initial training is carried out at staff inductions</p>
<p><b>Is there a higher-level qualified person who is the designated Safeguarding person on the council and what level of training has this person had?</b></p>	<p>Angela Parmenter is the Council's lead safeguarding officer – lead training completed and refreshed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board.</p>
<p><b>Who is the Youth Officer Champion for ECDC? Is this publicly known with the various outside bodies?</b></p>	<p>The Council's Youth Officer Champions are Sarah Burton, Housing Options Team Leader, and Stephanie Jones, Communities and Partnerships Support Officer.</p> <p>Stephanie is a member of the Community Safety Partnership's newly established Young People's Task and Finish Group and she attends meetings with the East Cambs Youth Advisory Board (YAB).</p> <p>Stephanie engages with the YAB on a variety of matters including inviting them to sign up to the ECDC Register of Consultees and the Climate Change Partnership.</p> <p>Stephanie engaged with the YAB on how to effectively conduct engagement with young people in order to better understand how the Council can effectively engage going forward and will work with them on the development of the emerging ECDC Young People's webpages.</p> <p>Stephanie is in correspondence with a variety of local organisations providing youth provision and will liaise with them when gathering information to inform the content of the ECDC youth webpages.</p> <p>Stephanie shared the Youth Strategy with partners and offered ECDC's support to working together to address common goals.</p> <p>Stephanie has attended multi-agency meetings to discuss the Youth Action Plan and how it links to other organisation's initiatives e.g. the Police's Children and Young Person's Team and Healthy Schools.</p> <p>Stephanie is leading the methods of engagement consultation with young people</p>

	<p>currently going on and will also lead on the next consultation exercise when reviewing the findings of the consultation that was carried out to inform the development of the youth strategy as well as understanding the impacts of COVID-19 on local young people.</p> <p>As the action plan is implemented further, there will be other opportunities for the Youth Officer Champions to raise their profile and work with outside bodies.</p>
<p><b>The promotion of Youth Clubs is a good idea but what is being done to ensure there will be trained staff/ volunteers to run these clubs? (p29)</b></p>	<p>ECDC do not provide youth workers or training for youth workers however the strategy highlights the needs of young people in East Cambs and has been shared with partner agencies that may be able to address to complement the work that ECDC is undertaking.</p>
<p><b>Have we the budget to keep their training up to date and to have paid staff to run the clubs?</b></p>	<p>ECDC do not provide youth workers or training for youth workers.</p>
<p><b>We know there are buildings available for use but staffing the clubs is a huge problem. Mapping on local youth provision in consultation with Parish Councils. Which councils were consulted and have we the details of the consultation?</b></p>	<p>Mapping was conducted using local information, secondary research and building on mapping carried out during the development of the Youth Strategy. The mapping findings were shared with all parish councils for them to advise of anything else that they were aware of and to check the accuracy of information relating to their parish. This will always be a work in progress with the database updated when new information becomes available. The information will be promoted on the ECDC Young People's webpages and prior to being published, the database content will be checked with the specific agencies featured within it.</p>