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EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 14 JULY 2022 – DECISION LIST

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Cllrs Bailey, Every, Dupré and Goldsack each delivered a tribute, and a minute's silence was held as a mark of respect, following the death of former District Councillor Mike Rouse, Independent Conservative Member for Ely Urban 1973-83, Independent Conservative Member for Ely Northern 1983-87, Independent Member for Ely Northern 1987-91, and Conservative Member for Ely North 2007-2019.

Agenda Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
1.	-	Public Question Time	To answer questions from members of the public.	One question was received from a member of the public. (The question and answer are included at the end of the Decision List.)	Chief Executive
2.	-	Apologies for Absence	To receive apologies for absence from Members	Apologies were received from Cllrs Cane, Downey, Edwards, Huffer, Starkey, Stubbs, Trapp, A Whelan and C Whelan.	-
3.	-	Declarations of Interest	To receive declarations of interests from Members in respect of any items on the Agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.	No public petitions had been received.	-

Agenda Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
4.	-	Minutes – 19 May 2022	To receive the Minutes of the last Council meeting.	It was resolved: That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.	Democratic Services Manager
5.	-	Chairman's Announcements	Announcement of items of interest.	The Chairman congratulated Lynne Smart, PA to the Chief Executive and the Chairman, on reaching 25 years of service to the Council. He commended her professional, friendly and approachable manner and thanked her personally for the help he had received from her in his role as Chairman. All Members and Officers present then gave her a round of applause.	-
6.	-	To Receive Petitions	To receive public petitions.	No public petitions had been received.	-
7.	-	Notice of Motions Under Procedure Rule 10	The following motions were received and considered: i) <u>Climate Change</u> (text of Motion at end of Decision List)	Motion lost.	-
8.	-	To answer Questions from Members	To receive questions from Members of Council.	Five Questions from Members were received and responses given as detailed at the end of the Decision List.	-

9.	X32	Corporate Plan	To consider the updated Corporate Plan 2021-2023 for the Council.	It was resolved: i) That the updated Corporate Plan, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved. ii) That the completed actions and progress made during the past 12 months be noted. iii) That the Monitoring Officer be instructed to amend the Constitution (ref: Article 1 paragraph 1.05) to make necessary amendments to reflect the new Corporate Plan.	Chief Executive Monitoring Officer
10.	X33	Recommendations from Committees and Other Member Bodies	To consider and take decisions on items recommended from Committees and other Member Bodies.	FINANCE & ASSETS COMMITTEE – 23 June 2022 <u>Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review</u> It was unanimously resolved: That the contents of the report on the Council's Treasury Operations during 2021/22, including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to the Finance & Assets Committee, be approved.	Finance Manager
11.	X34	Community Governance Review – Burrough Green / Westley Waterless Parish Boundary	To consider a change to the parish boundary between the parishes of Burrough Green and Westley Waterless <i>via</i> a Community Governance Review.	It was unanimously resolved: i) That the results of the Stage 1 Community Governance Review consultation (paragraph 3.4 of the report) be noted. ii) That the Stage 2 Community Governance Review consultation take place on the recommendation to change	Democratic Services Officer (Policy & Systems)

				<p>the parish boundary between the parishes of Burrough Green and Westley Waterless, as set out in the Terms of Reference in Appendix 2 of the report.</p> <p>iii) That the final recommendations on the Community Governance Review be brought back to Council at its 20 October 2022 meeting.</p>	
12.	-	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Update Report	<p>To receive the reports from the Constituent Council representatives on the Combined Authority: Overview & Scrutiny Committee (13/6/22) Combined Authority Board (20/5/22, 8/6/22, 27/6/22)</p>	<p>It was resolved: That the reports from the Constituent Council representatives on the Combined Authority be noted.</p>	-

1. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Question to the Leader of the Council from Graham James, resident of Little Thetford

“My question relates to the Ely Zipper Bus Service. I live in Little Thetford and was formerly the Chair of the Parish Council. The service was well used by the residents in Little Thetford before COVID Lockdown. After a slow return it is very apparent that its use now appears to be at least at the same level if not even higher. Many people that I have spoken to in the village have told me on many occasions how much the service is valued, with more using it now owing to the price of fuel and concerns over climate change rather than using their own transport.

Little Thetford is extremely grateful for the support it has received from the District and County Council in getting the service up and running alongside the further support during the COVID pandemic. It was with some alarm that I and others in the village heard of an apparent move to stop or significantly curtail the current Ely Zipper service being proposed publicly by the Mayor and the Combined Authority. These pronouncements were being made without even considering the potential expansion programme to other villages known locally as Zipper Two.

I raised these concerns at our Parish Council meeting last night. The Council has written to the Mayor of the Combined Authority expressing their support to the retention of the Zipper Bus Service and has received a reply thanking them for their interest and saying that no decisions had yet been made. In his manifesto the Mayor committed to safeguarding and expanding public transport network. Even the idea of curtailing a vital local community service where there is no real alternative is very difficult to understand.

The residents of Little Thetford are extremely grateful for the support already given by the District Council. My question is: can the Leader of the District Council specifically and the Council more generally assure us that they are taking all possible steps to preserve the current Zipper Service, to ensure that the renewal of the contract for the service later this year is prioritised and to support the expansion of the service to Zipper Two.

Thank you”

Answer from the Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey

“Thank you, Mr James, for your question. As you rightly allude to, bus services are the responsibility of the Transport Authority which is the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority under the Mayor Dr Nik Johnson.

However, this Council is fully committed to doing all it can to promote sustainable forms of transport and we undertook a District-wide consultation in 2020 via a survey that was sent to every household in the District. This resulted in a great piece of cross-party working that produced the Bus Service Proposals for our District – a document which was handed over to the Combined Authority and we hoped would form part of the new Local Transport Plan as it comes forward. To date, we have had no real response from the Combined Authority to that piece of work.

The Mayor Dr Nik Johnson has stated that he wishes to expand bus services, particularly in rural areas like ours. Indeed, he has made it a central and fundamental part of his emerging Local Transport Plan.

Most bus services are in fact run commercially with no requirement for state subsidy. However, some services, usually those in rural areas do require state subsidy to make them viable, and the Ely Zipper is one such service.

The Zipper was championed and developed by Cllr Bill Hunt when he was still a County Councillor and was launched in 2014 – it was in fact a bit of an experiment to put on a simple – what I would call old-fashioned bus service - an hourly service that gets people to where they want to go in a reasonably short amount of time rather than trying to go everywhere and do things for all people, and with flexibility of when they can return because it is hourly. The service has been regularly promoted and nurtured since it started and is well used and much loved, and provides around 22,000 passenger journeys per year.

It is a model that we hoped to replicate – where the geography allows – in other areas and is described in the Bus Service Proposals. Prior to Covid the Ely Zipper was actually the second lowest subsidised service in the whole of Cambridgeshire. The model is that the operator receives a simple payment for running the service and the Combined Authority keeps the fare box – it's a good model because it ensures that it is in the Authority's interests to get an increasing patronage and to keep promoting the service and increasing the amount of users.

There was an opportunity to include a new stop on the Ely Zipper route at the Lancaster Way Business Park, and this means that Grovemere, who run the Business Park which in fact is a designated and growing Enterprise Zone, support the service financially through S106 contributions which were agreed as part of their planning permission to expand the business park and bring new businesses and high-quality jobs to the District. The additional funds brought the subsidy down even lower and increased usage of the service by paying customers (rather than simply by those with a bus pass which are actually funded by the Combined Authority as well). Many workers now use the service in addition to residents who are accessing education and healthcare and for shopping and leisure purposes. Even post-Covid, the Ely Zipper is now back up to 87% of the passenger journeys it had prior to the pandemic and that is growing again – this compares with 75% average for the rest of the county, so it shows that it is a very successful and much-loved service.

All subsidised services are due to be re-tendered soon by the Combined Authority with new contracts being awarded in October. Dews, who are a relatively small operator, came to the District Council in early May with concerns that due to the massive hike in fuel prices they were now running the service at a loss and simply couldn't continue. I thank Dews for coming to us, and for giving us an extended period to try to engage with the Combined Authority to deal with the situation. But Dews had said that if nothing was agreed by 30th June they would very reluctantly have to pull out of the contract early. This would have meant that the Ely Zipper service would have ended in September, just a few weeks short of when it would be due to start its new contract. Despite huge efforts by Officers and Councillors, the CPCA did nothing to deal with this situation, simply referring us to its future re-tendering process happening later in the year.

Clearly, the service ending in September would have left people completely in the lurch who would have had to turn to alternative means of transport, and it would have totally undermined service patronage and, I believe, put the future of the service at risk. It would be a case of letting the service wither and die, which is the exact opposite of what the Mayor says he wants.

I was not prepared to let this happen, so East Cambs District Council together with Grovemere stepped in and agreed to provide the £10.4k support to the Zipper until the retendering process has concluded and a new contract let. I have asked the Mayor to step up and agree to pay the £10.4k back to East Cambs tax payers and Grovemere but had no response to that request to date. In fact, I have sent another letter today as we've had a somewhat woolly response.

Cllrs Bill Hunt and Lisa Stubbs have also been working on an Ely Zipper 2 service, which would service Market Street Ely, The Hive, the Princess of Wales Hospital, Mepal, Sutton, Witcham and Witchford, and we have made specific proposals on this to the CPCA.

However, I have to say I am gravely concerned about the future of all our existing subsidised bus services. Unfortunately, the Mayor failed to win any funding from the national £5bn bus improvement money and is now in the process of developing a framework for the forthcoming re-tendering of subsidised services. The current proposal of that framework is to rate services based on the cost per passenger service – it is this approach that has, in the past, taken away rural routes and resulted in increased services in Cambridge City where people with bus passes can get on frequent and flexible services free of charge, and where they complain about not having a service every two minutes! This is at the cost of no services in many of our rural communities and this is totally unacceptable and goes totally against the rhetoric and promises of the Mayor.

Myself and Cllr Bovingdon who is the Council's rep on the Transport Committee will be speaking against this approach to cutting services, and instead calling on the Mayor to use its own revenue funding to support rural bus services and support the transport needs of East Cambs residents. East Cambs Officers are also working to the same aim and in fact I think it would be helpful if we asked, tonight, the Chief Executive to write to the CPCA as well on this subject, just to underline its importance.

So, Mr James, the answer is yes, we will do absolutely everything we can within our limited powers to assure this service continues but the Ely Zipper is far from assured and I do urge all users of the Zipper and all Parish Councils and community groups to write to the Mayor and demand that he commits to a long-term future for the Ely Zipper service. We will also continue to work towards improved bus services for our whole area, including pushing for Ely Zipper 2. Thank you for bringing this to the Council's attention."

7. NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

i) Climate Change

That this Council resolve to support the Climate and Ecology Bill (CEE Bill) and the Nature and Climate Declaration, and to write to Zero Hour – the CEE Bill Alliance – to express this support.

8. TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

i) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Mark Inskip:

"The end of this month will be the second anniversary of the extraordinary full council meeting which revealed that the council's administration had been working on a secret project to build a crematorium. As we subsequently learned, the plan is to build a crematorium on the site of the much loved Mepal Outdoor Centre.

The council's records show that the first payments towards the crematorium project were made in January 2019. There has been further expenditure in each subsequent year.

Can the Leader of the Council confirm the expenditure made in each of the financial years 2018/2019, 2019/2020, 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and in the current financial year to date on the crematorium project?

Can the Leader of the Council further confirm the increase in estimated development cost from £6.54 million as a consequence of the delays to the project gaining planning approval?"

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

"The expenditure on the crematorium project for each year is as follows:

In 2018/19: £29,105

In 2019/20: £64,451.28

In 2020/21: £218,935.75

In 2021/22: £63,865.19

Current financial year: £2,629

In line with Full Council approval in July 2020 a detailed planning application has been developed and submitted. The timeframe it has taken to develop the planning application has reflected the extended consultation that was required with statutory consultees and then awaiting their formal responses. A very considerable timeframe in some cases, specifically engagement with the Highways Authority at the County Council has taken a very considerable time because of the requirements of the Highway Authority, frankly, changing when there was a change of staff at the County Council dealing with the consideration of the planning application. However, through persistence on the part of the project team all highways matters have now been resolved but that took a huge extended period thanks to the County Council.

This is a very significant project, it is right to be thorough and to present it when it is in a position to present to the Council. Subject to planning approval being secured for the project the further review of the funding strategy will be undertaken after an update of the capital costs for the project. This was agreed to be reported back to Members before final approval so it will be a final business case before final approval to progress with the scheme or not.

Finally, I would just remind Members what I said during the last item, that I again find it incredibly disingenuous of the Liberal Democrat Group to keep bemoaning the loss of the previous use of the site, which ended in 2017, and which we tried incredibly hard through cross-party working at the time to bring forward a similar use for the site and it was not found to be financially viable or possible as some members, or one member, opposite knows perfectly well and their constant arguing against our second efforts at funding a viable use for the site without putting forward any alternative viable proposal! They made no objection to the demolition of the structures on the site of the former Mepal Outdoor Centre, which frankly were dangerous and a risk to public health – none whatsoever, no objection to that! Some use of the site has to be found and the site we now know has to be protected for its biodiversity assets. So, continuing to argue and taking to social media to bemoan the loss of the outdoor centre and saying it should still be an outdoor centre is utterly disingenuous. And if they're still confused about it then perhaps the Lib

Dem Group should seek advice from their Deputy Leader, as it is the organisation Cllr Cane is the Deputy CEO of, the local Wildlife Trust, that is giving that very advice to this Council that curtails what the site can and can't be used for in terms of outdoor activity – and for good reason, to protect the biodiversity of the site and improve the ecology as we were talking about in the last item of this agenda and the members opposite declare they are so passionate about. I have a little suspicion, Chairman, that it does not suit them politically to take note of their Deputy Leader's organisation's advice to this Council because they are far more interested..."

Following a Point of Order from Cllr Inskip requesting that an answer be given to the second part of the question, Cllr Bailey continued as follows.

"I did the very best I could on answering that part of the question because that cost is as yet unknown. The business case will come forward to this Council which has always been the promise.

I'm not in a position to say that the cost has increased because we haven't established the current build cost so I am not in a position to confirm that. What I have confirmed is the expenditure as requested over the last years, which is a known amount of money.

I will end by saying that the members opposite should listen to the advice of the Deputy Leader's organisation that has provided statutory advice to this Council, but I'm afraid Chairman they seem to be far more interested in political point scoring than actually caring about this ecologically nationally important site and its future protection. It's about deeds not words Chairman."

ii) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Simon Harries:

"Over the past 18 months planning applicants in some parts of East Cambridgeshire have not received any response from Network Rail even for very urgent concerns that relate directly to planning applications. Repeated attempts to ask for a substantive reply on such matters have been blocked month after month. In one case, an application has been held up for a full 18 months as a result. Will the Leader of the Council take steps to find out from Network Rail at the highest level she can reach why such delays are taking place and what can be done to remove these delays?"

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

"Thank you for your question.

I have spoken to Officers about this and they are not aware of any particular specific applications where the lack of response from Network Rail has been the sole reason for preventing a decision on a planning application.

I would welcome Councillor Harries sharing more information with me so that I can ask Officers to investigate further and of course, absolutely, if there are issues we will write to Network Rail and find out what is causing any delay."

iii) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Lorna Dupré:

“The Council Planning Manager's post was advertised some weeks ago. There are rumours, though no written announcement to councillors, of other departures in the Council's planning team. Will the Leader of the Council make a statement about capacity in the Council's planning service, including current and forthcoming vacancies; the success or otherwise of attempts to fill those posts; and her assessment of the capacity of the Council to provide an effective planning service?”

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

“Thank you for your question.

Recently the Planning Manager and one Team Leader have left the Council and a Team Leader is due to leave the Council in August. We have filled the Team Leader positions, which included an additional post at Team Leader level, and I am very pleased to say that these positions were filled through internal promotions. This was announced during the Chairman's Announcements at last week's Planning Committee. We will soon be advertising for the vacancies that have arisen as a result of those internal promotions.

With the Planning Manager post, the first round of recruitment has been unsuccessful. We have now undertaken a salary benchmarking exercise and the position is now being re-advertised with a Market Supplement.

We have also secured agency support while we recruit to vacant posts so the service is properly resourced.

I am confident that this Council will continue to provide an effective planning service and one of which I am extremely proud. It is a service nationwide that is under a lot of pressure and they continue to do an excellent job.”

iv) Question to the Chairman of the Operational Services Committee from Cllr Alec Jones:

“The disruptions to waste collections over the last few months have included changes to the service which will have reduced the amount of waste that can be recycled. What estimate has the Chair of Operational Services Committee been given of the percentage reduction in East Cambs recycling rates resulting from these disruptions?”

Response from the Vice-Chairman of the Operational Services Committee, Cllr David Ambrose Smith:

“ECSS has sought to mitigate the impact of service disruption on the amount of recycled material. ECSS did not propose changes to the frequency of collections as part of the reconfiguration of rounds.

Residents experiencing missed collections were advised to leave their bins out for collection and those who contacted Customer Services stating that they had no additional capacity in those bins, were issued with clear and brown sacks.

We are currently unable to quantify the success or otherwise of these mitigation measures as we do not currently have recycling figures for the first quarter for comparative purposes. We will provide all Members with this data when it becomes available.”

v) Question to the Chairman of the Operational Services Committee from Cllr Gareth Wilson:

“What is the additional cost to date incurred by ECSS in making the various changes necessary to ensure the waste collection service meets the agreed service levels? What are the projected additional costs of these changes for the full financial year 2022/23? Does ECSS plan to pass these costs on to the Council through an increased Management Fee for the same agreed service level?”

Response from the Vice-Chairman of the Operational Services Committee, Cllr David Ambrose Smith:

“There are two broad areas of additional expenditure planned for 2022/23 related to the use of agency staff to cover staff absences and issues arising from round reconfiguration and the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan.

It is very difficult to split the costs between covering staff absences and additional resources to cover missed bins. Nevertheless, as an indication, total staffing costs for the first quarter (in house staff plus agency staff) are over budget by £17,500.

In terms of the Improvement Action Plan, there are three additional cost centres, specifically:

- additional support from external contractors, currently Countryside Recycling, (costs incurred to date £10,800);
- additional consultancy support to ECSS management (subject to contract);
- short-term and long-term review of staff terms and conditions and working arrangements (subject to consultation). Current costs relate to temporary enhancements to overtime arrangements and the payment of an additional 6% on basic salary for ECSS non-managerial staff. The long-term permanent review will be subject to consultation.

ECSS is committed to completing the Improvement Action Plan by end October 2022 and will provide Members with a financial update at that time, that will reflect the outcome of the consultation and any contractual changes.

The impact on the Council’s Management Fee will initially be a matter for the ECSS Board prior to consideration by the Council. This will reflect an assessment of the overall increased costs and the extent to which some of these may be of a recurring nature.”