



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the remote Meeting of East Cambridgeshire
District Council held on Tuesday 23 February 2021 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor David Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Alec Jones
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor Daniel Schumann
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Charlotte Cane (<i>from Minute 56 onwards</i>)	Councillor Amy Starkey
Councillor Victoria Charlesworth	Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Matthew Downey	Councillor John Trapp
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Paola Trimarco
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Lis Every (Chairman)	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Simon Harries	Councillor Christine Whelan
Councillor Julia Huffer	Councillor Gareth Wilson

47. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A statement had been received from Steve Griffiths, a resident of Wilburton, regarding Agenda Item 7a – Motion: A1123 (and A1421) Re-Classification – and was read aloud on his behalf. Members were asked to take it into consideration during the later debate on the item.

Regarding Agenda item 7(a) A1123 (and A1421) Re-Classification:

“Whilst I would support a genuine, evidence based, approach to reducing traffic on the A1123, the motion put forward to the Council contains no factual basis upon which the statements made can be shown to warrant consideration.

I am astonished that the County Council have made a decision without considering the impact on the wider network. Surely Councillors do not think that the traffic will simply disappear because of a re-classification?

I am also concerned that the motion has been allowed to be put in place with the wording of “expresses its disappointment that this was not supported by all County Members representing East Cambridgeshire Divisions”. In a democratic country, those members should be allowed to vote as they wish – particular given the lack of any evidence put to the

County Council. This wording should be struck from the motion as being undemocratic.

The Councillors should be aware of the following document:
<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/asset-library/Heavy-Goods-Vehicle-Diamond-Area-ReportNovember-2020.pdf>

The conclusion is comprehensive, demonstrating that traffic does not travel the length of the A1123 (as would be expected as an “A14 bypass”), and including:

“To conclude the HGV ‘diamond’ area analysis there are several key points to note. Over the data collection period, 4,325 HGV’s were captured by the cameras, with a daily average of 875 HGV trips per day. Out of the 4,325 HGV’s trips the analysis showed that only 7% (311) were considered through trips. **The remaining 93% (4,014) are local trips** which have interacted with sites / locations within the ‘diamond’ area. **It is therefore considered that implementing measures to reduce levels of through trips would not have a significant impact on the number of HGV’s within the ‘diamond’ area.**”

(My emphasis)

This would appear to contradict the three points of the motion. The sheer quantity of traffic using the B1049 in peak times demonstrates the notion of B-road classification simply does not reduce traffic levels – yet not formal traffic data is presented to support the motion.

I also note that the HGV Diamond Report states “the committee with appoint a county wide working group to develop a revised policy for HGV management”. The revised policy has yet to be published, and therefore this motion appears to be “jumping the gun”. As Cllr Hunt is a Councillor on the Member Steering Group, surely he would want to see the outcome of the working party to make sure he is doing right for his ward members based on fact?

Would the reclassification result in a road with a lower maintenance requirement, yet the same level of traffic? This could be pot-hole hell, the consequences of which could be significant to both roads users and the Councils.”

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Charlotte Cane.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A Declaration of Interest was made by Councillor Amy Starkey as follows:

Agenda Item 9: Recommendations from Committees and other Member Bodies – would leave the meeting for this item only.

50. MINUTES – 22 OCTOBER 2020

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcement:

“During this pandemic and the lockdowns that we’ve all had to endure I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all our Officers who have been working on supporting elected Members and our residents during this time, from ensuring that our vulnerable residents have the personal support they need, to businesses quickly and efficiently receiving grants that they’re entitled to. This includes also that our services are continuing to run effectively. This has required an extremely effective co-ordinated approach with our County Council colleagues. This has been led by Dr Liz Robin, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough’s Director of Public Health, who has now announced her intention to retire before the end of April, having delayed her retirement plans so she could continue to lead Public Health through the challenging winter period. I know that our District Officers lead by Jo Brooks wish to say their own thanks to her having worked so closely during the last months, sitting with her on the various bodies including the COVID Finance Group awarding bids for various initiatives to the tune of approximately £5.5m. It is true to say that whilst formal working relationships are in place there is now a stronger and closer relationship between East Cambridgeshire District Council and the County Council on the specific issues of caring for our residents during the pandemic, sharing good practice with others including Central Government. On behalf of the District Council, I would like to send Dr Robin our thanks and best wishes for her retirement.”

52. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

53. MOTIONS

a) A1123 (and A1421) Re-Classification

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Bill Hunt and seconded by Cllr Dan Schumann:

This Council unequivocally supports Cambridgeshire County Council in its commitment and ambition to reclassify the A1123 (and A1421) from an “A” to “B” road.

Furthermore, the Council commends the motion proposed by Councillor Bill Hunt and agreed by the County Council on 15 December 2020 but expresses its disappointment that this was not supported by all County Members representing East Cambridgeshire Divisions.

The reclassification of the A1123 (A1421) provides a number of key advantages and opportunities for the East Cambs villages of Haddenham, Stretham, Wicken and Wilburton, specifically:

- following the improvements to the A14, to improve the quality of life for many 1000’s of our residents;
- improve air quality and congestion consistent with the Council’s Climate Change Strategy;
- reduce the incidence of pedestrian and cycle injury, damage to vehicles and houses caused by the use of A1123 as a strategic route (or locally known as the “A14 bypass”) by vehicles especially HGVs.

The Council requests the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to forward this motion to the Executive Director for Place and Economy and pledges our support to this important initiative.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Hunt explained to Members that the A1123 from Soham to Huntingdon was commonly known as “the A14 bypass” and that an accident or breakdown on the old A14 tended to cause very heavy traffic on the A1123. The short 2 mile A1421 linked Haddenham to Witcham Toll. He acknowledged that the new Ely bypass had helped to reduce some of the traffic but his goal was to get cars and HGVs using the much improved new A14. In December 2020 the Motion he proposed at County Council to pursue the reclassification of both roads to B roads had passed with 37 votes in favour and he highlighted that the Parish Councils of Haddenham, Stretham, Wilburton and Wicken all supported the initiative. He also commented that there was much public support along the route although he noted the public statement read at the start of the meeting in opposition.

Although his main concern was for the residents of Wicken, Stretham, Wilburton and Haddenham he also had sympathy with those living in Earith, Bluntisham, St Ives and Wyton. He drew Members’ attention to the fact that the seconder of his County Council motion was the Councillor for the Earith area, highlighting that the issue was not purely an East Cambs problem.

He highlighted the pollution from heavy traffic along the route and the damage to local residents, especially children, and stated that reduced traffic would assist in the Council’s target of zero Carbon. It would be much easier to achieve traffic calming measures on a B road than an A road which was a further incentive for the reclassification. Fewer vehicles would result in less damage

to parked cars and houses and would be safer for residents, in particular for children and residents with limited mobility.

Addressing the issue of funding, Cllr Hunt acknowledged that reclassification from A roads to B roads would mean less funding provided to the County Council by Central Government, but emphasised that the successful implementation would also mean less traffic and therefore the roads would suffer less wear and tear. To provide perspective, he informed Members that the County Council's annual budget was in excess of £500m and the potential loss of income due to reclassification would be approximately £250k.

The following Amendment was then proposed by Cllr Lorna Dupré and seconded by Cllr Gareth Wilson:

This Council ~~unequivocally~~ **broadly** supports Cambridgeshire County Council in its commitment and ambition to reclassify the A1123 (and A1421) from an "A" to "B" road **provided that this does not result in a net reduction in the budget for maintenance of Cambridgeshire's roads.**

~~Furthermore, the Council commends the motion proposed by Councillor Bill Hunt and agreed by the County Council on 15 December 2020 but expresses its disappointment that this was not supported by all County Members representing East Cambridgeshire Divisions.~~

The reclassification of the A1123 (A1421) **potentially** provides a number of key advantages and opportunities for the East Cambs villages of Haddenham, Stretham, Wicken and Wilburton, specifically:

- following the improvements to the A14, to improve the quality of life for many 1000's of our residents;
- improve air quality and congestion consistent with the Council's Climate Change Strategy;
- reduce the incidence of pedestrian and cycle injury, damage to vehicles and houses caused by the use of A1123 as a strategic route (or locally known as the "A14 bypass") by vehicles especially HGVs.

The Council recognises, however, that reclassification alone will not fully address these issues, and will only achieve the above objectives in conjunction with practical measures including the appropriate imposition of weight limits, 20mph speed limits in villages, and other speed restriction measures. It further recognises that any reclassification must take place without detriment to residents in other communities not on strategic road freight routes.

The Council requests the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to forward this motion to the Executive Director for Place and Economy and pledges our support to this important initiative **to be implemented without a net reduction in the road maintenance budget or detriment to residents in other communities not on strategic freight routes, and alongside the practical measures listed above.**

Speaking on her Amendment Cllr Dupré informed Members that it had three straightforward elements. Firstly, reclassification only if there was no net reduction in the maintenance budget for Cambridgeshire's roads. She informed Members that the Government's maintenance grant for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Highways had already been cut by £7.5m for the coming year and that County Council Officers had estimated that this proposal would result in a further £0.25m reduction in the grant with no corresponding reduction in the maintenance requirement. Secondly, that the proposal should not cause the traffic to move onto other local villages' roads. And thirdly, acknowledgement that changing the classification would not cause traffic to disappear. She highlighted personal experience of heavy traffic along the B1381 in Sutton irrespective of its B-road status. Her amendment therefore proposed that practical changes such as weight- and speed-limits and other speed restriction measures would be needed in addition to the reclassification.

Cllr Dupré highlighted that she and Cllr Hunt were both members of the County Council's Working Group reviewing policy on heavy vehicles in villages, as mentioned in the public statement at the beginning of the meeting, and she agreed with the author's comment that this motion would be "jumping the gun".

Several Members emphasised that supporting the Amendment would mean opposing reclassification since it would not be possible to change a road from an A road to a B road without a reduction in the highway maintenance grant received from Central Government. The Leader reiterated the view that the required maintenance of the roads would also decrease with the reclassification and mentioned that additional highways maintenance funds had already been allocated in the County Council Budget which surpassed the projected drop in Government funding. Several Members commented that it would be much easier to get safety measures in place on B roads than on A roads and highlighted the many health and safety concerns of local residents along the route, together with prolonged efforts from Parish Councils to address the issues themselves. Attention was also drawn to the recent upgrade of the A14 and the opening of the Ely Southern Bypass, both of which made the A10 and A14 more attractive to freight traffic.

Other Members emphasised that reclassifying the roads would not stop them from being the most direct route and would therefore not, in isolation, address the issue of the HGVs using them. A Member drew attention to the statement from the member of the public which indicated that not all of the traffic was through traffic. Another Member mentioned that Central Bedfordshire had recently imposed weight restrictions on some roads to reduce the number of HGVs using them, and suggested that a similar scheme could be effective in

East Cambs in combination with speed restrictions. In support of the Amendment, one Member explained that the aim was to lay out the changes that needed to happen in order to achieve the objectives of the original Motion.

The seconder of the Amendment recorded his appreciation to the proposer of the Motion for addressing the issue of too many lorries on the A1421 and A1123. He stated his agreement that the roads should be re-classified as B roads in order that speed reduction measures, speed limits and weight limits could be added and emphasised that a key purpose of the Amendment was to tell the County Council not only to reclassify the roads but also to put in place the practical measures detailed in the amended paragraph.

Upon being put to the vote, the Amendment was lost with 10 votes in favour and 17 against.

The proposer of the original Motion then encouraged Members to look afresh at the Motion as a means to take the first step in addressing the roads' issues.

In response to Members' questions about the additional highways funding she had referenced regarding the County Council Budget, the Leader of Council explained that £30m had been allocated over the medium-term financial strategy, of which £4m/year for 5 years would be in the general highways maintenance budget but with no decision yet taken as to whether the money would be spent on roads or footpaths.

Several Members explained that whilst they supported the principle of reclassifying the roads they would be unable to support the Motion while it contained a paragraph criticising a colleague's actions at the County Council. They suggested that removal of paragraph 2 of the Motion could potentially result in unanimous support for the Motion which would in turn give a clearer message to the County Council. Cllr Hunt responded that he stood by the sentiment in that paragraph. Cllr Wilson proposed an Amendment deleting paragraph 2, which Cllr Downey seconded. A Member interjected that under Motions with Notice Procedure Rule 10 there was a requirement for 24 hours notice of Amendments, this was confirmed by the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer. Upon a Member seeking further clarification regarding non-financial Amendments, the Democratic Services Manager drew Members' attention to Procedure Rule 10.6.

The seconder of the Motion reminded Members that the road reclassification had Parish Council support, was wanted by residents, and would improve the quality of life of residents along the route.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was carried with 17 votes in favour and 10 abstentions.

b) Brexit

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Simon Harries and seconded by Cllr Lorna Dupré:

The Council notes, through recent Government statistics and ongoing reports from UK businesses, that new trading conditions following Brexit have made the business models of many existing small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) either much more difficult, impairing their ability to invest in the UK, or in some cases no longer viable.

The Council further notes that:

- East Cambridgeshire depends for employment, service provision, business rates and the buying power of its population on such enterprises.
- Both the Council's future strategic growth plans (including market town masterplans) and medium to long-term financial plans require a vibrant SME sector.
- Any major downturn in projected growth for businesses in this sector risks undermining some of the assumptions on which financial planning and budgeting are based.

The Council therefore mandates the Section 151 Officer to examine those underlying assumptions that have been made concerning economic conditions, business recovery and Council income streams, that are relevant to medium and long-term financial planning.

All those assumptions related to current and proposed future Council financial plans are to be compared with the emerging realities of Brexit-related impacts to local businesses, investment prospects and wider public finances. Assumptions that no longer apply as expected, together with other financial gaps, are to be identified.

The Section 151 Officer will report to the F&A Committee at its projected May meeting with notification of:

- Changes to risk profiles for council activities, loans, investments and income projections.
- Changes to the risk profile of Trading Company activities.
- Assessments on possible changes needed to Council financial strategy as a result of these developments.

This information is required to ensure that disruption caused by changes to economic activity in the SME sector does not expose the Council's finances to further risk.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Harries emphasised that the Motion's purpose was purely technical and not an attempt to revisit Brexit differences.

He explained that he was concerned about the Council's exposure to financial risk, especially regarding possible downturns in the economy related to Brexit, and wanted to ensure that this had been fully investigated. Specifically, to determine whether the District had problems regarding Brexit and, if so, what could be done in the near to mid-term future to mitigate them and reduce the risks. He referenced the changes in the economy during the 1980s and cautioned that similar profound economic changes were predicted by many economists following Brexit. With that in mind, he felt it important to carefully investigate the financial risks to which the Council was exposed.

The Council Leader thanked Cllr Harries for the Motion and expressed the view that Brexit was an opportunity as well as a challenge. She stated her faith in the Council and its Officers to bring forward issues when timely and pertinent and highlighted a flaw in the Motion for not recognising what the Council already did well and for seeking to restrict the Section 151 Officer with deadlines at a time when flexibility was important. Another Member added that that the response to the COVID pandemic had illustrated the Council's and Officers' exemplary ability to manage risk.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Lorna Dupré reiterated that the Motion sought to highlight the issues many small and medium sized enterprises faced in the post-Brexit era and the reliance of the Council and District on a successful and secure local economy. She emphasised the importance of reassurance that the assumptions about the post-Brexit economy were robust.

In summing up, the proposer stated that the financial approach relied on three main areas for growth; the property market, the potential for attracting more SMEs, and the monetisation of Council services. He requested more detailed explanations for all of these and scrutiny of the assumptions on which the Council's financial plan rested.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was lost with 11 votes in favour and 16 against.

c) In support of the Fens Biosphere

Cllr Mark Inskip informed Members that in order to facilitate debate and agreement he had, under Procedure Rule 12.6, revised his Motion in line with the Amendment proposed by Cllr Anna Bailey, seconded by Cllr David Ambrose Smith, and circulated to Members *via* email the previous evening. He then proposed the following amended Motion:

This Council is proud to be a partner in Natural Cambridgeshire, the Local Nature Partnership for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which launched its Doubling Nature vision last year. Achieving the vision depends on collaborative partnerships and the sharing of the vision with a wide range of stakeholders, including various agencies, organisations, communities, landowners, farmers and developers.

Biosphere Reserve status is awarded by UNESCO to unique and valuable landscapes. The stated aims of biospheres are to connect people, economies, and nature to secure a future where all can thrive, meeting the needs of current and future residents and working towards providing secure and happy futures for all. Further, that biospheres aim to improve the natural environment, using new ideas, science, and technology to explore new ways of living every day in ways that solve global challenges.

East Cambridgeshire lies wholly within the proposed Fens Biosphere geography, and includes the proposed Biosphere Core Zones of the Ouse Washes, Wicken Fen, and Chippenham Fen, all of which already enjoy protected status.

The proposed Fens Biosphere was awarded Candidate Status by UK Man and the Biosphere (UK MAB) on behalf of UNESCO in November 2019, which is the first stage in achieving Biosphere Reserve designation by UNESCO. The UK currently includes seven areas that have achieved designation. Eight former Biosphere sites in the UK have withdrawn from the World Network of Biosphere Reserves. If the Fens Biosphere were to achieve designation it would be one of 714 designated Biospheres in the world, located across 129 countries, and would be the only lowland Biosphere in the UK, and the East of England.

In order to gain UNESCO Biosphere designation, the Biosphere initiative must demonstrate the widest level of local support, including that of local authorities. Although several local authorities within the candidate area have voiced support, in order to achieve designation, it is a requirement that this support is demonstrated through formal endorsement. For the Fens Biosphere project, a date of June 2022 has been given by which that endorsement must be demonstrated.

The Council discharges its statutory duty to control and determine development in the district through adherence to national legislation and local planning policy, currently the National Planning Policy Framework and the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.

This Council:

- notes the efforts of those involved to date in achieving Candidate Status
- recognises the potential value of the Fens Biosphere, but
- believes the implications of Biosphere Reserve status are not yet clear

Further, this Council notes:

- the Government's recently closed White Paper consultation "Planning for the Future" which sets out plans for fundamental reform of England's planning system, the outcome of which is, as yet, unknown

- that there has been no consultation on the Fens Biosphere with Parish, Town and City Councils, communities and residents to date

This Council therefore:

- requests further investigation of the implications and benefits of designation for East Cambridgeshire, and
- instructs the Chief Executive to write to Cambridgeshire Acre to seek further information

As proposer of the Motion, Cllr Inskip explained the background of the Biosphere designation as a special status awarded by UNESCO to unique and valuable landscapes. He emphasised the unique nature of the Fens and the challenges and opportunities faced both by residents and the natural environment. He drew Members' attention to the first Fen Biospheres conference held on 13th January 2021 which had been attended by over 160 people, including two of his local Parish Councillors whose positive feedback had in part prompted him to table the Motion. He acknowledged that there were some concerns regarding the proposed status, as reflected in the amended Motion, and hoped that by making the revisions it would be possible to achieve unanimous approval in order to send a strong message regarding the Council's wish to fully understand what the Fens Biosphere would mean for the District and how to fully engage in the process.

Cllr Simon Harries confirmed that he was the seconder for the amended Motion as presented by Cllr Inskip.

The Leader thanked Cllrs Inskip and Harries for supporting and adopting the Amendment. She expressed the importance of balancing the competing demands of development in a growth area such as East Cambs, with the environmental and wildlife issues and she highlighted the two recently adopted Supplementary Planning Documents on the Natural Environment and Climate Change which now formed part of local planning policy. She recognised and applauded the efforts to obtain Candidate Status for the proposed Fens Biosphere but urged caution that the implications of the whole District becoming part of a Biosphere were not yet fully understood and needed to be clear before any further commitments were made. She also stressed the importance of consulting local residents, businesses, organisations and Councils.

Cllr Inskip was thanked by one Member for bringing an important initiative with potential to the Council although another Member cautioned that without more information the District could be committed to something which impacted on a large number of initiatives.

As seconder of the Motion, Cllr Simon Harries responded that he believed it to be an entirely positive initiative which fitted well with the Council's agenda and main strategic goals. He also reminded Members concerned about this being a commitment to something that could not be got out of, that it was not statutory.

Cllr Inskip summarised that he understood there were some reservations but it was a positive proposal that he hoped would be well-supported. He also informed Members that the Councils of South Cambridgeshire and Kings Lynn and West Norfolk had already supported the initiative or were in the process of doing so.

The Motion was agreed unanimously.

54. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Questions were received and responses given as follows:

i) Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Alan Sharp:

“The Council’s most recent 5 year land supply report, published in December 2020 shows that the Council has not only retained its 5 year housing land supply, but that with effect from 1st January 2021 it can in fact demonstrate 6.14 years supply of land. Does the Leader agree with me that this is good news for residents?”

Whilst noting that the Council has no powers or levers to force developers to build out the units that they have been granted planning permission for, does the Leader also agree with me, that the fact that the Council has also passed the Housing Delivery Test with a score of 87% against a pass rate of 75% is very good news for residents and communities in helping to ensure development is controlled, and the development envelopes are respected?

Further, does she agree with me that the recent successes of the Council in defending the multitude of planning appeals and judicial reviews from developers on sites in Witchford is a sign of a well-run, competent planning department that has a full complement of staff and provides a first class service for residents?”

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

“I have the pleasure of informing Council today that actually, as a result of the successful Housing Delivery Test outcome, we are now able to demonstrate just over 7 years housing land supply in East Cambs. The fact that the Council can demonstrate this level of supply of land for housing is indeed very good news for our communities and residents. This means that the development envelopes, the lines drawn round our villages and settlements, outside of which development is not normally able to take place are respected. The fact that we have also passed the housing delivery test which is necessary to keeping that land supply figure intact is also to be celebrated. Together, these two achievements put us in the strongest possible position to resist speculative development and we have recently seen a number of inappropriate applications outside the line successfully refused. As well as respecting the development envelopes, having a 7+ year supply of housing land in

place also means that our community led development policy is working at its most effective. It is this policy that has brought forward the successful Community Land Trust settlements that can now be seen across our district - in Swaffham Prior, Stretham, Soham, Haddenham and two CLT homes in Ely, with more CLT sites on the way. Congratulations to the new tenants of the first two CLT properties at Haddenham who moved into their new homes last month, built by East Cambs Trading Company – my enormous thanks and gratitude also to the Haddenham CLT Trustees – they have worked incredibly hard, in short order, and in the middle of a global pandemic to get to this point. Their efforts are paying off and their community, as well as having truly affordable housing reserved for Haddenham people, will also have an income in perpetuity. And all this at nil cost to tax payers with the exception of a modest £5k grant to get them started. No community understands better the need to be able to refuse unwanted and inappropriate applications than Witchford. And I am grateful to the hard work and expertise of the Council’s Planning Team and Senior Management in successfully defending no less than four legal planning battles in Witchford in the last year. We have shown that we are willing and capable of standing up to these challenges from developers in defence of our communities. It also shows that we support those communities that have gone the extra 13 mile to shape development in their area by doing the hard graft of getting a Neighbourhood Plan in place and that we will fight to protect those plans alongside our own Local Plan. I have to say that this is in very stark contrast to Liberal Democrat controlled South Cambs District Council’s planning service which has been having very serious and costly procedural and Governance issues. At the last two meetings of the Planning Committee alone, 5 of the 6 agenda items placed before Committee are now facing judicial review; the Council has had to refer itself to the High Court; and an independent audit of its planning performance has been commissioned. I am sorry for staff and residents in South Cambs - they deserve better and I thank our excellent Head of Planning and her full complement of staff for the professional and efficient service that together, they run.”

ii) Question to the Leader of the Council from Councillor Bill Hunt:

“Does the Leader join with me in welcoming the decision of the Finance and Assets Committee to work with the Chief Constable to implement Section 38 of the Police and Crime Act to carry out enforcement of on street car parking regulations? And secondly, what is the Leader’s ambition for the introduction of CSAS in the District and would she commit to referring any decision on this to Full Council and to giving all Members an opportunity to discuss the issue beforehand?”

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

“Taking your questions in reverse order CSAS can be effective on a number of fronts and I am particularly interested in the training that underpins CSAS. Nevertheless, we do not have any plans for introducing

CSAS at this time. When and if we do consider this, we will do it on a case by case basis, considering each CSAS power on individual merit. And yes, of course, the ultimate decision would lie with this Council and after an all Member Seminar. Following the successful Conservative motion to find a way to enforce on street car parking regulations I very much welcome the decision of Finance & Assets Committee to pursue the implementation of S38. It is disappointing that the Liberal Democrat Group failed to support it at Committee. I note that since the Committee meeting, the Liberal Democrat Leader is promoting the use of Civil Parking Enforcement, CPE, instead, including advocating spending large sums of tax payer's money in order to do so. Cllr Dupre cites another local authority that is proposing to spend £400k of tax payer's money to implement CPE as the way forward, but there was no amendment forthcoming from the Liberal Democrat Group at the F&A Committee proposing this and I note there is no mention of it in their budget amendment this evening. 14 I have said it before and I will say it again, if we can make it work S38 is a significantly less bureaucratic and less expensive way of dealing with this issue than the CPE route and it is right to pursue it. Whilst the vast majority of other local authorities use CPE it is no coincidence that those authorities also charge for car parking in their off street car parks which we will not do. S38 is potentially much simpler, quicker and cheaper to implement and will give us greater ability to flex resources as required to run an effective system of compliance. Dangerous and inconsiderate on street parking has for too long blighted our towns and villages and, under this Conservative administration, the Council, as usual, has sought a creative solution rather than blindly copying what other Councils do. It has my full support and I will be looking to see significant progress as soon as possible."

iii) Question from Councillor Christine Whelan:

"The Council have recently revised their equality, diversity and inclusivity policy, in light of this what has the Council done to promote LGBT History month which is happening this month as it does every February?"

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

"The Council hasn't promoted LGBT History month. In the future if Members have ideas for communication activity that the Council should be undertaking then please could these items be submitted to the Communications team for consideration."

iv) Question to Chairman of Operational Services Committee from Councillor Mark Inskip:

"Has the Chairman of the Operational Services Committee requested and received a full report on the recent email outage which left the Council without email services for nearly three days? Does this report include an analysis of the root cause of the incident, future preventative and/or mitigation actions and other lessons learned? Does the report include a review of the Disaster Recovery plan as a consequence of the

lengthy outage? Does the report include an analysis of the effect of this incident on the Council's risk register? And is he confident of the adequacy of the Council's investment in its information technology?"

Response from Chairman of Operational Services Committee, Councillor David Ambrose Smith:

"The Director of Operations advised all Council Members on 4th February that the emailing system was again operational and gave an explanation of the root cause of the incident. This was a system failure and not any form of cyber-attack. Further communication to all Councillors was provided on 11th February giving detailed technical information and confirmation that the incident did not influence the Council's Risk Register. As Chairman of the Operational Services Committee I do not feel it necessary for a further review and I am satisfied with the explanation given and the future monitoring of the system that is in place. This current financial year the Council has significantly invested in both hardware and software, including laptops, replacement remote access system and telephone system configuration to enable Officers to work from home throughout the pandemic. Investment has also been made in the completion of a robust Disaster Recovery Site at e-space North and continued upgrades to software used across the organisation. I believe that the 15 planned investment for the coming year is adequate and proportionate, I can only assume the Liberal Democrats think the same as they have made no proposed additional investment in their budget amendment."

v) Question to Chairman of Finance & Assets Committee from Councillor Lorna Dupré:

"Approval was given by this Council on 31 July 2020 to spend an additional £30,000 in 2020/21 on the administration's Mepal Crematorium project, on top of sums already spent up to that point. Since that date, a further £91,451 has been spent on this project. Could the Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee explain: a) on what authority £71,487 was spent on this project before that decision was made on 31 July, and where that authority is documented? b) which budget head that £71,487 came from? c) on what authority an overspend of 205 per cent on the additional £30,000 approved by Full Council has been incurred; who signed this off; and where that is evidenced? d) which budget head the £91,451 spent on the project since 31 July 2020 came from?"

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

"The costs prior to July 2020 were funded from the Council's projected underspend which was last reported to Finance & Assets Committee on 25th January. The proposal for the development of a crematorium with associated burial and pet cemetery facilities on the former Mepal Outdoor Centre was confidential up to this stage and the outline business case remains so. Council agreed the allocation of up to £30k

for the submission of the planning application for the development, funded from the Surplus Savings Reserve and I refer you to the 20 February Agenda Item no. 11 and this is subject to a quarterly Finance Report to Finance & Assets Committee. The additional spend of £61451 will also be funded from the Surplus Savings Reserve. The additional spend is due to the additional consultancy and survey costs to resolve complex ecological and access issues prior to submission of the planning application. If the project comes to fruition some of this revenue expenditure can be capitalised with a contribution back into the Surplus Savings Reserve. A full financial statement will be brought to Council at this time with any further expenditure proposals for the development of a full business case.”

vi) Question to Chairman of Finance & Assets Committee from Councillor John Trapp:

“In the light of concerns expressed across the country by local authority election officers and returning officers, can the Chair of the Finance & Assets Committee advise what assessments have been done of the feasibility and additional cost of keeping staff and 16 members of the public safe during the local elections if they are held on the first Thursday in May, at every stage of the process from nominations to election count; and whether any shortages of polling stations have been identified, and if so how many and where?”

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

“Clearly the question really is a matter for the Returning Officer so it won’t surprise you that he has advised me in my response.

Our Returning Officer in conjunction with other Returning Officers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are currently finalising their risk assessments. These will cover all aspects of the election from nominations through to declaration. We are also awaiting further Central Government guidance as was included in the documentation published after the Prime Minister’s announcement yesterday, which I am sure you have all read.

Specifically in relation to polling stations, 2 polling station venues have been changed. The first is in Cheveley from Cheveley Primary School to Cheveley Parish Hall and the second, one I know well because it’s where I vote, is in Burwell from Gardiner Memorial Hall to Mandeville Hall. An additional polling station has been secured in Soham at the Red Lion Hall.

55. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Councillor Amy Starkey left the meeting for the duration of this item.

Council considered report V131, previously circulated, detailing recommendations from the Finance and Assets Committee as follows:

1. Finance & Assets Committee – 26 November 2020

a. Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme & Discretionary Business Rate Reliefs Policy Reviews 2021/22

It was resolved:

- i) That the LCTRS 8.5% benefit scheme, i.e. the maximum benefit to working age claimants is 91.5%, be retained for 2021/22 financial year.
- ii) That the Council's policies with regard to Discretionary business Rate Reliefs remain unchanged for 2021/22.

b. Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review

It was resolved:

That the mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, be noted.

2. Finance & Assets Committee – 25 January 2021

2021/22 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy (AIS)

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee proposed the following Motion, seconded by Cllr Ian Bovingdon, and clarified to Members that the Council did not currently invest outside the UK and had no plans to do so.

That Council approve:

- The 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy
- The Annual Investment Strategy
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement
- The Prudential and Treasury Indicators

Councillor Simon Harries proposed an Amendment, seconded by Cllr Alec Jones, to remove Singapore, Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong and Qatar from the Approved Countries for Investments in the Annual Investment Strategy.

The Leader of Council noted the information provided in Appendix C2 of the report detailing the Human Rights status of the countries listed in the Annual Investment strategy, and Cllr Brown's assertion that the Council did not invest overseas or have any plans to do so, and reminded

Members that any future investment decisions would be a matter for Full Council, at which point up to date information would be provided in order to make an informed decision. Therefore, in her opinion, the Amendment was unnecessary. Several Members concurred and emphasised the changing socio-political status of countries which meant current information would be needed at such time as an overseas investment was being considered.

Other Members expressed the view that it would be an important policy statement to make clear that the Council would not invest in countries with a poor political or social status. A watching brief and awareness of the human rights records of other countries was suggested as something the Council should be doing as good practice.

One Member reminded Council that, due to the horse racing industry, there was significant investment in the south of the District from some of the countries mentioned in the Amendment and that the potential impact on livelihoods of residents in that area of the District should be considered as part of a future debate, if overseas investment was under consideration.

During the debate there was general agreement regarding the importance of the principle of considering the human rights status of potential countries for investment, but disagreement as to whether restrictions were needed on any individual countries in advance of consideration of any potential future plan to invest overseas.

In summing up his proposed Amendment, Cllr Harries stated the importance of making the Council's default position that investment should not take place in inappropriate places. As proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Brown clarified that there was a credit-rating policy in place for investments and agreed with Cllr Harries that Officers did a good job investing within the UK.

Upon being put to the vote the Amendment was lost with 10 votes in favour and 16 against.

Returning to the Motion, the Leader of Council reminded Members that the Council had met its investment strategy commitments from internal borrowing, so there had been no need for any external borrowing, and that was forecast to continue into 2021/22. She emphasised that this was a strong position for the Council to be in.

Upon being put to the vote the Motion was passed with 16 votes in favour and 10 abstentions.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to:

- The 2021/22 Treasury Management Strategy;
- The Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement;
- The Prudential and Treasury Indicators;
as set out in Appendix C of the report.

Cllr Amy Starkey returned to the meeting.

A short break was taken from 8:43pm to 8:56pm

Upon re-starting the meeting Cllr Alec Jones declared a possible interest in Item 15 due to a potential future application for an ARG.

56. 2021/22 COUNCIL TAX, REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL STRATEGY

Council considered report V132, previously circulated, setting out the Council's proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required level of Council Tax in 2021/22. 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:

"In 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. This recommends that the Council's Council Tax for a band D property during 2021-22 will be £142.14, this being frozen for an 8th consecutive year.

When the draft budget report was presented to Finance and Assets Committee on the 25th January, we were still waiting for the final Local Government Finance Settlement from Government and the Business Rates information from the NNDR1; all of this information is now available and is included in the papers now in front of you.

This up-dated information in net terms has made little difference from the position reported to Finance and Assets Committee with the unidentified saving requirement for 2022-23 reducing from £58,000 to £53,000.

The Council, via the use of its surplus savings reserve, has a balanced budget for 2021-22 and as just mentioned, is £53,000 short of balancing its 2022-23 budget and thus does not need to make any reactionary cuts to services in the near future.

However, the Council does continue to have a substantial saving requirement in 2023-24 and future years of the MTFS, so does need to

be considering now, how this gap is to be bridged in order to achieve a balanced budget for those years. Options for this are discussed in section 13 of the report.

Members will also be aware that a revised motion has been published with regard to the budget.”

The Chairman then invited the Leader of Council to propose and speak on the revised Motion, which was seconded by Cllr Josh Schumann:

“It’s with a feeling of déjà vu that I speak to propose the Council’s budget for 2021/22 as amended. Under 3 different Conservative Leaders we’ve been able to present a balanced budget and freeze the East Cambs element of Council Tax for the last 7 years – this is the 8th year that we commit to doing that again. And Members will note that once again, the budget is balanced for the next two financial years.

I know this may be boring for the opposition, I know it’s not what they want to hear, I know they want to talk the Council down, I know they want to put Council Tax up, but for people in our local communities this provides a little bit of certainty in a very uncertain world.

The last 12 months was one of the most difficult years in our collective memory. My heart goes out to everyone in East Cambs that has lost a loved one over the last year, COVID related or otherwise. I understand how difficult the lockdowns have been and I’m acutely aware that the legacy of COVID and its impact on people’s mental and physical health, on children’s learning, on businesses, on jobs and on the financial health of the nation will be with us for a long time to come. The pandemic has brought out the best of us. The renewed sense of community across the district has been truly moving.

I’ve been so proud of our staff – they’ve kept services going throughout and they’ve stepped up to respond to the new needs of residents and businesses. Working hand-in-hand with communities, our housing team continue to support those that are shielding and self-isolating. Our waste and recycling crews have kept a full service going throughout, and the Council has given out more than £18m in Government grants to East Cambs businesses. The I.T. and Planning Teams ensured we were one of the first Councils in the country to be up and running with online meetings.

And despite the pandemic, we’ve had some successes to celebrate. The Housing Team achieved national “Gold” recognition, in their pursuit of preventing homelessness. Residents will soon be moving into the first eight £100k homes to be built in Cambridgeshire, in Fordham. Brought forward by the Mayor, James Palmer, and developed by our own Emma Grima, the £100k homes project gives first time buyers the chance to purchase 100% freehold for £100k. New and refurbished affordable

homes have also been delivered at Haddenham CLT and at the ex-MoD site in Ely. The Council has fully met its £1m contribution to Ely Southern Bypass and work has begun on the new railway station at Soham. And we're working with our colleagues in the NHS to support the redevelopment of the Princess of Wales Hospital in Ely. This important project will see all existing services retained, as well as a new full Local Urgent Care Service, new diagnostic services, and additional day surgeries.

The NHS is doing a fantastic job with the vaccine roll out and on behalf of East Cambs residents, I extend our very grateful thanks to all NHS staff for their heroic efforts throughout the last year.

The financial fall out from COVID is, as yet, unknown and the Council's budget position in the next three to four years is uncertain. But we recognise the financial difficulties faced by many and we stick to our belief that raising Council Tax should be a last resort - we will not burden our community with a Council Tax increase in the middle of this pandemic. If the opposition Group does not support this tax freeze they should explain to our residents why - clearly, honestly and without spin. We do this because we can – and we will be one of a small handful of authorities to do so. It is a result of years of prudent budgeting, commercial endeavour and good old hard work. I pay huge tribute to Ian Smith and every single member of staff for their contribution to making this possible.

So we must also look forward and whilst we do so with a sense of optimism underpinned by the vaccination programme, we must acknowledge the uncertainty that lies ahead for communities, businesses and Government.

We've got the very real advantage of balanced budgets for the next two years which is not, under my Leadership, going to lead to complacency, but it's a strong base to work from and gives us time and the opportunity to take decisions now – some of which may be difficult – to ensure the impact is felt the most when our finances need it the most. So we prepare now. We've always been open and honest with our public – we put out a very clear set of promises in our manifesto and we are delivering on those promises. Residents wanted us to keep Council Tax and fees low and deliver great services, to be commercial for community benefit and that is exactly what we've done and continue to do. East Cambs Trading Company is a huge success story - it will have delivered over £2m in financial benefit to this Council by the end of this financial year.

The MTFs presented this evening includes indicative Council Tax increases of £5 per household for 2022/23 and beyond. But let me make myself absolutely clear - these increases will be a last resort – this Council will do everything it possibly can to delete them. We will act

now, looking at how we can reduce the deficits. But I'm making an unambiguous pledge – if I have to stand up at Full Council next year and recommend a Council Tax increase, it'll be because we've exhausted all other options.

Back to the here and now. A balanced budget for two years, a Council Tax freeze for the 8th consecutive year, an authority that's delivering. I commend this budget to Council and ask all members to support it."

Cllr Charlotte Cane joined the meeting at 9:04pm

On the invitation of the Chairman, the Opposition Leader then proposed and spoke on a previously-published Amendment, seconded by Cllr Mark Inskip, as follows:

"The Liberal Democrat budget amendment focusses on recovering from COVID. The pandemic has hit families and local businesses hard. Jobs are at risk, mental health is declining for many people, and teenagers and young adults have been particularly affected by the long periods of lockdown and worry about their future on top of the chronic lack of affordable local amenities. That's why our budget proposal centres on helping small firms at the Council's eSpace centres, help with their rents; offering advice on COVID safety to food serving establishments hoping to open or re-open; and on ring-fencing £40k within the Council's major projects fund to start a piece of work with partners on improving leisure and recreation across the District, with young people and the outdoors particularly in mind.

We've also identified efficiency savings in the Council budget to reduce the Conservatives' budget shortfall. Both parties' proposals provide balanced budgets in 2021/22 and 2022/23 but require substantial savings in 2023/24. By addressing efficiency savings early however, the Liberal Democrat proposal reduces the savings requirement in 2023/24 by over £400k.

Finally, the Conservatives propose to freeze Council Tax this coming year but then to increase it by the maximum possible amount every year for the lifetime of their financial plan. We agree with them that they have starved the Council of income for basic services for far too long but we have proposed instead a smaller increase of 1% in Council Tax this coming year and 2% the following year, waiting until April 2023 to increase the Council Tax by the 3.5% that the Conservatives propose from April 2022.

That's our budget amendment. I commend it to Members and I very much hope that it will achieve support."

During debate on the Amendment, a Member questioned the need for an allocation of £5k for COVID advice when Environmental Health Officers were

already providing that service. Several Members felt unable to support a rent reduction for eSpace tenants that, as far as they knew, had not been requested and did not take into account the support that they had already received. They also sought clarification as to the purpose of the £40k requirement from the major project reserve, questioning what it would do that wasn't already being done or could be done from other (possibly external) funding as well as the excellent work Parish Councils continually did for their local communities using CIL contributions and Parish Council precepts.

At the request of a Member, the meeting was briefly adjourned 9:12-9:13pm for Officers to confirm the arrival time of Cllr Cane and therefore establish whether she would be eligible to vote on the Agenda item. Having checked the records, the Democratic Services Manager informed Members that Cllr Cane had arrived at 9:04pm, part way through the Leader's speech, and expressed the view that, since she would have been present for the vast majority of the debate on the item, she would be able to make an informed decision on it. The Chairman stated her agreement with this view.

Speaking in support of the Amendment a Member expressed concern, after speaking to various businesses, that despite the support that had been received during the pandemic some businesses were facing a "cliff-edge" if the support was withdrawn prior to the economy fully reopening. She explained that the funding in the Amendment was in part to offer some breathing space for such businesses. She agreed with other Members that the advice provided to food businesses by the Officers had been well-received and the proposed extra funding was to ensure that it could continue to be widely available. Responding to the earlier query regarding the purpose of a £40k allocation from the major projects reserve, she stressed the importance of fresh air and exercise as restrictions eased and explained that the funding would review and address the provision of suitable facilities, especially for young people who had outgrown the existing facilities for young children.

Several Members spoke against the concept of a Council Tax rise following the challenges faced by residents during the previous year. Other Members highlighted that at County level the Conservative group had voted in favour of a Council Tax raise and that East Cambs residents would see a Council Tax rise for 2021/22 due to that. Some Members responded that County and District Councils had different roles and responsibilities to consider when setting their Council Tax elements and therefore should not be directly compared.

As seconder of the Amendment, Cllr Mark Inskip explained that the proposed £5k help towards food-related businesses was intended to enable a 50% reduction in the cost of the first 2 hours of advice in the Safer Food Better Business mentoring scheme. He reiterated the concept of investing in outdoor leisure and recreation facilities across the district for local residents, especially young people, and expressed concern regarding the plans for a crematorium on the former outdoor centre at Mepal instead of reopening it. He also highlighted that the cumulative Council Tax rise over two years would be lower in the Amendment than in the Motion.

As proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey responded to the Amendment by stating that the cost of the rent reduction proposal would be greater than the funds generated by the 1% Council Tax rise and confirmed that all eSpace tenants who received Small Business Rates Relief had received grant funding and none had legally been required to close due to COVID. She reiterated other Members' comments that Council staff were providing support to food premises and would continue to do so, and she reminded Members of various leisure projects in the pipeline across the district as well as the potential for external funding opportunities. She expressed concern at the proposed Council Tax rise for the coming year, and that the use of potential savings from staff turnover could in effect be a cut to the staff resource.

Cllr Austen sought and gained confirmation that she was eligible to vote, having heard all of the debate despite some technical issues.

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

FOR: (11) – Cllrs Cane, Charlesworth, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A. Whelan, C. Whelan, Wilson

AGAINST: (17) – Cllrs C. Ambrose Smith, D. Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovington, Brown, Edwards, Every, 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, some Members spoke against the concept of a Council Tax freeze in 2021/22 followed in 2022/23 by the largest increase allowed by law without a referendum, and expressed concern that the repeated policy of no Council Tax rise had left a budget hole for future years that was becoming hard to fill. They reiterated previously-discussed concerns regarding future economic problems due to both COVID and Brexit, and that consequently some of the assumptions within the budget could be at risk.

As seconder of the Motion, Cllr Josh Schumann drew Members' attention to the cost savings and service improvements achieved by bringing the Waste service in-house and the housing delivery success which had offered affordable housing to local residents whilst also generating income for the Council. He said he had been reassured to hear from the Leader that any future Council Tax rises would only be as a last resort and he was pleased to see that the budget continued to deliver against the high targets set in the Corporate Plan.

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, Brown, Edwards, Every, Huffer, Hunt, D. Schumann, J. Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco, Webber

AGAINST: (11) – Cllrs Cane, Charlesworth, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A. Whelan, C. Whelan, Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The Motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

a) That approval be given to:

- The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax Requirement as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- The draft revenue budget for 2021/22 and MTFs for 2022/23 to 2024/25 as set out in the revised Appendix 2(a) & (b) of the report;
- A Council Tax freeze in 2021/22;
- The Statement of Reserves as set out in revised Appendix 3 of the report;
- The 2021/22 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.

b) That approval be given to use the remaining Council Tax Hardship grant awarded by Government, but not totally allocated during 2020/21, in the manner detailed in paragraphs 11.7 to 11.10 of the report, this to benefit residents claiming Local Council Tax Reduction Support in 2021/22.

c) That the Finance Manager be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, to approve any Business Rate reliefs or other changes to Business Rates announced by Government in the national Budget on the 3rd March 2021, as detailed in paragraph 6.7 of the report.

57. CIL INFRASTRUCTURE LIST AMENDMENT

Council considered report V133, previously circulated, requesting the approval of the addition of the Gardiner Memorial Hall, Burwell, to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Infrastructure List.

The Infrastructure and Strategy Manager introduced the report and reminded Members that inclusion on the list did not commit the Council to funding projects.

Cllr Alan Sharp moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Cllr Lavinia Edwards, and clarified that any payments would need approval from the Finance & Assets Committee.

Several Members spoke in favour of the inclusion of the Gardiner Memorial Hall on the CIL Infrastructure List and highlighted the importance of the Hall for many groups and individuals both within Burwell and the surrounding villages.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the draft CIL Infrastructure List, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

58. COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURING

Council considered report V134, previously circulated and including a revised set of recommendations circulated after Agenda publication, regarding the restructuring of Council and its Committees.

Cllr David Brown, Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, proposed a Motion to revise the recommendations in the report as follows:

Members are requested to:

- (i) agree the revisions to the terms of reference as summarised in paragraph 4.2 and detailed in Appendix 1 to take effect from the Annual Council meeting;
- (ii) authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary and consequential amendments to the Constitution to implement the Council's resolution;
- (iii) authorise the Democratic Services Manager to consult with the existing Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider the implications of the new Audit Committee;
- (iv) agree to increase the membership of the following Committees, specifically:

Finance & Assets Committee	11 Members
Operational Services Committee	11 Members
Licensing Committee	11 Members

By way of background, Cllr Brown detailed the very lengthy meetings of the Finance & Assets Committee over the previous year together with the need for additional meetings in order to meet the heavy workload. The Motion therefore sought to establish a new Audit Committee to relieve the Finance & Assets Committee of the Audit functions. Regarding the proportionality figures, he confirmed that the Conservative Group would cede one seat on the Finance & Assets Hearing Sub-Committee and a second seat to be confirmed before the Annual Council meeting in May.

Cllr Lorna Dupré, Opposition Leader, then proposed the following Amendment and explained that the suggested new committee would separate out the financial and strategic planning roles to enable the Council to be well-focused on key priorities:

Members are requested to:

- (i) Amend - agree the revisions to the terms of reference as detailed in the revised Appendix 1a and 1b to take effect from the Annual Council meeting, specifically:
 - the establishment of a new Economic Development & Strategic Planning Committee with a membership of 7 members;
 - transfer responsibility for the operations of Leisure Services and the making of a final car parking order to Operational Services Committee;
 - extend the powers reserved fully to Council to include the Corporate Plan and Member Allowance Scheme.
- (ii) as per motion
- (iii) Amend - authorise the Democratic Services Manager to consult with the existing Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider the implications of the new Economic Development & Strategic Planning Committee.

Several Members expressed the importance of separating the audit function from the financial management function and commented that the need for this had also been raised externally, including by the trainer at a Members Seminar on 14th October 2019. The large and increasing workload for the Finance & Assets Committee was emphasised repeatedly. For some Members this reinforced the need for a separate Audit Committee, for others it highlighted the merit in separating the financial and audit aspects from the strategic planning aspects such as the SPDs that had previously featured towards the end of very long agendas. One Member commented that with so few committees the remit of each one became very broad.

In terms of strategic planning and economic development there was discussion around the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans and Market Town Plans with different viewpoints expressed as to whether or not their potential was being maximised.

The Leader reminded Members that the Council was a constituent member of the Combined Authority and as such the Council's Economic Development Team worked well with the Economic Development function at the Combined Authority. A Member responded that this was an example of a lack of ambition for East Cambs, whereas an Economic Development & Strategic Planning Committee would focus its attentions on how to build an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the District. Concern was raised that, without specific strategic planning, East Cambs risked becoming a dormitory region of Cambridge. Another Member stated that the Council could demonstrate great ambition with long term strategic projects such as the Ely bypass and Leisure Centre and the forthcoming Soham train station and theatre.

As the seconder of the Amendment, Cllr Simon Harries expressed disappointment that there was an apparent determination to avoid scrutiny whereas a properly constituted committee for strategic planning would ensure plans could be worked through in detail in a timely fashion. He emphasised that ambition was not sufficient without scrutinising ideas well to be sure of the best possible outcomes.

Summing up as proposer of the Motion, Cllr David Brown reminded Members that Market Towns Plans were currently under consideration, ambition had been the driver behind the Enterprise Zone at Lancaster Way, and he echoed the sentiments of others who had spoken against the Amendment.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was declared to be lost with 12 votes in favour and 16 votes against with no abstentions.

During subsequent debate on the Motion, a Member suggested that the purpose of an Audit Committee should be to hold the Council to account and therefore a consultation about how the committee could properly operate would be more appropriate. Given that the Motion also included revisions to Terms of Reference and changes to Committee sizes it had become confusing and the opportunity for cross-party revision had been missed. The Member also referred to other Councils in which there was no majority representation on the Audit Committee and/or the Chairman was not drawn from the Administration in order to ensure proper scrutiny. By comparison the Member noted the proposed Committee size of only five Members with a majority for the Administration and no suggestion that the Chairman would not be drawn from that majority.

Another Member agreed that an alternative solution would be a cross-party investigation to address the flaws in the current Committee structure and determine a better proposal that could achieve more widespread support.

There was the suggestion that an increase in the memberships of the Finance & Assets, Operational Services, and Licensing Committees seemed unnecessary, but conversely the Audit Committee was unduly small and resulted in an imbalance in the Committee sizes.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Josh Schumann reiterated that its purpose was to address the overwhelming amount of business within the Finance & Assets Committee.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be carried with 16 votes in favour and 12 votes against with no abstentions.

It was resolved:

- That the revisions to the terms of reference as summarised in paragraph 4.2 and detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be approved to take effect from the Annual Council meeting;
- That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary and consequential amendments to the Constitution to implement the Council's resolution;
- That the Democratic Services Manager be authorised to consult with the existing Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider the implications of the new Audit Committee;
- That the memberships of the Finance & Assets Committee, Operational Services Committee, and Licensing Committee each be increased to 11 Members.

59. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Council considered report V135, previously circulated, presenting the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 as required under the Localism Act 2011.

The HR Manager outlined the contents of the report updating the Council's pay policy for the 2021/22 financial year. She informed Members that since the writing of the report HM Treasury had published a direction disapplying the legislation regarding the exit payments cap which had come into force in November 2020. A revised recommendation had therefore been circulated. In response to a Member's question, she confirmed that the report was purely a legal reporting requirement rather than a discussion document about levels of pay.

It was resolved:

That the 2021/22 Pay Policy Statement set out in Appendix 1 of the report be approved and adopted, subject to the deletion of paragraphs 10.4 and 10.5 to reflect the changed legislative position.

60. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORTS

The Council considered the updates, previously circulated, from Constituent Council Representatives on the Combined Authority for the Audit and Governance Committee meetings held on 2 October 2020, 27 November 2020 and 29 January 2021; the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 26 October 2020, 23 November 2020, 14 December 2020 and 25 January 2021; and the Combined Authority Board meetings held on 25 November 2020 and 27 January 2021.

A Member asked the Council Leader, as the Council representative on the Combined Authority Board, if it was known when the £45m would be released that the Government was holding from the Combined Authority to do with affordable housing, and asked for clarification regarding the closing date of the housing programme. Cllr Bailey agreed with the Member that the closing date was a point of contention. She explained that when the Combined Authority was established there was a 5 year housing target. Clearly it could not deliver housing before it was in existence and therefore had worked to a 2022 closing date. MHCLG on behalf of Government had agreed to forward a year's worth of funding towards the programme at the start, but appeared to have backdated it as Year 1 funding. It was therefore unclear whether the programme ended in March 2021 or March 2022 but the Combined Authority, including Cambridge City Council, had been working to a March 2022 date and were expecting to hear the final outcome shortly.

It was resolved:

That the contents of the reports be noted.

61. ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY – ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANTS

The Council considered report V136, previously circulated, detailing the actions taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency.

It was resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11:19pm

Chairman.....

Date.....