



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting of
East Cambridgeshire District Council held at
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE on
Thursday 14th July 2022 at 6:15pm

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 (Chairman)
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Paola Trimarco
Councillor Lis Every	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Mark Goldsack	Councillor Gareth Wilson
Councillor Simon Harries	

1 member of the public was in attendance

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, tributes were given, 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.

Cllr Anna Bailey, Leader of the Council: *"First elected in 1973 for Ely Urban District Council as an Independent Conservative and still serving on the City of Ely Council up until his death, Mike's commitment to our local community is long obvious and enduring. Mike served as Mayor to the City of Ely twice and as Chairman of this Council in the 1980s as well as serving on multiple Committees and Chairing many.*

Always a man with a plan and the ability to tell stories, articulate visions and inspire passion in others, Mike was always able to back up what he was saying with common sense and sound reasoning, often with hugely insightful information from history. Always a champion of change and looking forward, Mike was motivated about doing the right thing for the next generation. Mike never let politics get in the way of making the right decision; Mike was first and foremost a representative of the people, even when it might have been at considerable personal cost to himself. Mike was my partner in crime on free car parking in our town and city centres.

Mike was a historian, a confidant, an advisor, an inspirer of others, a friend to this Council and a friend of us all. Universally liked and respected Mike truly transcended politics – as long as it suited him! The hugely well attended celebration of Mike's life at Ely Cathedral was an incredibly moving and fitting tribute.

Mike is greatly missed, and he leaves a Mike-shaped hole in local life. But his mark on Ely and the wider area is permanent. We thank him very much for his long and energetic service to our community."

Cllr Lis Every: *"I had known Mike for over 40 years, as a teacher, actor, writer, director, councillor, historian, photographer and colleague. Mayor of Ely 3 times, he brought a humility to the role as first citizen, spending hours of time with our residents supporting their own causes and bringing recognition for them and their organisations.*

He was on the City Council for 50 years, and a founder member of the Museum. He was our 'go to person' on anything to do with Ely and was a consummate statesman: wise, fair, professional, knowledgeable - but with a wicked sense of humour - and so supportive of our local people. His political activities ensured free parking in our City of Ely; he was instrumental in bringing about the Country Park and the Ely by-pass into Ely. He supported our diverse local community and was a community champion to large numbers of citizens.

We will never see the like of him again and the number of people at his Thanksgiving was testament to his popularity and standing in the area. He stood as a councillor for Ely, and Ely and East Cambridgeshire will miss him."

Cllr Lorna Dupré, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group: *"It's hard to imagine someone more completely Ely than Mike Rouse. Born and educated in Ely, Mike was heavily involved in the life of the City in every way. Not just a councillor on the City of Ely Council where he served for 50 years, the District Council and the County Council, Mike was also a keen participant in amateur dramatics, a recognised local photographer and chronicler of the local history of our area in a number of books. One of Ely's most recognised figures, he will be greatly missed by all who knew him."*

Cllr Mark Goldsack: *"I'm going to come at this from a slightly different angle, and a personal one, if I can. I was unfortunate enough to be ill and unable to attend his service, so these are my thoughts on Mike.*

I have five real levels of involvement with Mike and he added value to my life, my development, my upbringing, my public and professional life.

Number one was education: From '75-'80 I was a pupil at Soham Village College and on many occasions I was in a classroom with one Mr Rouse at the front of it. He was unique, humorous, detailed and intently fun all the while. A very good man.

Private life: I have filled minor roles on stage at Soham College Players and Campaign Amateur Theatre. I never saw a better actor or a better director than Mike Rouse.

Professional life: On two occasions I asked Mike if he would be a reference for me. He never copied me on the references that he wrote. Both times I received a job offer.

Public life: I regularly spoke to him regards politics and County and have found no deeper passion for Ely, Soham, and East Cambridgeshire than those held by Mike and they are missed already.

Family life: When my mother died prematurely 20 years ago I put together a small set of memoirs - captured anecdotes from what my mum had been involved with - and I wanted to produce them as a gift for her grandchildren to remember her by. But I wasn't the best at English even though Mike was my teacher so I contacted Mike and I said "would you run your eye over them?" and he did run his eye over them, and I got them back – red lines all over them, corrected spellings all over them. What he actually said was "Love the stories, could do better, you obviously never listened in my lessons." So that's always been with me.

So, I will miss Mike. I am ever so grateful for the multi-dimensional relationship I shared with Mike, not at a deep level, and I would just say: rest well sir."

19. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Graham James, a resident of Little Thetford, asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

"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.”

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey, responded as follows:

“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 abus 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."

20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Charlotte Cane, Matthew Downey, Lavinia Edwards, Julia Huffer, Amy Starkey, Lisa Stubbs, John Trapp, Alison Whelan and Christine Whelan.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

22. MINUTES – 19 MAY 2022

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman congratulated Lynne Smart, PA to the Chief Executive and the Chairman, on reaching 25 years of service to the Council. She had joined the Council in May 1997 as a typist and word processor operator, was promoted to team leader in February 2001, became a PA later that same year and had been in her current role since June 2010. 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.

24. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

25. MOTIONS

a) Climate Change

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Dupré and seconded by Cllr Inskip:

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.

Speaking as proposer of the Motion, Cllr Dupré asked that the Council join the 193 other local authorities and the MPs and peers that had formally given their support to the Nature and Climate Declaration and the Climate and Ecology Bill. Together they addressed the most significant issues of the current time and the risks of delayed action on these issues would be severe. The cross-party Declaration was launched in Parliament in May 2022. It called on the Government to fulfil the UK's fair share of emissions reductions to ensure that the average global temperature increase would not exceed 1.5°C, to halt and reverse biodiversity decline by 2030, and to deliver a more ambitious and integrated environmental protection and decarbonisation plan. The Climate and Ecology Bill had been written by scientists, experts and campaigners, and had secured the support of 150 parliamentarians representing all of the major political parties. It would place particular climate-related duties on the Secretary of State and various committees, as well as requiring the creation of a Climate and Nature Strategy and an independent representative Climate and Nature Assembly to consider measures for inclusion in the Strategy. The Council had declared a Climate Emergency and agreed actions to reduce its carbon

footprint, as had many other councils, but local government was constrained by national policies that prevented action as well as by lack of capacity and shortage of funding. Both the Declaration and the Bill sought to move the Government towards clear leadership, and she urged the Council to publicly endorse them.

Several Members expressed their support for action regarding climate change and biodiversity issues, and highlighted actions that the Council and the UK Government were already undertaking and planning to undertake, but spoke against approval of the Motion. Opinions expressed included concerns that:

- Extinction Rebellion had been involved in the development of the Bill;
- the specified targets were unrealistically ambitious, which could undermine buy-in from the public and from businesses;
- a Citizen's Assembly would be ineffective and/or could circumnavigate the proper parliamentary process;
- re-wetting of the Fens was included in the Bill and would not be in the interests of East Cambs residents;
- increasing the energy bills for households using gas central heating was included in the Bill;
- details were missing from the Bill to explain some of its contents;
- the Bill was unnecessary in light of the Government's existing plans.

A Member emphasised that climate change was first and foremost the responsibility of large enterprises since individuals lived in the context of them. They stated that their understanding of Citizens Assemblies was that, rather than reducing the transparency of decision-making, experience in the Republic of Ireland indicated that they highlighted key points for legislators to discuss. In addition, although Extinction Rebellion were disruptive, future generations may consider them to have been heroes, and the overall Motion should be considered in the spirit in which it was proposed.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Inskip expressed disappointment that those opposed to the Motion had, in his view, misrepresented the contents of the Bill that had been broadly supported by politicians, scientists and organisations. The latest evidence was clear that decisive action was needed for rapid and large-scale change to combat climate change and biodiversity reduction. The decisions of policy- and law-makers on this significant issue would determine the legacy for future generations. In October 2019, the Council had declared a Climate Emergency and committed to an annual Environment Plan that included stark content. The Climate and Ecology Bill was the only legislation before the UK Parliament that would address the natural emergency and it was rooted in scientific evidence. It was a measured Bill, taking account of international commitments, and it both recognised issues and offered support. It was supported by 120 MPs, 31 peers, 193 Councils, and many expert scientists and organisations. He considered that it would be a shame for the Council not to follow through on its commitment to tackle the climate emergency.

The proposer of the Motion, Cllr Dupré, responded to several of the concerns raised, stating that there were excellent local examples of re-wetting fenland, and a proposal for re-wetting of the Fens did not imply widescale flooding of East Cambs. Regarding increasing energy bills, the dependence on fossil fuels forced consumers to accept large price increases and retrofitting improved insulation would reduce the amount of energy needed. A purpose of the Motion was to highlight that the Government was not prepared for the huge scale of the task, and therefore could not protect consumers from pricing fluctuations in fossil fuels. Local authorities were unable to take the actions that they wanted to due to the lack of sufficient action from the UK Government. She expressed disappointment that the Conservative group had opposed the Motion and that, in her opinion, this reflected a more widespread lack of aspiration within the party to tackle the environmental issues and need for net zero.

Following a request from the proposer, a recorded vote was taken on the Motion, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: (6) – Cllrs Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trimarco, Wilson

AGAINST: (12) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Bailey, Bovingdon, Brown, Every, Goldsack, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Webber

ABSTENTIONS: (1) – Cllr Sue Austen

The Motion was declared to be lost.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Questions were received and responses given as follows:

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 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."

7:22pm Cllr Goldsack temporarily left the meeting.

27. CORPORATE PLAN 2021-2023 (UPDATED)

Council considered a report (X32, previously circulated) containing the updated Corporate Plan 2021-2023.

The Chief Executive introduced the report and explained that it included the priorities for 2022/23 and detailed the progress made during the previous 12 months.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Bailey, moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr J Schumann.

The proposer spoke about the promises that had been made at election time and had been delivered since then. She highlighted that Council Tax had been frozen for nine consecutive years, and that Bus Service Proposals and a Cycling and Walking Strategy had been delivered to the Combined Authority as part of the Council's championing of alternative travel.

7:24pm Cllr Goldsack returned to the meeting.

Cllr Bailey stated that free car parking had been maintained in the District's car parks and the Police would report to the October Council meeting about the progress of their on-street parking enforcement pilot. She had recently spoken at a Homes England event, which was the second national event at which the Council's policy on community-led development had been lauded. Support for CLTs would continue and their trustees were thanked for their time and expertise. The £100k Homes policy would continue to deliver in Ely and in Kennett as well as being encouraged elsewhere in the District. Apologies were given for the recent disruption to the Waste Service and a thorough review was underway to ensure that the problems did not reoccur. The Environment Action Plan included 20 new pledges, including the installation of 24 electric vehicle charging points, and £1.75m had been identified for home energy improvements. CIL money was being used to help deliver new health and community facilities in the District and progress continued on proposals for a new crematorium protecting the on-site biodiversity. A £2m Growth and Infrastructure Fund had been launched to support communities in their delivery of capital projects, the applications for which needed to be submitted by 5pm on Friday 7th October using the forms available from the Grants page of the Council's website. Work with the Combined Authority would continue in the areas of skills and education, with a focus on the skills employment hub and adult education. The Leader was proud of the Council's record of delivery and

urged all Members to recognise the objectives of the Corporate Plan and to support it.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group expressed a lack of confidence in the completeness of the Corporate Plan since there had previously been no mention of the Mepal Crematorium plans in earlier Corporate Plans for a period of 18 months during which the Council was spending money on the project. She challenged the assertion of excellent service delivery, citing the recent and ongoing issues regarding Waste collection, and gave the opinion that the transport policy was contradictory since it supported the dualling of the A10 between Ely and Cambridge yet opposed measures to address congestion in Cambridge. She also had concerns that the problems of the A10 BP roundabout at Ely would be repeated at the Littleport A10 roundabout since a recent cycle route suggestion had not included a safe crossing point there. Homes for social rent were needed but did not feature, and the approach to CLTs and £100k Homes was divisive. She also stated that the Liberal Democrat group would continue to push for >30% affordable housing on the former Ely MOD site.

Two Members spoke in support of the Corporate Plan and highlighted the enhanced input to economic development, the library-based business hub in Ely and plans to replicate it in Soham and Littleport, further education provision, and the overall positive and far-ranging ambition of the Plan.

In response to a comment made during the debate, a Member raised a Point of Order requesting that the Chief Executive confirm that Officers supported all Members regardless of political affiliation. The Chief Executive confirmed this to be the case.

Cllr J Schumann, as seconder of the Motion, stated his support for the Corporate Plan which was transparent and had set out the Council's priorities and plans to achieve them. No alternative Corporate Plan had been proposed by the opposition. He also commented that although the Waste Service had faced recent challenges, it remained an excellent service. He considered the Corporate Plan to be ambitious, bold, and positive.

The proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey, responded to various points raised during the debate:

- The crematorium project had previously not been included in the Corporate Plan due to its commercially-sensitive nature.
- The recent issues with the Waste collection service had not been acceptable, but she reminded Members of the extenuating circumstances and the similar issues faced by neighbouring Councils. She reiterated that, overall, the Council's services were high-performing and of very good quality.
- Congestion charging was opposed due to its greater effect on poorer members of society, but seeking solutions to address congestion was supported. Rather than penalising car use, she considered it better to

deliver bus or rail improvements and active travel solutions to encourage less car use.

- The need for a safe crossing of the A10 at the BP roundabout was recognised and had been a firm commitment of the previous Combined Authority Mayor.
- She disagreed that CLTs were divisive and as an example stated that more than half of the adult population of Kennett were members of the Kennett CLT.
- Owners of £100k Homes had the benefit of low mortgages, and >30% affordable housing on the former MOD site could not be delivered until after planning permissions had been secured.

Upon being put to the vote, 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.

28. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Council considered report X33, previously circulated, detailing a recommendation from the Finance & Assets Committee as follows:

1. Finance & Assets Committee – 23 June 2022

Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed that the Council approve the report on the Council's Treasury Operations during 2021/22, including the Prudential and Treasury Indicators. He thanked and congratulated the finance team for the solid performance in treasury management. The Vice-Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Bovingdon, seconded the Motion.

7:46pm Cllr Trimarco temporarily left the meeting.

A Member stated that they had commented in the 23rd June Finance & Assets Committee meeting that section 6 of the treasury report appeared to use out-of-date figures and was overly-optimistic. They questioned why revisions had not been made, given that the economic situation had further deteriorated. Nonetheless, they commended the professionally prepared and well-written report.

The Finance Manager explained that the report contained the situation at 31st March 2022. During the course of the year further treasury management reports would update the information to reflect the situation at the time of writing.

The seconder stated his support for the proposal. The proposer reinforced the Finance Manager's comments.

7:48pm Cllr Trimarco returned to the meeting.

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.

29. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – BURROUGH GREEN / WESTLEY WATERLESS PARISH BOUNDARY

Council considered a report (X34, previously circulated) considering a change to the parish boundary between the parishes of Burrough Green and Westley Waterless via a Community Governance Review.

The Democratic Services Officer (Policy and Systems) introduced the report and explained that the Stage 1 consultation had been completed. No objections had been received to the proposal to bring all dwellings on the north side of Westley Waterless Main Street into the Westley Waterless parish. The report therefore recommended progression to Stage 2 of the consultation process.

Cllr Sharp moved the recommendation in the report, seconded by Cllr D Schumann, and commented on his personal experience of the boundary in question since Burrough Green was part of his District Ward and both Burrough Green and Westley Waterless were within his County Division.

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 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.

iii) That the final recommendations on the Community Governance Review be brought back to Council at its 20 October 2022 meeting.

**30. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY
UPDATE REPORT**

The Council considered the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee (13/6/22) and the Combined Authority Board (20/5/22, 8/6/22, 27/6/22). The Chairman stated that the report from the Audit & Governance Committee (30/06/22) would be brought to the next meeting.

There were no comments or questions.

It was unanimously resolved:

That the reports from the Constituent Council representatives on the Combined Authority be noted.

The meeting concluded at 7:53pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....