



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the remote Meeting of East Cambridgeshire
District Council held on Thursday 22 October 2020 at 6.00pm

P R E S E N T

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	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

32. **FORMER COUNCILLORS GRAHAM STEWARD AND JOHN WILLSON**

Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting, a minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect following the recent deaths of former District Councillor Graham Steward, Labour Member for Sutton from 1991-2003 and former District Councillor John Willson, Independent Member for Ely West from 1991-1995.

Councillor Dupré gave the following tribute to former Councillor Graham Steward from former Councillor Dil Owen:

'Graham Steward passed away on Saturday 12 September.

He is sadly missed by his many friends and colleagues, and his family - wife Ann, children Jo, Will, Kate, and grandson Toby.

Graham retired early from his role as an advisory headteacher in Inner London in 1987 and moved to Sutton where he enjoyed cattle droving, fishing, gardening, and shooting rabbits and pigeons for his many farmhouse recipes.

Graham joined the Sutton and District Labour Party in the early 90's and became an enthusiastic campaigner, collecting petitions and organising numerous events, often playing his guitar on the streets and markets in the constituency and singing amusing and protest songs that he had honed during his years as a leading member of the Woodcraft Folk.

He successfully contested the District Council seat for Sutton and represented the villages of Sutton and Mepal for almost two terms before retiring in 2001. He was instrumental in forming the first ever formal political grouping on the Council.

His passion for community was energetic and committed, helping many disadvantaged groups and individuals. He was Chair of Mepal Outdoor Centre trustees for many years and was a huge advocate for the youth service and its many clubs as well as instigating a consultation and reporting back to his constituents at nearly every Mepal and Sutton Parish Council meeting.

The community can thank Graham for the establishment of Sutton's Feast Week and subsequently its many successful activities. He was its first Chair and instigator of the Feast in 1999, and all children were in receipt of an etched Millennium glass and candle. It was formally inaugurated in the village on New Year's Eve 1999 with a parade, bonfire, and fireworks. It has, for 20 years, been a great success and village unifier—a wonderful legacy to Sutton.

Graham's love of folk music saw him, along with his wife Ann, form the Red Rose folk group, playing twice a month in both the Chequers in Sutton and the Three Pickerels in Mepal. Many artistes and amateurs attended these sessions which lasted for years and raised thousands of pounds for local charities.

Graham's musical talents took him to many old people's homes, and he entertained groups of learning-disabled children, adults, and those with mental health issues.

A big supporter of the pub as a community hub, he also started folk sessions in many pubs around East and South Cambridgeshire before becoming a founder member of the successful folk and ceilidh band Eel Pie along with his wife Ann, Ray Dron, and the sadly also recently-deceased members John Crowe and Terry Stoodley.

Another of his lifelong passions was tending his extensive garden and growing vegetables.

He died peacefully in his sleep the day after his 83rd birthday, having been cared for at home by his family.

His funeral took place last month but there will be a wider celebration of his life at a time to be determined after Coronavirus restrictions can be safely lifted.

Any donations in Graham's memory can be sent in aid of Sutton's Priors Field Surgery Patient Participation Group Kitchen Garden and Sensory Garden. This village project encapsulates so many of Graham's interests, passions and

values. Based at the allotment site in Sutton, it brings local people together to share the joys of community and gardening.'

The Chairman gave a tribute to former Councillor John Willson, who had been a prominent Ely citizen, being manager of the former city centre Tesco store and Mayor of Ely, as well as giving stalwart service as a District Councillor.

33. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Questions were received from Jethro Gauld, Margherita Cesca Nelder-Haynes and Susan Bussell and read out at the meeting. The questions and responses given by the Leader of the Council, are detailed below:

Question 1

The following question was received from Jethro Gauld and read out at the meeting on his behalf:

"Declaring a climate emergency last year was an important step for ECDC. Unfortunately, local councils across the UK may unwittingly be contributing to worsening the climate crisis by investing in fossil fuels via local authority pension funds and other investments. Fossil Free UK estimate that UK local authority pension funds currently invest £14bn in funds linked to coal, oil and gas. This is obviously incompatible with solving the climate crisis.

Will the council join other local authorities and large institutions such as The University of Cambridge in making a public statement on the current financial exposure of ECDC to fossil fuels and commit to:

1. Immediately freeze any new investment in publicly-traded fossil fuel companies;
2. Divest from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds within 5 years.

As public bodies, local councils have a responsibility to work for the public good; publicly divesting from fossil fuels sends a clear message to the markets that we need to leave them in the ground."

Question 2

The following question was received from Margherita Cesca Nelder-Haynes and read out at the meeting on her behalf by Susan Bussell:

Electric vehicle charging points in East Cambridgeshire District On behalf of East Cambs CAN, Climate Action Network

The transport secretary has said, "It is vital that electric vehicle drivers feel confident about the availability of charge points near their homes and that charging an electric car is seen as easy as plugging in a smart phone."

Although car sales are down, sales of electric vehicles are surging. Demand for charging points is undoubtedly growing in the district. As part of the Government's £1.5 billion Road to Zero strategy, funding is now available to local authorities for the on street residential charge point scheme. Is the district council taking this opportunity and applying for funds under this scheme?

The district council has recognised the importance of electric charging points in their environment and climate action plan. But will you deliver on this? New residential developments are being constructed without EV charging points on site. Will the Council commit to stop this practise and introduce a new normal as part of their plans to reduce emissions to comply with the Climate Change Act?

Question 3

The following question was received from and read out at the meeting by Susan Bussell:

Questions to ask at Council meeting on behalf of Eastcamb's CAN Energy efficiency of homes in the district

The 2015 Report by the Building Research Establishment - Dwelling Level Housing Stock Modelling and Database -prepared for East Cambridgeshire District Council on housing stock highlighted that the average Energy Efficiency ratings for all private sector dwellings in East Cambridgeshire is 52 falling within band E, which is worse than the average for both England (55) and East of England (55). For owner-occupied housing stock in East Cambridgeshire, the figure is 53 and for the private rented sector it is 50.

This lower energy efficiency results in:-

- higher carbon emissions contributing to climate change and;
- increased fuel poverty amongst low-income families and poorer health.

The highest concentrations of fuel poverty and “excess cold”, in the private sector, were found in the wards of Dullingham Villages, The Swaffhams and Stretham.

1. What has the Council done to reduce carbon emissions from domestic properties and reduce fuel poverty across the whole of the District?
2. Is the Council going to take advantage of the Green Homes Grant – Local Authority Delivery, from Central Government, in order to make homes in the district more energy efficient, reduce fuel poverty amongst low-income families and decrease carbon emissions? I refer councillors to a very helpful and informative recent report titled Hotnumbers prepared on behalf of Carbon Neutral Cambridge. This report provides an overview of home energy upgrade opportunities in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough combined Authority in order to accelerate the rate of improvement and help optimise the use of the Green Homes Grant scheme in our area. (Report circulated to all Councillors and available on Council website)

3. Lastly how is the Council enforcing the regulations concerning the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for private rented properties, across the district, since it became a legal requirement for all, non-exempt, private rented properties to be at least an E rating since April 2020? It is noted that the BRE Report of 2015 stated that just under 25%, in East Cambridgeshire, were estimated to have an EPC rating of below an E rating.

Responses from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

Question 1

The Council does not directly invest in any companies involved in fossil fuels.

However, the Council, does clearly have funds in the Cambridgeshire Pensions Fund, which is managed by Cambridgeshire County Council. We have no control therefore on where this money is invested.

Further, the majority of the Council's cash holdings are invested in Money Market Funds (this in line with the Treasury Management Strategy) where again we have no control where the money is ultimately invested.

Question 2

The Council has engaged two companies to carry out a feasibility study regarding the suitability of installing rapid EV charging points in Council owned car parks. One of the companies is also investigating the feasibility of installing 7Kw to allow overnight charging for residents. This is being done as part of the Government's Road to Zero Strategy.

The Council is also working with CPCA and other local Councils to produce a Combined Authority area wide EV Strategy to address the growing demand for electric vehicles and associated infrastructure across the area.

Planning officers encourage the inclusion of EV charging points in new development and in the Fordham Neighbourhood Plan there is a specific policy which allows the planning team to request EV charge points for developments in Fordham.

The Council is currently consulting on its draft Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document which encourages the provision of electric charging infrastructure.

Question 3

The Council provides a Home Energy Conservation (HECA) Act 1995 return every 2 years, the last online submission was provided in 2018. This outlines action taken by the Council to:

- Reduce carbon emissions from domestic properties
- Reduce fuel poverty across the whole district and is outlined below;

- Target hard To Treat (HTT) homes that might be eligible for Energy Company Obligation (ECO funding)
- Organise and advertise advice surgeries (drop in sessions) at various locations around the district.

To ensure households are accessing the best energy deals, targeted promotion of energy options to households will be carried out by working in partnership with other groups and organisations, maximising engagement through established mechanisms and maintaining dialogue with external groups.

Promotion and support in the provision of basic energy efficiency measures will be achieved by utilising a wide range of mechanisms, including, for example, the Council's website, literature, social media, articles in relevant publications, newsletters, attendance at relevant events plus use of frontline staff working within the community as well as through face to face contact with residents.

Promoting energy efficiency measures is proposed for inclusion in strategic planning policy documents and updated as national policy changes. And we work in partnership with Health Agencies to target vulnerable groups living in cold homes.

We will provide information and links via our website on the most up to date information on FITs and RHI, energy efficiency planning guidance, and Action on Energy (Cambridgeshire wide District Council partnership). We continue to work towards seeking external funding sources.

The Council will be working with neighbouring authorities, through the Action on Energy Partnership on a bid submission for the next round of the Local Authority Delivery Grant. The report prepared on behalf of Carbon Neutral Cambridge provides some very useful data and information to assist with the bid.

The enforcement of Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard lies with Cambridgeshire County Council. The County Council has drawn up a delegated authority agreement for consideration by the Council. If agreed, this will then come under the remit of this Council's Environmental Health Domestic team. The role can be combined as part of the standard inspection routine, and to combine both the MEES and HHSRS process to enforce heating standards.

When a routine inspection is undertaken by officers within the Environmental Health department they check the EPC rating of the property. They also assess the property under the 'excess cold' hazard, under the Health and Housing Safety Rating System. Even if the property is above the required EPC rating, officers may find that works need to be carried out by the landlord to improve the insulation of the property and enforcement action may be required. If the EPC is found to be below the required legal rating, this will be referred to the enforcing agency which is currently Trading Standards.

The Council housing team organises Landlord Forums, where advice, support and guidance is provided to landlords.

34. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of Interests were made by Councillor Charlotte Cane as follows:

Agenda Item 12: Exempt Minutes 31 July 2020 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) - will leave the meeting at this point and not return.

Agenda Items 6 & 8: Petitions & Questions from Members – whilst these items have matters relating to Mepal Outdoor Centre, will remain for these items as there will be no discussion or decisions on the issue.

36. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 July 2020 and Extraordinary Council meeting held on 31 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 23, page 3, second paragraph, final sentence to read:

‘.....conscientious and committed Chief Executive to East Cambridgeshire.’

Minute 27, Corporate Plan – record that Councillor Cane left the meeting for the duration of this item.

37. **CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruption to individual organisations, partnerships and key strategic workstreams nationally, regionally and locally. The pandemic has caused rapid, and in some cases, radical systems change, both positive and negative.

At present East Cambridgeshire is one of the Districts in the country to have the fewest number of COVID-19 positive cases. However, as you all know from this unpredictable virus this can change rapidly and therefore we continue to manage and monitor the situation daily. The Council has now moved from the response to the recovery stage of the epidemic working through an internal officer recovery group led by Jo Brooks, our Operations Director, which has been set up to maintain key

services, continue to help those in need, support our businesses and keep everyone informed.

This group is also part of the wider Local Resilience Forum which has convened a county wide Recovery Co-ordination group. Thus the council works collaboratively with a multitude of organisations and sub-groups which cover different areas of work – all working towards a common goal. We have worked with businesses, community groups, Public health, other statutory bodies and other authorities from parish councils through to central government to help drive an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable recovery for East Cambridgeshire. In addition, a COVID-19 Member Working Party was set up to initially feed into the wider district recovery plan working through a workstream programme alongside and supported by officers. Most of the recommendation from the group are now in place.

A Cambridge and Peterborough Local Outbreak Plan is in place which describes what measures are being adopted to help control and contain Coronavirus and we have written an East Cambs District local outbreak response plan which hopefully we will not need to put into action.

We can be very proud of our officers who have worked extremely hard to support our District both at business and resident level. It is also testament to our residents who are helping to keep the virus to a minimum by following the rules and guidance.

GREEN FLAG AWARD

I am sure you are aware that for several years, two of our green parks and open spaces in Ely, the Country Park and Jubilee gardens have been awarded the Green Flag Award and I am delighted to confirm that the team who manage these have been successful again this year.

Many congratulations to the team who manage the spaces and work all year around to gain this prestigious accreditation. Each site is judged on its own merits and suitability to the community it serves by volunteer judges and are deemed to be a welcoming place, well maintained, clean, healthy, safe and secure. Each site also has to be sustainable, supporting conservation and heritage, marketed and managed well having demonstrated community involvement.

Huge credit to the team and our thanks for achieving this for our residents and visitors.

BUS SERVICES REVIEW MEMBER SEMINAR

Please can I remind all Members of the Bus Services Review Member Seminar taking place on Thursday 29 October 2020 commencing at 6pm.

38. **PETITIONS**

Council received a petition requesting that the Mepal Outdoor Centre remain as a Leisure Centre. The Petition had the title 'Save Mepal Outdoor Centre - Potential for the Future' and stated that it was part of an ongoing community campaign to keep the Centre as a valuable resource for the future health and wellbeing of both the local environment and community.

The Petition Organisers, Colin Stevens and Mercedes Rollason thanked the Council for the opportunity to formally present the petition and spoke in support of the petition, stating that it demonstrated the level of community support for the retention of the Mepal site as a leisure facility. The petition not only included signatures from local people but those in the wider communities abutting the edge of the District. The petition organisers had been told many stories about the facility, but the petition was not just about nostalgia, and there was a real local expectation that the facility would be returned to leisure uses. The petition organisers had been humbled to experience the level of community feeling for the facility. The development of a crematorium would represent a major change of use for the site and it was vital that the voice of the community in favour of leisure usage should be heard. Therefore, it was requested that this be taken into consideration as part of any decision-making by the Council and Finance and Assets Committee and any Planning process.

The Petition Organisers then responded to questions from Members as follows:

In response to a question, the petition organisers expressed the view that they believed that there was enough public interest for a full public consultation exercise.

In response to a question about alternative uses for the site, the petition organisers stated that whilst it was not their role to suggest these, some suggestions had been made to them as part of the gathering of signatures.

A Member followed this up by asking how many concrete expressions of interest had been made. The petition organisers stated that this had not been widely explored, but people wanted a constructive conversation regarding leisure usage.

With regard to questions on sustainable uses for the site, the petition organisers stated that these needed to be related to the long-term future of the site, bearing in mind the projected local population growth and the need to promote the health and well-being of the local community. The 'Save Mepal Outdoor Centre' campaign acknowledged that the Centre could not return to what it had been and needed to reflect the needs of the modern changing population. The demographic was changing, therefore something new needed to be created, rather than the facility being taken away.

A Member referred to the previous detailed discussions and process to find a way forward with regard to leisure usage via the Working Party

which had involved one of the local Sutton Members. Despite this extensive process, the selected operator had withdrawn.

A Member referred to the possibility of getting together groups of voluntary or community organisations to operate individual 'spheres' of leisure activities on the site. The petition organisers expressed the view that adaptable and imaginative solutions were required, as it appeared that the site was too large a venture for a single operator.

The Chairman and Leader of the Council thanked Colin Stevens and Mercedes Rollason for their attendance and presentation of the Petition to the Council.

The Leader of the Council then responded to the Petition as follows:

I want to thank residents for bringing forward this petition, and of course I take note that 468 local people plus a further 183 unidentified local people have signed it. I share with you a strong desire to ensure a sustainable future for the Mepal site. First and foremost it has to be understood that the site is a key biodiversity asset in our District. The site is both beautiful and ecologically important, having matured since the outdoor centre ceased to trade – nature has taken over and wildlife has flourished.

I would like people to understand, therefore, that whatever the future for the site, that future has to protect and respect the wildlife and biodiversity that exists there. You could say that the site is *constrained* by the ecological assets, but I would prefer people to think of this positively as the wonderful asset that it is. And in line with the commitments made in our Environment and Climate Change Strategy, which received unanimous cross party support, we must go further than this - we must not only protect the natural assets but we must work to enhance them. I would also like to remind members of the opposition and our residents that we recently adopted the Natural Environment Supplementary Planning Document which now forms a material part of our planning policy - again this received unanimous cross party support - any development of the site will have to be instructed by what it says.

The Council worked incredibly hard, in good faith, to try to secure continued use of the site for outdoor pursuits. Despite our considerable cross party efforts it just wasn't possible to secure a sustainable community re-use of the site by a third party – organisations just couldn't find a way to make it financially viable. Anyone investing in the site, including the Council, will need to look for a return to pay for the cost of that investment. The outdoor education and leisure sector is now suffering massive financial hardship across the country in the wake of the Covid pandemic; indeed, the outdoor education sites run by the County Council are suffering enormous financial problems along with private sector leisure providers across the country.

The Council needs to secure a use for the site that respects its natural assets and that it can pay for. We do need to take steps to support our Medium Term Financial Strategy – something that this Council has an excellent track

record of doing. We always look for solutions that benefit the community whilst helping to support the cost of frontline services, such as our brilliant housing team who help to ensure people do not become homeless. Looking for a use that will respect the site's ecology and help to generate an income is a reasonable, responsible and positive thing to do. Site use is constrained, for the reasons I have outlined; investigating the possibility of using the site to realise our ambition for a crematorium in our district is a sensible, reasonable and logical thing to do.

What we now have is the opportunity to provide a "green" crematorium, woodland burial facility and pet cemetery, which would fulfil the need for a self-supporting re-use of the site that responds to and respects the site's biodiversity needs and would provide a new facility for local residents that is not currently available in our district. We hope too, that some appropriate recreational use of the site may also be possible - but once again, I must emphasise that this has to be dictated by the biodiversity and ecology needs of the site.

I will set out later, in response to a question from a Member, where we are up to with site investigations and next steps.

39. **MOTIONS**

(i) Protecting the Public's say in the Planning Process

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Lorna Dupré and seconded by Cllr Charlotte Cane:

This Council notes:

1. The publication by Government of the White Paper *Planning for the Future* on 6 August 2020, which sets out proposals for changes to the planning process for the future.
2. That the vast majority of planning applications are given the go ahead by local authority planning committees, with permission granted to around nine out of ten applications.
3. That research by the Local Government Association has said that there are existing planning permissions for more than one million homes that have not yet been started.
4. That there is a significant shortage of affordable housing in East Cambridgeshire.

This Council is concerned that the proposals seek to:

1. Reduce or remove the right of residents to object to applications near them.
2. Grant automatic rights for developers to build on land identified as 'for growth'.
3. Remove section 106 payments for infrastructure and their replacement with a national levy.
4. Significantly raise the size of development at which applicants are required to provide affordable housing, from the current ten properties to forty or even fifty.

This Council further notes:

1. The Royal Institute of British Architects called the proposals 'shameful' and said they 'will do almost nothing to guarantee delivery of affordable, well-designed and sustainable homes'. RIBA also said that proposals could lead to the next generation of slum housing.
2. The reforms are opposed by the all-party Local Government Association, currently led by Conservative Councillors.

This Council believes:

1. That existing planning procedures, while not without their flaws, allow for local democratic control over future development, and give local people a say in planning proposals that affect them.
2. That proposals for automatic rights to build in 'growth' areas, and increased permitted development rights, risk unregulated growth and unsustainable communities.
3. That an increase in the threshold for the provision of affordable housing will mean an end to the building of new affordable homes in our rural villages.
4. That local residents must be in the driving seat in shaping the future of their communities, and local determination of the planning framework and planning applications play an important part in this process.

This Council resolves to:

1. Respond to the consultation on the *Planning for the Future* White Paper, and to make representations against the proposals as outlined in this motion.
2. Write to and lobby both of our Members of Parliament, urging them to oppose these proposals and to circulate their replies to members.
3. Highlight its concerns over these proposals to the public and local residents.
4. Instruct officers to bring forward a paper to the Finance & Assets Committee examining the potential for this Council to work with East Cambridgeshire's rural parishes to apply for designation under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, with the consequent power to set its own affordable housing threshold.

Councillor Dupré spoke as proposer of the Motion, highlighting the two aims of the Motion to give a committed and robust response to the Government White Paper and a way forward for more Affordable Housing for Parishes. 1 million homes already had Planning consent but these were not being built due to land-banking and the slow release of sites to keep house prices high. The proposals in the White Paper would limit local say in the Planning process to mere design issues. Local people should be in the driving seat with regard to shaping their communities not in the child seat. The threshold for the provision of affordable housing would be increased from 10 to 40 or 50, so the Government needed to be lobbied on these vital issues regarding the future of the Planning process. The second part of the Motion was to propose a way

forward on affordable housing and give opportunities for the large number of smaller settlements in our District.

The following amendment then was proposed by Councillor Anna Bailey, and seconded by Councillor Joshua Schumann:

Delete: paragraphs 1 (1-4), 2 (1-4), 3 (1-2), 4 (1-4) and 5 (1-3)

Add: 'This Council resolves to' and retain paragraph 5 (4)

So the amendment reads:

This Council resolves to instruct officers to bring forward a paper to the Finance & Assets Committee examining the potential for the Council to work with East Cambridgeshire rural parishes to apply for designation under Section 157(i) of the Housing Act 1985, with the consequent power to set its own affordable housing threshold.

Councillor Bailey spoke in support of the amendment as follows:

'The vast majority of this motion is better served by debate at Item 10 of our Agenda this evening, which is a well written, all-encompassing look at the White Paper proposals.

There is potential merit in item 4 which is about investigating rural designation status for parts of our District. Used in the right way it is an attractive policy with the effects being two-fold. 1) Giving the *opportunity* for the District Council and / or Parishes to implement policy affordable housing at a lower threshold to the national policy. 2) Placing restraint on affordable homes purchased under Right to Buy by restricting the opportunity to purchase and for future purchasers to people that have lived and worked in the Parish for 3 years.

North Kesteven District Council took 21 months to achieve getting the Order into place and the status into effect. However, once the order is in place, there is no change in planning policy, so to then make it actually have an effect on affordable housing trigger points planning policy would need to change either via the Local Plan or through Neighbourhood Plans.

So, members need to understand that this will not help us deal with the 40 to 50 trigger issue, but we have already made representation on that. The ECDC response to the Government's "Changes to the Current Planning System" consultation which ended on 1st October reads:

"ECDC agrees with the principle of trying to support small and medium sized builders, and the proposal may have merit on that basis.

However, ECDC is concerned that raising the site threshold to 40/50 dwellings before any affordable housing can be sought from developers, even for a temporary 18 month period, will have significant implications on the Council's ability to deliver affordable housing.

As a rural district, many of our homes are delivered on (or proposed on) small sites, of less than 50 dwellings. This is particularly the case for the many smaller settlements in the district (of which there are around 50), the vast majority of which do not have sites of greater than 50 homes. In effect, even if temporary, the ability of smaller settlements to deliver affordable homes will be gone, perhaps for many years to come.”

It appears, on the face of it, that most areas of our District might qualify for designation, with the exception of Ely, Soham and Littleport and perhaps one or two other places.

But, achieving it could take a considerable amount of time and energy - with quite a high risk that no such national policy even exists by the time it is achieved, depending on the outcome of the White Paper; there is also some risk that ECDC or a PC would not be *allowed* to set a lower threshold by an Inspector / Examiner of our Plans.

But achieving the status would enable Neighbourhood Plans to *attempt* to set a lower trigger point, and it would also bring into effect the Right to Buy restriction which is akin to the £100k homes policy already adopted and in action in our patch and is in line with the kind of thing this administration likes to do!

It is a complicated issue, so further work to understand it should be taken forward by the Finance & Assets Committee and that is the basis of our amendment.’

A number of Members expressed serious concerns with the amendment, stating that it stripped out all that was wrong with the White Paper, which this Council should be making a clear statement about to Central Government. Particular reference was made to Neighbourhood Plans, which had been a huge success and would be very detrimentally affected by the White Paper proposals. Nationally 1,000 had been made and 2,000 were in the process of development, with 7 being completed or planned within this District. Neighbourhood Planning had been embraced by local communities to enable them to have some control over local development. However, the White Paper proposals would provide no motivation for embarking on this rewarding process that could bring communities together. Therefore, this Council needed to clearly object to the Government and the amendment stripped this ability away.

Other Members commented that the Neighbourhood Planning issue was addressed as part of Agenda Item 10 and gave a clear response to Central Government from this Council on the matter.

The seconder of the Motion concurred with the views expressed that the amendment stripped out the main issues and was not supportive of local communities embarking on the Neighbourhood Plan process. This Council needed to give a clear message that they supported Neighbourhood Plans and valued parishes’ input into the Planning consultation process.

Other Members commented that the amendment removed the clarity of the Council's position on the White Paper and would leave confusion in the minds of local people.

The seconder of the amendment commended the Chairman on the opportunity for the Motion to be debated by all Councillors at full Council, rather than being referred to the Finance and Assets Committee, and stated that the final paragraph 4 of the Motion had merit, which was why it had been retained in the amendment. The other issues in the Motion would be dealt with under Agenda Item 10.

The proposer of the Motion stated that she was pleased that the ruling administration was willing to consider the issue of designation but not making representations to Central Government on the other issues would cause public confusion. She was disappointed that local communities would be let down by the stripping out of the key elements of the Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was carried by 17 votes in favour to 11 votes against and became the substantive Motion.

With regard to the substantive Motion, the seconder of the original Motion expressed disappointment that only a small element of this now remained, but commented that it was important to secure more affordable housing across the District, particularly in small, rural villages. Therefore, she would support designation and hope that the administration would commit real resources to moving forward on the issue quickly. The proposer of the original Motion also commented that the very small element that remained of the Motion had merit.

Upon being put to the vote, the substantive Motion was carried unanimously.

(ii) Parking Enforcement

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Anna Bailey and seconded by Cllr Joshua Schumann:

This Council unequivocally endorses the constitutional commitment to free car parking in its off-street town centre car parks. This commitment, together with a proportionate enforcement regime, is even more important now to support town centre businesses to recover from the COVID 19 crisis.

Nevertheless, the Council remains concerned at the growing instances of dangerous and anti-social on street car parking across the District, not limited to, but notably in Ely, Littleport, Bottisham and Soham. The on-street enforcement regime is not fit for purpose.

The decriminalisation of on street car parking does not offer an appropriate solution to a District committed to free car parking and sound financial management. The Council cannot sign up to a scheme which is irreversible, has significant unfunded capital and

revenue commitments and would lead to the introduction of car parking charges in our District.

Therefore, this Council instructs the Director, Operations to engage with the Chief Constable to discuss the provision of a dedicated car parking enforcement resource for the District and/or the effective implementation of CSAS (Community Safety Accreditation Scheme) and furthermore requests that an update is reported to Finance and Assets Committee in January 2021 detailing any legal and financial implications for consideration and decision on how to progress the matter.

Councillor Bailey spoke in support of the Motion as follows:

‘This administration and the Conservative ones before it has always put free car parking in our off street town centre car parks right at the top of our Agenda.

There has never been a more important time to reconfirm our commitment in public this evening as our town centre businesses grapple with the current health crisis. I make that commitment again now - we will not charge for car parking in our town centre car parks – full stop!

However, we know there are car parking issues - beyond our control - causing frustration and inconvenience to our residents, notably with off street parking.

We did all we could - we built our highly successful commuter car parks in Ely to take cars off residents’ streets with support from our local partners.

But we know the problem remains not only in Ely but in towns and villages across the District - inconsiderate and sometimes dangerous parking risking lives and damaging businesses!

I am aware that other Cambridgeshire authorities are pursuing decriminalisation of car parking through Civil Parking Enforcement. I cannot and will not agree to this course of action - it is tantamount to writing a blank cheque on behalf of every single taxpayer in the District and if it doesn’t work there is no going back - it is not reversible!

We must consider a better alternative. We have two potential options which I believe we should explore.

We need to pursue, with the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary and the Police and Crime Commissioner, a policy to fund Police enforcement resource and, or the implementation of the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme with commitment by the Police for co-operation on an effective enforcement response to evidence collected by our officers.

If this motion is carried, and I hope this will be unanimous, we can get a report back to the Finance & Assets Committee early in the New Year.’

Councillor Inskip proposed under Council Procedure Rule 10.4 that the Motion be referred to Finance and Assets Committee for consideration. He explained that the reasons for this was that there were real concerns with regard to the Motion, as Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) was not being considered by this Council, although other neighbouring Councils, including Fenland, which was similar to East Cambridgeshire, were considering it. There were real problems with parking within the District and the Finance and Assets Committee should not be constrained in the options that it could consider. In response, the Chairman reported that under Procedure Rule 10.4, she considered that it was more convenient to allow the Motion to be dealt with by Council.

A Member stated that it was important to have an opportunity to consider this issue tonight, since Councillors had seen examples of abuses of parking schemes throughout the District. A dedicated resource was required and this was why all Councillors should support the Motion.

Other Members stated that, whilst they supported the principles of the Motion, Finance and Assets Committee was the more appropriate body to consider all of the issues in more detail.

The Liberal Democrat Leader referred to East Cambridgeshire as a 'outlier' with regard to parking enforcement. Currently there was no mechanism to report parking offences within the District due to lack of policing resources. South Cambridgeshire DC also was in a similar position. However, the lack of information on the issues at present was why a decision could not be made tonight. Also, it was her understanding that CSAS did not apply to parking enforcement, so it would not achieve the required objectives. So, whilst she supported taking action on parking enforcement, this might not be the answer.

Other Members concurred with these remarks and expressed serious concerns regarding the level of illegal parking within the District. The current enforcement regime was not fit for purpose, but the recently announced reduction in policing numbers, including PCSOs, would not help to address the problem. This was why a range of options needed to be considered, including CPE. If the Motion was passed tonight, it was important that all options should be considered by Finance and Assets Committee, including CPE.

On the issue of PCSOs, a Member reported that the Police had advised that East Cambridgeshire was to retain its existing 4 PCSOs.

As seconder of the Motion, Councillor Joshua Schumann stated that CPE was a 'blunt instrument' that worked well in high density urban areas, but was not suitable for largely rural areas, as it would not be enforceable. Therefore, the Council needed to engage with its partners

to identify a suitable solution, which is what the Motion called upon us to do.

In summing-up, Councillor Bailey, as proposer of the Motion, stated that she was glad that this District was an 'outlier' in terms of having free parking and she understood that other authorities such as Luton BC had used CSAS effectively. CPE had been considered by this Council in 2018, but had been found to be unviable in rural areas without the introduction of parking charges, due to the requirement for enforcement in all off-street car parks within the District and to fund this from the scheme itself rather than from the Council Tax. In addition, CPE was a 'once and for all' option, with around a 30 month implementation period. So a faster, more effective solution was required.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.21pm for a comfort break and re-convened at 8.31pm

40. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

7 Questions from Members were received and responses given as follows:

Question from Councillor Mark Inskip to the Leader of the Council relating to Mepal Outdoor Centre:

'Question to the Leader of the Councillor regarding surveys and assessments commissioned by the Council on the Mepal Outdoor Centre site

The District Council has commissioned an extensive set of surveys and assessments of the Mepal Outdoor Centre site over the past year. These include a preliminary ecology appraisal, a groundwater risk assessment survey, a topographical survey, numerous daytime winter bird surveys, breeding bird, reptile and botanical surveys.

In her interview with the Ely Standard on the 18 August the Leader of the Council referred to the bio-diversity of the site and "some important wildlife." Presumably this is confirmed by these surveys and assessments. Neither opposition councillors nor members of the public have access to these surveys and assessments and we can therefore only speculate as to the details in these documents.

In response to a Freedom of Information request FOI/EIR 20/21-170 issued last month requesting publication of the document the council argued that "the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information" until the submission of the planning application.

Given the level of public interest demonstrated by the petition of over 2,300 names presented to the council why is it necessary to continue to keep these documents secret, particularly if there is an intent to publish later this year?

And if there is an intent to publish, as implied in the response to the Freedom of Information request, can she confirm that every document listed in the request will be published in November and on what date in November?’

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

My starting point is to reiterate that the detail of the preliminary ecological appraisal, the groundwater risk assessment and site investigation survey were reported in some detail to all Members of this Council when Full Council considered the outline business case for the crematorium project. It was also confirmed at the special full Council meeting that the preliminary ecological appraisal needed to be supplemented with a broad range of further ecological survey work so that there was comprehensive detail of all ecological matters across all seasons of the year. This work has been progressed as planned but the fire that took place on the Mepal site has resulted in the last of the survey work having to be rescheduled which has caused delay in being able to report on ecological matters.

We need to consider the ecological assets of the site in the round, and to do that we obviously need to complete all the survey work first. The final survey was completed earlier this week and we will now be putting all of the survey findings into a summary report.

All survey documents will form part of the planning application which is intended to be submitted in November 2020 and will therefore be publicly available.

To reassure East Cambridgeshire residents the Council will of course be seeking their views on the project as part of the planning application. This will include the following information being made available to the public through a dedicated page on the Council's website:

- A planning policy statement to confirm that the project is compliant with the current planning policy of this Council
- Design concept visuals with a landscape plan
- CGI visuals of the proposed development
- Statements on the site survey work and ecology.

There will also be a link from the website to an on-line survey for members of the public to complete and return. This is the best way to directly inform the public about the project and as part of the planning application to get their views on the project. And of course a planning application requires the applicant to fully and accurately report the findings of public consultation.

Question from Councillor Matthew Downey:

"How has this Council marked Black History Month this year? Please supply a list of activities and dates."

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

Ahead of Black History Month (30th September), a member briefing was created and sent to members to inform them about Black History Month, its aims and detail of what the Council is doing during October to promote it and how they can get involved. Cllr Downey was included in that circulation.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic our approach has been focused on digital communications, such as our website and social media platforms.

A webpage dedicated to Black History Month was made and is currently still live. The page provides more information about Black History Month, asks people to take part in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy consultation and promotes events taking place online by Cambridgeshire Libraries. We have also featured this webpage on the council's homepage carousel.

Social media has been regularly taking place throughout the month. This has been a mix of sharing content from the 'Great Black Britons' section of the Black History Month website and providing book recommendations, which feature our own social media graphics and a synopsis of each book.

Similarly, regular promotion of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy consultation has been taking place.

Question from Councillor John Trapp:

"What progress has been made to date on the promised formal review of the property requirements of Palace Green Homes and East Cambs Community Housing to be completed by the end of December 2020? How is it intended that members of this Council will be engaged in the review and the outcome reported to all members?"

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

In Dec 2018 it was agreed that an operational review of office accommodation requirements would be carried out and reported to Asset Development Committee by 31 Dec 2020. That review is underway and the findings of the review will be reported to the renamed Finance & Assets Committee at its final meeting this calendar year on 26 November 2020.

Question from Councillor Alec Jones:

How many dwellings in the private rented sector in East Cambridgeshire have a category 1 Housing Health and Safety Rated System (HHSRS) hazards? What percentage of properties in the private rented sector does this equate to? Which wards have the highest concentrations of such properties?

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

I would just like to say, that with detailed questions of this nature, it would clearly be helpful if Members could provide as much advance notice as possible to help our busy officers respond and to enable Council to be furnished with as complete an answer as possible. I would also remind members that you don't *have* to wait to ask questions at Full Council – you can ask officers for information at any time.

Within the Private sector Housing modelling Report 2015 the following key findings were made.

1,089 (22%) dwellings in the private rented sector have Category 1 Health and Housing Rating System (HHSRS) Hazards. The levels of excess cold hazards are particularly high in East Cambridgeshire. The private rented sector is considerably worse than other tenures for HHSRS Category 1 hazards and fuel poverty.

The report does not provide specific information relating to the highest concentration of Category 1 HHSRS Hazards within wards of private rented properties, however the report does provide information on all tenure (rented and owner occupied) households and are provided as follows.

The highest concentrations of fuel poverty are found in the wards of the Dullingham Villages, The Swaffhams and Stretham, along with Excess Cold hazards.

The highest concentration of all HHSRS hazards are found in the Dullingham Villages, The Swaffhams and Downham Villages.

Enforcement action to remove hazards in all properties, irrespective of tenure, is available to local authorities and this is led by legislation and through our adopted Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2019. The policy identifies that the Council will provide awareness, advice and assistance wherever possible to the public, businesses and organisations to help them meet their legal obligations before embarking on the enforcement route, but that enforcement action will be taken when it is proportionate to do so. Last year we successfully resolved 70 requests for assistance from private sector housing tenants with concerns about their housing conditions or with outstanding repairs.

Addressing hazards in owner occupied properties through enforcement is inherently difficult, but possible. Fuel poverty is being addressed by all the measures highlighted in the previous answer.

The Housing Adaptations and Repairs Policy 2019 allows for energy efficiency measures to be grant aided under the Discretionary Special Purpose Assistance Grant for those eligible to apply.

Question from Councillor Charlotte Cane:

1. How many dwellings in East Cambridgeshire have been granted planning consent by the Local Planning Authority but not completed?
2. How many units of social housing have been completed in East Cambridgeshire in each of the last five years?

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

As at 1 April 2019, there were 5,720 dwellings with permissions not yet completed.

The Annual Monitoring report is being finalised and is due to be published within the next month which will provide the April 2020 figure.

The number of social housing units that have been completed in East Cambridgeshire in each of the last five years is as follows:

2014/15- 19
2015/16- 54
2016/17- 11
2017/18- 88
2018/19- 63

Again, the Annual Monitoring report to be published within the next month will provide the 2019/20 figure.

Question from Councillor Lorna Dupré:

- What proposals are being put to the Combined Authority for Market Town Masterplan projects in the towns of Littleport and Soham and the city of Ely? Who has been involved in putting together these proposed projects? Please supply a statement for each of these three settlements showing dates of consultation, which individuals and organisations have been involved, and links to the consultation materials used.
- What response is the Council making to the Government's *Raising accessibility standards for new homes* consultation, and how are members being involved in making that response?

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

Market Town Masterplans – Cllr Lorna Dupre

The Council will be submitting bids to the Combined Authority in November and January. The details of the January bids are not yet finalised so this update focuses on the bids that we intend to submit in November.

Consultation in the form of meetings and engagement has taken place across all three Market Towns which has enabled the development of the bids so far.

The bids focus on COVID Recovery and Accelerating Growth.

Littleport

A single bid will be submitted for Littleport for a contribution to the roundabout to accelerate the delivery of a housing and employment site off the A10.

Officers have worked with District, County and Parish Councillors to develop the bid and have also engaged with businesses and developers.

Ely

There will be multiple submissions in Ely which will require further consultation and engagement if the bids are successful.

Street furniture enhancement - this is being worked up by officers and comprises of street furniture replacements throughout the city centre and out to the riverside.

Steeple Row - officers are working with Ely Perspective to bring this long-standing project to fruition. It is something that I have long supported and been involved in and would be very pleased to see come to fruition.

Ely Town Centre Study - if successful this study will be a useful evidence document that will help shape the future of the city centre for Ely. During the process key stakeholders, City of Ely Council, the Cathedral, Shopkeepers, Ely Markets, and Businesses will be engaged to inform the study.

Connectivity - there will be a bid which seeks to improve the digital connectivity in Ely.

The District Council, City of Ely Council and the Cathedral have long standing ambitions to explore what could be done to connect the Cathedral with the city centre. It is intended that a bid is submitted to the CA for funds to enable the Cathedral to carry out a feasibility study to inform a plan that would enable this to be achieved. If successful, there will be opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to become involved in the feasibility study.

To date Officers have been working with Cllr Every, representatives from businesses, Ely Perspective and CCC Highways.

Soham

Multiple bids will be submitted in Soham.

Business Space project - Officers have been working with Councillors and the Town Council to formulate a bid that seeks to secure business space in Soham.

High Street Enhancements - this is being worked up by officers and comprises street furniture replacements and improvements throughout the town centre.

Digital Connectivity - there will be a bid which seeks to further improve the digital connectivity in Soham.

To date Officers have been working with Soham District Councillors [all Soham invited to initial meeting to discuss], Soham Town Council, County Councillors and CCC Highways.

Officers are still working through the bid submissions and there will be a detailed note provided to all Members prior to the bids being submitted to the Combined Authority.

Raising Accessibility Standards – Cllr Lorna Dupre

The consultation for this closes in December 2020. The Council will be submitting a consultation response. If Members have anything specific to include in the response please contact Richard Kay, Strategic Planning Manager.

Question from Councillor Simon Harries:

- What action does the agreement with the Ministry of Defence for the purchase of the former MOD housing at Princess of Wales Hospital permit the Ministry to take in the event that this Council's Planning Committee refuses planning consent for development in Phase 2 on this site?
- What deadlines does the agreement with the Ministry of Defence for the purchase of the former MOD housing at Princess of Wales Hospital set regarding Phase 2 of the development for (a) submission of a planning application; (b) granting of a planning application; (c) completion of construction on the site?

Response from Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

The deadlines with the MoD for the purchase of the former housing at the Ely site regarding Phase 2 of the development are as follows:

- a. Submission of planning application - 31 July 2020
- b. Planning consent - 31 July 2022
- c. There is no contract deadline relating to completion of construction of the site

41. **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES**

Council considered a report, V90 previously circulated, detailing recommendations from the Council's Committees as follows:

1. FINANCE AND ASSETS COMMITTEE – 23 JULY 2020

Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review

A Member commended Officers on their management of investments and the good return received at this difficult time. But the investment of 28% in ECTC also was highlighted, which was considered by the Member to be too great a commitment and risk in relation to one entity for a Council of our size.

It was resolved:

That the report be approved.

2. LICENSING COMMITTEE – 9 SEPTEMBER 2020

Licensing Act 2003 Licensing Authority Statement of Licensing Policy – Five Year Revision

The Senior Licensing Officer was commended on his thorough work.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the draft Statement of Licensing Policy, including the amendments shown as tracked changes in Appendix 2 in their entirety, be approved.
- (ii) That the approved Statement of Licensing Policy be recommended for adoption by full Council to come into effect on 7 January 2021.

3. FINANCE AND ASSETS COMMITTEE – 24 SEPTEMBER 2020

Corporate Risk Management – Policy and Update

A number of Members commented that the Risk Management Policy did not properly define the Council's risk appetite or contain adequate ratings and notification mechanisms in relation to higher risks.

It was resolved:

That the updated Risk Management Policy, as set out in Appendix 3 of the submitted report, be approved.

42. **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL PLAN AND 'PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE' WHITE PAPER**

Council considered a report, V91 previously circulated, updating Members on a wide range of Planning Policy matters, and seeking an agreed way forward on such matters. The Strategic Planning Manager summarised the key areas covered by the report which were:

- Proposed Council response to Planning White Paper
- Progressing any review of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan
- Issues in relation to Neighbourhood Planning
- An update on progressing Supplementary Planning Documents

Members commended the Strategic Planning Manager on his thorough and comprehensive report on the issues.

The recommendations in paragraph 2.1 of the submitted report were proposed by Councillor Bailey and seconded by Councillor Joshua Schumann.

Councillor Bailey spoke in support of her Motion as follows:

'It is important to consider all elements of the planning policy environment in the round, so I thank Richard Kay for bringing this very well written paper to us which grapples with current planning policy needs as well as potential policy of the future.

There is no doubt that a simpler, quicker and more straight forward planning process would be welcome. However, there are issues with a number of aspects of the proposed reforms for this district that we need to bring to the attention of Government. It does feel to me, that the proposals are more suited to urban areas than rural districts such as our own and the lack of detail in much of the White Paper does make it difficult to understand the real effect of what is proposed.

- I am concerned that the idea of zoning sites for growth may result in bypassing the detailed investigation and understanding of individual site assets and constraints that comes from the existing system and may lead to poor development
- I do have concerns about the changes of timing of community engagement
- I have very real concerns about the possible undermining of our Community led development policy
- I am worried about possible undermining of environmental assessment of sites – I can't see that this will be done prior to areas

being allocated to growth zones, and therefore it is hard to see how or when it will be done at all – I do not believe this is what the Government wants

- The effect on Neighbourhood Plans, which this Council supports, is too unknown and seems likely to be negative
- And I cannot support the idea that costs would automatically be awarded against the Council for failed appeals - this will undermine delivery of a quality built environment
- I am also incredibly disappointed about the silence surrounding the issue of incentives and levers for authorities to force developers to actually build what has been granted permission – something this district has suffered greatly from

The basis of our response is set out at 3.16. This has been written in a very factual, non-political way by Richard, who has a detailed and intimate knowledge of East Cambs' policy and our approach to planning. I really believe we need to send a strong response to Government - that response will be so much stronger if it is cross party and unanimous. I strongly urge members to see if they can agree to the statements made at 3.16. If they believe substantive points are missing, it would be helpful if they could also outline those – I note the Lib Dem amendment which I will speak about later, but am pleased that it appears to indicate support for the approach set out in the paper.

With regard to the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan, the paper is well argued and option 1 is the correct route to shore up protection of our 5 year housing land supply.

Writing to Parish Councils to offer continued support with Neighbourhood Planning and to update them on the planning environment is the right thing to do.

And I hope all members can endorse the straight forward item of the updated work programme for Supplementary Planning documents.

So I do believe that the concerns of other Members in the motion earlier tonight are addressed by the paper and I therefore hope we can show a united front tonight by unanimously agreeing the recommendations.'

The following amendment then was proposed by Councillor Lorna Dupré and seconded by Councillor Charlotte Cane:

2.1 That Council:

- I. Notes the publication of the Planning White Paper, and delegates to Director, Commercial, in consultation with the Leader, to respond to the White Paper in line with the principles set out in the agenda report **with the addition of representations against the proposal to increase**

thresholds for the provision of affordable housing, and to circulate the response to all members at the same time as it is submitted;

- II. Undertakes to lobby the two Members of Parliament representing wards in East Cambridgeshire urging them to oppose the proposals as they stand;**
- III. Agrees to commence preparation of a partial update to the 2015 Local Plan (a 'Single Issue Review'), in accordance with the principles set out in the agenda report and to a timetable (the 'Local Development Scheme') as set out at Appendix 1; and
- IV. Endorses the updated work programme for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents over the coming 12 months.
- V. Continues to support Parish Councils on planning matters, including those that have identified an interest in progressing Neighbourhood Plans in their area, and further resolves that Officers should write to each Parish Council with a thorough update on planning policy matters, in line with the content of this agenda report, and explain what it means for them at a local parish level.

Speaking in support of her amendment, Councillor Dupré stated that it was not simply about the White Paper. She welcomed the proposed response on design statements and Planning costs. However, the White Paper wrongly blamed Councillors for the problems with the Planning system, not developers. The amendment also was required to address the issues relating to affordable housing and to ensure that the Council's response was circulated to local MPs and they were lobbied to oppose the proposals in the White Paper.

Councillor Bailey spoke on the amendment as follows:

'Cllr Dupre seeks "the addition of representations against the proposal to increase thresholds for the provision of affordable housing."

The White Paper does **not** propose to increase the threshold.

Cllr Dupre is getting confused with a different and already closed consultation, as I set out in my speech on the earlier Liberal Democrat motion.

To confirm, ECDC has already responded to the Government's "Changes to the Current Planning System" consultation which ended on 1st October as follows:

"ECDC agrees with the principle of trying to support small and medium sized builders, and the proposal may have merit on that basis.

However, ECDC is concerned that raising the site threshold to 40/50 dwellings before any affordable housing can be sought from developers,

even for a temporary 18 month period, will have significant implications on the Council's ability to deliver affordable housing.

As a rural district, many of our homes are delivered on (or proposed on) small sites, of less than 50 dwellings. This is particularly the case for the many smaller settlements in the district (of which there are around 50), the vast majority of which do not have sites of greater than 50 homes. In effect, even if temporary, the ability of smaller settlements to deliver affordable homes will be gone, perhaps for many years to come."

I am very happy to undertake that our two MPs receive a copy of our White Planning paper response to Government as well as our response to the previous consultation that closed on 1st October.

I therefore believe that Cllr Dupre's amendment cannot be supported, as it is not formed on correct information, and given that I have undertaken to ensure our MPs are furnished with copies of both of our consultation responses, I do hope that all Members of the Council can support the recommendations as they stand, which will send a united and strong response to Government.'

A number of other Members urged Councillors to support the amendment, as reference to affordable housing thresholds would reinforce the Council's previous representations on the issue. It also seemed reasonable to lobby local MPs on the issues.

The seconder of the original Motion Councillor Joshua Schumann commented that the Council's response would be weakened if we included issues not referred to in the White Paper. In addition, the Liberal Democrat Group were able to submit a response to Central Government in their own right or as individuals, if they felt strongly on the issue.

The seconder of the amendment, Councillor Cane commented that the amendment made the Motion stronger on the issue of affordable housing. It also was important to lobby MPs so that they were aware of this Council's views. She also expressed disappointment that the Council's response to the Government's "Changes to the Current Planning System" consultation relating to affordable housing had not been discussed with Councillors before it was sent. The rest of the original recommendations remained intact in the amendment, as they were 'all good stuff'. Councillor Cane did not believe that it was true that the Planning system was broken, but that developers were not building on the permissions already granted to them. The White Paper threatened to reduce Neighbourhood Plans to local design guides and curtail the valuable input of Parish Councils into the Planning process.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was declared to be lost by 11 votes in favour to 17 votes against.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be carried unanimously.

It was resolved:

That Council:

- I. Notes the publication of the Planning White Paper, and delegates to Director, Commercial, in consultation with the Leader, to respond to the White Paper in line with the principles set out in the agenda report.
- II. Agrees to commence preparation of a partial update to the 2015 Local Plan (a 'Single Issue Review'), in accordance with the principles set out in the agenda report and to a timetable (the 'Local Development Scheme') as set out at Appendix 1.
- III. Endorses the updated work programme for the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents over the coming 12 months.
- IV. Continues to support Parish Councils on planning matters, including those that have identified an interest in progressing Neighbourhood Plans in their area, and further resolves that Officers should write to each Parish Council with a thorough update on Planning policy matters, in line with the content of this agenda report, and explain what it means for them at a local Parish level.

43. **COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORT**

Council received a report on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's appointees.

With regard to item 3.1 of the CA Board meeting Decision Summary for 5 August 2020, a Member raised a question regarding the reasons for the longer periods of loan extension by the CA for ECTC affordable housing schemes loans compared to other providers, which was responded to by the Leader of the Council, as the Council's representative on the CA Board.

A Member raised a question on item 3 of the CA Audit and Governance Committee Decision Summary for 31 July 2020, asking whether the MHCLG correspondence relating to governance issues could be circulated to all Councillors, together with any subsequent correspondence. Councillor Brown, as the Council's representative on the CA Audit and Governance Committee, agreed to clarify if this was possible and that the governance issues had been resolved.

It was resolved:

That the report on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's appointees be noted.

44. **JANIS MURFET**

The Chairman reported that Janis Murfet, who had been a Democratic Services Officer at this Council for the past 23 years, would be retiring on the following day. She stated that Janis had given outstanding service to the Council and would be greatly missed. The Chairman of Planning Committee, Councillor Bill Hunt, gave his special thanks to Janis on behalf of that Committee. The Chairman and Members of the Council expressed their best wishes to Janis for the future.

45. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

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

46. **EXEMPT MINUTES – 31 JULY 2020**

Councillor Cane left the meeting and did not return

It was resolved:

That the Exempt Minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 31 July 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 10.12pm.

Chairman.....

Date 23 February 2021