



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Agenda Item 4

Minutes of a Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council
held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE
on Tuesday 20th February 2024 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Chika Akinwale
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith
Councillor Anna Bailey
Councillor Ian Bovingdon
Councillor David Brown
Councillor Charlotte Cane
Councillor Christine Colbert
Councillor Lorna Dupré
Councillor Lavinia Edwards
Councillor Mark Goldsack (Chairman)
Councillor Martin Goodearl
Councillor Kathrin Holtzmann

Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor James Lay
Councillor David Miller
Councillor Kelli Pettitt
Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor John Trapp
Councillor Lucius Vellacott
Councillor Mary Wade
Councillor Gareth Wilson

36. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Statement from Nicholas Acklam, a resident from the village of Reach

“My name is Nicholas Acklam. I have lived in Reach for 32 years and was involved in the production of the Reach Neighbourhood Plan. It has taken five years to get to this point and the journey has not always been smooth. I am therefore pleased that the Plan was strongly endorsed by my fellow villagers at referendum earlier this month, with a turnout of 58% and a vote in favour of 66%. The Reach Neighbourhood Plan usefully supplements ECDC’s Local Plan, identifying in detail those qualities that make Reach a special place and which residents wish to preserve, whilst enabling modest, appropriate, and sustainable development. The Plan also provides a foundation on which improvements to our neighbourhood, as identified by residents, can be implemented. One such example is the Reach Nature Recovery Plan which already forms part of the district’s nature recovery strategy, but which depends heavily on policies laid out in the Neighbourhood Plan. It follows that I commend the Reach Neighbourhood Plan to Councillors and ask that you formally adopt it as part of the Development Plan of the district.”

Response from the Chair of the Council

The Chair thanked Mr Acklam for attending Council and for his statement and welcomed Mr Acklam to remain for the debate at Item 11 which his statement referred to. Council Members were requested to take Mr Acklam's statement into consideration in connection with Agenda item 11.

2. Question from Charmaine Switsur to the Leader of the Council -

Read out by the Democratic Services Manager:

"I have read about the Bereavement Centre project, which I think is a good use of the land at Mepal and I wanted to give my thoughts to the Council about it. I believe that this will be a fantastic local facility for the families of East Cambs. I particularly appreciate that the facility is for all people from different faiths and no faith at all. The images I saw of the proposed building look dignified and the surroundings look beautiful and peaceful. I really like the idea of a natural burials area and pet cemetery being included because many people would like to be buried near all their loved ones, including dearly treasured pets. I also like the idea that my carbon footprint will be minimised even in my death with the electric cremators, renewable energy, and a shorter trip to Mepal. Older people trying to get to their friend's funeral often have to rely on favours from friends or family and with a local centre it will be much easier for people to get there. I really hope that this project gets the go ahead.

My question is:

Will the Council work with local people to ensure that the inside of the bereavement centre is special, that it reflects its surroundings, and that it offers the atmosphere and services that the people of East Cambs want to see?"

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

"Thank you for your question and for your support of this project. Yes, we want to work really hard to make the Bereavement Centre special, to make it feel different, to respect and reflect its special surroundings and to deliver the services that local people want in the way that they want them. This is a community facility, it will belong to the people of East Cambs, and it's really important that they feel a sense of ownership and love for it. We will work with the public to understand this and to deliver a community facility and service that they, and we, can be proud of."

3. Question from Peter D. Harvey to the Leader of the Council - Read out by the Democratic Services Manager:

"Given a presumption in favour of commercial best practice; due diligence, can the Leader of the Council advise over what contingency plans are in place and/or have been considered in the event the speculative commercial venture, namely the proposed crematorium at Mepal, is unsuccessful?"

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

"I would like to start by reassuring you, and all the public, that extensive due diligence has been carried out on this project. The plans for the proposed Bereavement Centre have been developed over several years and we have worked with independent industry experts to produce a detailed business case

which includes a needs analysis, a full competition appraisal and a cost appraisal for both construction and operating costs; the business case has been robustly tested and is positive. There are no borrowing costs in the plan. Because of this work, I do not consider this to be a speculative commercial venture whatsoever and it is not accurate to describe it as such. The plans we are considering this evening have been well thought out and carefully modelled to ensure that the Bereavement Centre is financially sustainable. The analysis that has been carried out demonstrates that, even with the prudent assumptions around the number of cremations and the lower charges compared with other crematoria, the proposed Bereavement Centre, which is a community facility, is financially viable and the business case is positive.”

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Horgan, Councillor Shepherd, Councillor Pitt, Councillor Alison Whelan, and Councillor Christine Whelan.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received from Councillors.

39. MINUTES – 19th OCTOBER 2023

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 19th October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

40. CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

1. Investors in the Environment

I am very pleased that the Council has received a Silver Accreditation from the Investors in the Environment demonstrating a commitment to reducing our environmental impact and to the continual improvement of our sustainability performance. The report highlights, the team at ECDC has maintained a good environmental management system and continued to drive down emissions in many key areas. East Cambs District Council has achieved an excellent reduction in paper use, driven by monthly updates, setting annual targets and champions within departments and the Green Team has organised Carbon Literacy training available to all members of staff which has increased engagement and empowered participants. I am extremely happy with the results, and I am especially grateful to our Green Team Members who have been so supportive and engaged throughout the year. A copy of the accreditation report outlining our achievements as well as the next steps is available from Emma Jane Danielsson, Climate Change and Natural Environment Senior Officer. Well done to all involved.

2. Building Control

I was extremely proud to hear Craig Smith and his Building Control team have received national recognition for their working relationship with Soham-based Building Control agent Andrew Fleet.

Together they won “Best Partnership” at the Local Authority Building Control Awards, which recognise excellence in collaboration, communication and overall partnership working practices. A further thank you from the Chair to everyone involved for a very commendable performance.

3. Chair’s Events

I, myself have been busy attending various Civic events; one of notable interest was a Holocaust Memorial Day hosted by Huntingdonshire District Council which was a very moving event, at which I was proud to represent East Cambs District Council.’

41. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

42. NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

No motions were received under Procedure Rule 10.

43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Three questions were received, and responses given as follows:

1) Question from Councillor Lucius Vellacott to Leader of the Council, Cllr Anna Bailey, in her capacity as the Council’s Combined Authority Board Member:

“The CPCA Mayor is set to raise the precept by 200%, and whilst a service linking Soham and Cambridge is welcomed, residents in Wicken will not see the benefit. Those living in the village need to access all their local services in Soham. With access to Soham train station, just one bus would link Wicken with the world, and the world with an internationally important Nature Reserve at Wicken Fen (and the excellent Maids Head pub).

Will the Leader of the Council push the Mayor to examine the viability of a two-hourly service linking Wicken and Soham in his new proposals?”

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey:

“Thank you, Cllr Vellacott, for your question. I did not support the Mayor’s precept when he introduced it in 2023, and I did not support the 200% increase to it this year. I note that, of the East Cambs residents that responded to the CPCA consultation on the precept, 66% were not willing to pay it to fund buses; in Fenland this figure was 77%. Perhaps this is because, despite the Mayor’s promises about levelling up public transport in the rural and deprived areas, he has made no progress on this to date. I’m afraid we are only in this position because of the chaos and dysfunctionality of the first two years of this current

administration at the Combined Authority. All other Combined Authorities and dozens of other Transport Authorities got tens of millions, and some got hundreds of millions to improve bus services – CPCA got nothing in that round. This failure is now being charged to local taxpayers. Devolution should be about receiving funding and powers down from Government, not a new excuse to tax local people, and it was unnecessary. Not least, the Mayor continues to support unsustainable bus routes, in one case costing the taxpayer a staggering £250 in public subsidy per return passenger journey, with promises that these high-cost routes will be improved to reach the benchmark level of £24 per return journey in public subsidy. However, the Labour and Lib Dem Board Members at the CPCA all supported the 200% precept increase and so now we must make the best of it. Three new routes are proposed for East Cambs from the precept increase as well as improvements on the B1102 corridor. In addition, there is also a plan to use some Government funding for a demand responsive transport pilot in East Cambs. Unfortunately, none of these proposals currently include Wicken, so I will of course take this up with the CPCA to see what is possible and report back. I do hope that the new funds raised through the Mayor's precept are not simply swallowed up rescuing commercially run services but, with the recent announcement by Stagecoach to make significant reductions to their Littleport to Cambridge Number 9 service, things have not begun well, and I fear we may see more of this to come. What new services East Cambs residents actually get from this new local taxation remains to be seen; I will do what I can to make sure that Wicken is given proper consideration."

2) Question from Councillor Cllr Bill Hunt, Stretham Ward, to Chair of F&A Committee Cllr Alan Sharp:

"At the meeting of the Finance and Assets Committee on 25th January 2024 doubt was cast on whether or not Stretham Parish Council had provided a letter of support for The Link project by Stretham and Wilburton Community Land Trust. Indeed, I noted that all the Liberal Democrats at that meeting, with the exception of one abstention, voted against providing funding for this project which includes a new GP Surgery. Can the Chair of the Finance and Assets Committee confirm that Stretham Parish Council did in fact provide a letter of support for the project?"

Response from the Chair of Finance & Assets Committee, Cllr Alan Sharp:

"Thank you, Cllr Hunt, for your question. Following meeting of the Finance and Assets Committee on 25 January 2024, and discussion regarding the Stretham Link Project Growth and Infrastructure fund application, the Council received a request from the Chief Operating Officer of Mereside Medical, that additional information be provided to Members of the Finance and Assets Committee to clarify their position regarding the new Stretham Link facility, including new GP premises for Stretham branch of Haddenham surgery. The information stated that the Chief Operating Officer of Mereside Medical had made it clear in her original email to Stretham Parish Council requesting in the letter of support that a key justification for new premises for Stretham branch being approved by the NHS is that it is integrated into community facilities that support wider health

and wellbeing. The email from the Chief Operating Officer to Stretham Parish Council mentions the Stretham and Wilburton CLT and their work preparing a revised proposal and Planning application for the new community facilities in Stretham; which include new GP premises for the Stretham branch of Haddenham surgery; that the CLT has now taken on all responsibility and risk associated with delivering and maintaining the new facility; and states that Mereside Medical are working closely with them to secure the capital funding required to deliver the build. It is clear in the email thread that the Chief Operating Officer provided, that all Parish Councillors were copied in on the email and that the support letter provided, explicitly recognised that the GP premises would be embedded in such a community facility. She requested that the email thread and attached letter of support be shared with all of those who were present at the Finance and Assets Committee meeting so that there is no ambiguity to the ask that was made to Stretham Parish Council, as well as the essential nature of the proposal to securing the resumption of healthcare services in Stretham. This email was sent to all members of the Finance and Assets Committee.”

3) Question from Councillor Martin Goodearl to Councillor Anna Bailey:

“Myself and the residents of Littleport and in the wider area are upset to hear that Stagecoach are making large reductions to the No.9 bus service in April. This will mean a massive loss of service to the residents of Littleport especially those, who cannot drive, requiring to get to an appointment at the walk-in medical facilities at the former RAF hospital or to access Ely for day-to-day tasks, as shopping or visiting friends and family. I am aware that Councillor Bailey has been in discussions with Officers at the CPCA. Can the leader of the Council please give us an update on what the CPCA is planning to do to restore the service for my residents and the residents of the other wards on this route?”

Response from the Leader, Cllr Anna Bailey:

“Thank you, Cllr Goodearl, for your question. I’ve met with Stagecoach about their proposed changes to the Number 9 service from Littleport to Cambridge, which will see a reduction of 3 buses to 1, the biggest impact for Littleport residents being the loss of most off-peak buses from Littleport to Ely. The changes are due to happen in mid-April. I have met with CPCA Officers about this, and they have agreed to work up a plan and timetable for a service to be tendered by CPCA to work around the operating hours of the reduced Stagecoach service. This will need to be checked for legality and put out to tender. I have also raised the need for ticketing co-operation, if this goes ahead, to ensure that people can use their tickets interchangeably on the two services. I have not yet had any further information back from the CPCA but will keep local members updated when I do. Stagecoach is holding a public meeting at 6.00pm, tomorrow Wednesday 21st February at Ely Museum, so anyone wishing to hear more about the changes to the Number 9 can attend.”

44. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Council considered a report (Y146, previously circulated), detailing the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) relating to Members' Allowances.

The Democratic Services Manager read a statement out on behalf of Richard Tyler, Chair of the IRP:

"This is my fourth time on the Panel, having started in 2012, and again well supported by Margaret Clark, Stanley Curtis, and Richard Powell, Again, the impartial advice from Tracy Couper was invaluable. This time we were all very pleased with the response of the Council Members to our questionnaire, which has helped us make an understanding of the work done by them and also their concerns. We also felt that those Councillors who attended our interviews either in person or by zoom set out how they felt thing could be improved. It became quite clear that the reduction in Councillors meant those still there had additional responsibilities. Virtually every Councillor, both new ones and experienced ones, stressed that they had an enormous amount of reading to do when attending committee meetings. The new members, also confirmed by the more senior members, said that every day they were contacted by members of the public in the street etc. sometimes when walking their dogs and even when taking their parents out for a meal. In addition, members of the public do not realise how much work, and the complexity of the work, you all do. I think that all of the new Councillors did not realise how much they had to do and that both political parties need to improve their information to prospective candidates in that regard. You receive less remuneration than other Councils and are doing a fantastic job. I hope you accept out recommendations as I believe the reasons behind all of them are clearly explained. I have enjoyed my time on the Panel but now reaching my eightieth year I will not stand again."

The Chair thanked Richard Tyler for his hard work and dedication over the years.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Brown. Cllr Dupré commented that Members should accept the recommendations of the Independent Panel as to not accept them would result in Members creating their own scheme; she added that the Panel had listened to the evidence and suggested sensible recommendations that addressed important issues which included trying to make it easier for those with caring responsibilities to take part in public life, which would enable the Council to be truly representative of its residents and therefore the recommendations should be supported.

Cllr Bailey echoed Cllr Dupré's comments and stated it had been a pleasure to work with the IRP Panel Members who understood the Councillors' workload. Cllr Bailey added it was difficult to vote on your own pay, but it was a requirement by law to have the IRP take place every four years, and she was happy to accept the recommendations in full, which included an important

change around caring duties; Cllr Bailey thanked the Panel for their hard work and Richard Tyler for his long service.

Cllr Brown reiterated that the recommendations of the IRP should be accepted and thanked the Panel and Richard Tyler for his service.

It was resolved unanimously that:

1. The recommendations of the IRP at Appendix A to the report be approved, to take effect from 1 April 2024.
2. The IRP comments at paragraph 6.3 to the report be noted.

45. POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEWS

Council considered a report (Y147, previously circulated), detailing the Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations review, which was carried out in October 2023, along with a consultation document which set out the Returning Officer's proposals that would be used for future Parliament local and other elections or referendums.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Brown.

Cllr Colbert asked officers to consider whether there may be alternative venues to the Methodist Chapel in Ely West Ward due to the difficulties in parking and disability access to which the Electoral Services Team Leader stated he was happy to make enquiries. Cllr Hunt congratulated the Electoral Services Team Leader and the Elections Team for covering the finer details that made the elections run smoothly and successfully.

Cllr Dupré quoted from Section 18 2(c) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 which required that a polling place be small enough to indicate to electors how they would be able to reach the polling station, secondly, it was important that the location was consistent, as constant change could reduce voter turnout and thirdly, it would be possible to change a polling station as needed by reference to Council or by delegation to officers. Cllr Dupré requested that Ely North be declared a polling place and asked the Chief Executive to circulate a briefing note to Members on how voters in Ely North would know the location of their polling station, what was being carried out to ensure a consistent polling station was being sought and on what grounds had the more obvious flexibilities been ruled out; the Chief Executive stated that a briefing note would be provided to Members shortly.

Cllr Bailey thanked the Electoral Team for their hard work and the fantastic job they did at the Elections.

It was resolved unanimously that:

- I. The current arrangements for the use of polling district/places/stations for future elections/referendums/polls, except the previous HI3 polling district and the Ely North ward be approved.
- II. Approval be given to the amalgamation of the previous HI3 polling district with the HI1 polling district
- III. The whole of Ely North ward be designated as a polling place, to provide flexibility for the Returning Officer to use any suitable building or area as deemed appropriate for relevant elections/referendums/polls.
- IV. The Returning Officer's use of suitable alternative polling stations should the need arise be approved.

46. MAKING (ADOPTION) OF REACH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Council considered a report (Y148, previously circulated), advising that, following the successful referendum on 1 February 2024, the Reach Neighbourhood Plan needed to be formally 'made' by East Cambridgeshire District Council and thereby formalised as part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Cane. Cllr Bailey stated that Reach was a small community and congratulated the residents who had worked hard on the Neighbourhood Plan.

Cllr Cane also thanked the residents of Reach for their work on the Plan, the professional consultants, and the Strategic Planning Manager for his advice during the process. The Neighbourhood Plan would protect Reach's many historical and environmental assets. It contained challenges for the Parish Council to deliver and would be helpful to the Planning Committee, therefore Cllr Cane urged Members to adopt the Plan as part of the Planning process.

Cllr Goldsack explained that Neighbourhood Plans had proven themselves as being critical in ensuring that the local voice was heard within the democracy world. He thanked Nicholas Acklam for attending and presenting at the start of the meeting and commented that Reach was a very special village.

It was resolved unanimously that:

- a) Reach Parish Council be congratulated on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan and a successful referendum outcome, becoming the seventh Parish Council to do so in East Cambridgeshire.
- b) The Reach Neighbourhood Plan attached at Appendix 1 to the report is formally made as part of the Development Plan for East Cambridgeshire with immediate effect.

47. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Council considered a report (Y149, previously circulated), to consider the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2024-25, a requirement under the Localism Act 2011.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Cane.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the 2024-25 Pay Policy Statement be approved and adopted.

48. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Council considered report Y150, previously circulated, detailing recommendations from Committees as follows:

1. Audit Committee – 16 October 2023

a) Risk Management Policy and Framework Update

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Cllr Brown, proposed that the updated Risk Management Policy and Framework documents, as attached at Appendix 1 and 2 to the report, be approved.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Brown and seconded by Cllr Petitt.

It was resolved:

That the updated Risk Management Policy and Framework documents at Appendix 1 and 2 to the report be approved.

2. Finance and Assets – 23 November 2023

a) Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review 2023-24

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Bovingdon.

It was resolved:

That the Mid-Year Review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report be noted.

3. Finance and Assets – 24 January 2024

b) 2024/25 Annual Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Bovingdon.

Cllr Vellacott highlighted that the Council would not borrow externally and had sufficient resources for internal borrowing to finance capital requirements, which was important for the Council to underpin the budget, plus the investment strategy looked to remain prudent as the Council continued to benefit from an inflated interest rate, therefore, he was happy to accept the recommendations.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to:

1. The 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy.
2. The Annual Investment Strategy.
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement.
4. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators.

c) Bereavement Centre Full Business Case

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Vellacott.

The Leader commented that in 2016 the Council held an ambition to build a crematorium to provide a quality service, closer to home and at lower prices for residents. Planning restrictions on crematoria meant that it was not easy to find a site, but the Mepal site became available in 2017 following the closure of the outdoor centre. Cllr Bailey added that the setting was beautiful and had a special atmosphere that the Council believed would support bereaved families. There would be space for quiet reflection, including the lake and other natural assets. It was also a Designated County Wildlife Site where the Council had an opportunity to improve the extensive biodiversity that existed whilst also opening the site for recreational use, such as walking, bird watching and fishing. Cllr Bailey explained that finances were not the motivation, but a positive Business Case meant a low risk for the Council. The Council had worked hard to delivery community infrastructure, including new community centres, a new leisure centre, cycle routes, new and improved roads, and a new theatre in Soham. Over £5.7m had been given to Parish Councils to support their projects. The Council also had significant funds put aside and would continue to provide support for community assets. Cllr Bailey commented that she understood that some Members did not support the proposal but hoped they understood and respected that the Council had worked hard to deliver a high-quality facility that would become a much-loved community asset. Cllr Bailey added her thanks to those that had

been involved in the project, these included the late Jo Brooks, Alistair Merrick, Isabel Edgar, and Sally Bonnett. Cllr Bailey stated she was delighted to support the project.

Cllr Inskip highlighted that the crematorium business plan proposed spending £9m of CIL funds in the northeast of the district which would not be the nearest crematorium for a large number of residents; CIL funds should improve infrastructure, transport, road traffic management, schools, community, sport, and health facilities. Cllr Inskip reminded Members that the Business Case relied on taking a significant amount of business from the crematorium based in March; yet Dignity stated that they would respond to competition by reducing fees. Cllr Inskip summarised by stating that residents did not want the crematorium and the business case was seriously flawed.

Cllr Hunt reminded Members that the Council wanted to provide a facility that was currently not provided for as there was now an 80/20 preference for cremations and population figures had increased resulting in a higher demand for the facility. Cllr Hunt stated he was therefore pleased to support the proposal.

Cllr Huffer expressed the view that funerals currently held in some local facilities were 'soulless'. The new facility was not about money but would give families a place where they could remember their loved ones and therefore, she supported the proposal.

Cllr Dupré stated that a significant number of residents were of the opinion that the crematorium was the wrong proposal, in the wrong place and therefore not wanted. The facility was located close to the March crematorium and relied on taking its business and working closely with Huntingdon crematorium and therefore she would not support the proposal.

Cllr Cane commented that she did not support the proposal as it would be less convenient than local cemeteries. Cllr Cane added that the money should be spent on replacing the outdoor activities across the district and not on competing with an existing crematoria.

Speaking as seconder of the recommendations, Cllr Vellacott commented that residents were vulnerable when dealing with the loss of a loved one and the Council now had an opportunity to help residents through this difficult time and also protect the rich biodiversity of the site. It was unfortunate that Mepal Outdoor Centre had not been a viable leisure facility, but the Council were now able to take action to protect the site instead of leaving it as wasteland. Cllr Vellacott believed the Bereavement Centre would be comfort, solace, and protection when residents needed it most.

Summing up as proposer of the recommendations, Cllr Bailey reminded Members that the old Outdoor Centre was a much-loved local facility, and

residents had an important historical family allegiance to it. The biodiversity and ecology present on the site meant that high impact leisure use now was not possible.

The Chair thanked Members for a dignified debate.

Following a request for a recorded vote, the recommendations were approved with 14 votes in favour, 9 votes against and 0 abstentions:

FOR: (14) Cllrs Ambrose-Smith, Bailey, Brown, Bovingdon, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Huffer, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp and Vellacott.

AGAINST: (9) Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Dupré, Holtzmann, Inskip, Trapp, Wade and Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

It was resolved that:

1. The Full Business Case as detailed in Appendices 1-4 of the report be approved.
2. A community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation up to £9.06m for the capital build be approved.
3. The Director Finance be authorised to secure alternative funding where CIL is not available, in consultation with the Chair of Finance and Assets Committee, as detailed in Section 5 of the report.
4. Provision is secured of a partner to manage fishing rights on the site as set out in Section 4.11 of the report.
5. The future operating model of the Bereavement Centre be approved as set out in Section 4.16 of the report.

49. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE STREET SCENE (ECSS) MANAGEMENT FEE

Council considered a report (Y151, previously circulated) concerning a request from East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) Board, requesting an increase in Management Fee for 2023/24 to meet the additional costs the Company had encountered in year.

The Director Finance explained that ECSS had requested an additional management fee of up to £200k, on an open book arrangement to meet additional costs.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Huffer and seconded by Cllr Sharp.

Cllr Huffer reminded Members of the vast improvements in performance made by ECSS over the last year, with the main reason for the current overspend due to staffing costs. Changes had been agreed to the reporting requirements to

give greater transparency and oversight and to enable Members to have greater confidence to deliver a high-quality service, therefore she urged Members to support the recommendations.

Cllr Cane proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Cllr Inskip:

Delete 2.1 and replace with:

2.1 Council notes with grave concern that having requested an additional fee of up to £500,000 in February 2023 and having brought a forecast full year overspend of £80,000 to members' attention in November 2023 ECSS is now requesting an additional fee of up to £200,000 for 2023/24 and:

- approves ECSS carrying forward the overspend into 2024/25.
- requires the Directors of ECSS to provide 18 month rolling management accounts to the ECDC s151 Officer by the 10th working day after each month end.
- instructs the external auditors for ECSS to review the governance and controls in the company and report to shareholders, detailing any weaknesses and recommendations for improvements to ensure delivery of agreed service levels on waste collection and street cleaning and sound financial management; and
- requires that a report be provided to Full Council on 25 July reporting on the results of the above so that Council can decide whether to increase the fee for 2024/25 to cover the 2023/24 overspend brought forward.

Speaking as proposer of the Amendment, Cllr Cane acknowledged that ECSS delivered a vital service to residents that was valued by residents. Cllr Cane suggested there had been a failure of governance from ECDC and a failure of financial management by ECSS, with Audit Committee failing to identify the issues and the Council now faced a further request for an increased fee of £200k at the end of the financial year, followed by a further request of £1m for the next year. Concerns had been raised by both Cllr Cane and Inskip regarding the low risk allocated to ECSS, but assurances were given that it was correct. Last year, a request had been made for audit reviews and Director assurances, but this had been rejected. Cllr Cane was of the opinion that ECSS had not delivered the agreed service levels or addressed any of the issues raised. Cllr Cane explained that the amendment would allow ECSS to carry forward the 2023/24 overspend, required forward monthly reporting to the Section 151 Officer and requested an external audit review be carried out with the result enabling a decision to be made on whether to increase the 2024/25 to cover the overspend from 2023/24.

The Chair opened the debate on the amendment.

The Leader refuted the statements made above and that she could not support the amendment. Last year ECSS had dealt with several issues, but these had been resolved resulting in improved performance. Cllr Bailey stated that ECSS services could not be cut as this would directly impact on residents, therefore the increased management fee should be supported. All Councils had seen an increase in costs and experienced overspends. External Audit had stated that ECSS was in a good financial position with management accounts submitted to the Board and received by all Members and therefore the amendment was unnecessary. ECSS required certainty to be able to deliver the service and Cllr Bailey was happy to support the increase in management fee, especially with the future separate food waste collection service that would be implemented by 2026. East Cambs had the best recycling rate in the County and was ranked 25th in the country.

Cllr Sharp explained that the ECSS Business Case would be submitted to the Operational Services Committee in March and to delay this would result in ECSS going into 2024/25 without an agreed business plan. Cllr Sharp commented that he could not support the amendment.

Cllr Wade expressed the view that there had been a misrepresentation regarding the request for increased funds, the issue laid with a late notice period and that good financial management principles had not been followed.

Speaking as seconder of the amendment, Cllr Inskip stated concerns had been raised regarding sound financial management, due to basic practices not being followed such as failing to incorporate funding for timetabled bank holidays and adequately assess appropriate levels of funding for agency staff.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Huffer explained that relevant officers from ECSS had attended the recent Operational Services Committee to answer questions. Cllr Huffer added that the staff salary award had been made in November 2023 and the January Operational Service meeting was delayed in order for the ECSS Board minutes to be submitted to that meeting. ECSS was now a much-improved service, with a better management structure and a great team and Cllr Huffer encouraged the Council to support them.

Following a request for a recorded vote, the Amendment was lost with 9 votes in favour, 14 votes against and 0 abstentions:

FOR: (9) Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Dupré, Holtzmann, Inskip, Trapp, Wade and Wilson

AGAINST: (14) Cllrs Ambrose-Smith, Bailey, Brown, Bovingdon, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Huffer, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp and Vellacott.

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

Returning to the substantive motion, Cllr Vellacott explained that ECSS was not run for profit but at a minimum cost to taxpayers and, with only one contract with the Council, had no other option but to ask Council for an increase in management fees. Members were already aware of these issues as ECSS Board papers were included within the Operational Committee Agenda where no concerns or questions had been raised. Cllr Vellacott urged Members to look for solutions as the performance reports showed the service was good and improving.

Cllr Hunt added that what was wanted by the Council and residents was a good and reliable service and not added bureaucracy and therefore he supported the Motion.

Cllr Cane was concerned to hear management accounts described as bureaucracy; ECSS had overspent by nearly £500k the previous year, and by nearly £200k this year, without informing Members of the final figures until February. It was Cllr Cane's opinion that the management accounts should be reviewed monthly, and it was not good financial management to carry this out just quarterly. Cllr Cane was concerned by the statement that the audit processes had given ECSS a 'clean bill of health' and found no problems with governance, when the report only evidenced that no significant fraud or misstatement had taken place. This was why a specific report had been requested.

Speaking as seconder of the Motion, Cllr Sharp reiterated three reasons for the increase; the NJC pay award was above what was budgeted for, agency costs had been overspent in order to continue delivering the service and the maintenance costs of an aging fleet of vehicles. ECSS now had ten new vehicles which would cost much less to run. Cllr Sharp explained that within an audit report, comments were made on the going concern of a company and give a true and fair view whether the company would be able to continue until the next balance sheet date. As an Observer on the Board, Cllr Sharp confirmed he had asked questions about the accounts and there was a stringent review of the accounts in place. Therefore, he supported the recommendations.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Huffer stated that Members needed to approve the Motion to ensure that the Waste service could continue.

Following a request for a recorded vote, the recommendations were approved with 14 votes in favour, 9 votes against and 0 abstentions:

FOR: (14) Cllrs Ambrose-Smith, Bailey, Brown, Bovingdon, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Huffer, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp and Vellacott.

AGAINST: (9) Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Dupré, Holtzmann, Inskip, Trapp, Wade and Wilson

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

It was resolved that:

1. An additional management fee payment to ECSS in 2023/24 of up to £200,000 be approved.
2. The Director, Finance be authorised to make the payment, of up to £200,000, based upon an open book accounting approach, at the end of the financial year.

50. EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE TRADING COMPANY (ECTC) – LOAN DEADLINE EXTENSION REQUEST

Council considered (Y152, previously circulated) concerning a request from East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) Board, for an extension to the loan repayment deadline from March 2026 to March 2027.

The Director, Finance explained that due to delays in the NHS handing over land at the MoD site, ECTC would no longer be able to complete works within the timetabled forecast. Members were therefore asked to extend the period of the loan facility by 12 months, to March 2027, to allow the works to be completed before the loan facility needed to be repaid.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Sharp.

The Leader explained she was pleased to propose the request to extend the date of repayment of the loan from ECDC to ECTC. The need for this has arisen because the NHS at the Princess of Wales Hospital needed to use ECTC's land for temporary parking for longer than originally anticipated. ECTC and the Council wished to continue to support the NHS in their endeavours to improve facilities at the Hospital site and this meant delaying the start of the Council's plans for new homes on the MoD site, hence the need to extend the timing of the loan.

It was unanimously resolved that:

- i) The ECTC request for the loan repayment extension from March 2026 to March 2027, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report be approved.
- ii) The Director Finance and Director Legal be authorised to amend the Loan Agreement and Debenture Agreement to implement the above.

7.55pm – 8:10pm the meeting was briefly adjourned for a comfort break.

51. COUNCIL TAX, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS

Council considered the proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required level of Council Tax in 2024/25. The report assesses the robustness of the budgets, the adequacy of reserves and updates the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

The Director, Finance presented the report and explained when the draft budget was presented at the Finance and Assets Committee in January, the Council was still awaiting the local government finance settlement figure and the business rate information; these figures were now included in the report. Several additional changes also had been made, which included the capital and revenue costs of the crematorium project, increased car parking fees at Angel Drove and increased Members' allowances following the Independent Remuneration Panel report. The updated information, especially the business rates, had made a positive impact from the position reported to the Finance & Assets Committee. The Council, via the use of the Surplus Saving Reserve had a balanced budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and therefore there was no need to make any immediate changes to service delivery. However, the Council did continue to have significant savings requirements in years three and four of the MTFS and therefore consideration was needed as to how the gap would be bridged in order to achieve a balanced budget.

The Chair thanked the Director, Finance for the hard work required to produce the budget.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Huffer.

The Leader stated the Council was one of only 38 Councils out of 381 nationally that had no external borrowing and was the only District, County or Unitary authority in the country proposing to freeze Council Tax for the eleventh year in a row, when many Councils were increasing their Council tax by the maximum amount possible. East Cambridgeshire had a balanced budget for the next two years, with no cuts or efficiency targets built in and a staff establishment budgeted in full and significant additional funding for waste service, inflation, environmental improvements, and a new fleet of vehicles. The Council would be implementing a separate weekly food waste collection after receiving capital and revenue funding from the government. This would allow the Council to redesign the waste and recycling around the new service and funding had been factored into the budget for black wheelie bins; this would further increase the Council's recycling rate. Funding had also been received to help with the new Local Plan, to increase the Internal Drainage Boards, a new Council website and financing for ECTC for the Eden Square development. There were no assumptions of dividends from ECTC, but significant benefits had been received (income from Ely Markets, reduction in costs of maintaining parks and open spaces through income, interest payments, income from property activity). The Council had unearmarked reserves at 10% which was higher than many other local authorities. Cllr Bailey thanked Officers for their careful

management of local tax payer's funds and urged all Members to support the recommendations.

Cllr Dupré proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Cllr Cane:

To approve:

- i) The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in Appendix 1
- ii) The draft revenue budget for 2024/25 and MTFs for 2025/26 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendices 2(a) and 2(b) – LibDem, specifically to reflect the following proposals:
 - To remove the capital cost and all future revenue streams in relation to the Crematorium project
 - To fund the initial capital cost (£600,000) and then on-going revenue costs to implement Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) within the District (£40,000 in 2025/26 and future years) (Capital cost to be funded £400,000 from CIL and £200,000 from a revenue contribution)
 - To increase the Environment Fund from £100,000 to £200,000 per year
 - To fund an officer to assist local parish councils and community groups to source grant funding from third parties and provide additional grant funding to these groups (total cost £100,000)
 - To build in a (£400,000) turnover allowance on staff costs in recognition that there will be staff vacancies throughout the year
- iii) A Council Tax freeze in 2024/25
- iv) The draft Statement of Reserves as set out in Appendix 3 - LibDem
- v) The draft Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 4 - LibDem
- vi) The 2024/25 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 5
- vii) The extension of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure 75% Business Rate relief (and potentially other reliefs) (which will be fully funded by the Government through Section 31) as detailed in Sections 6.6 to 6.8 of this report.

Cllr Dupré highlighted that the amendment would remove funding from the crematorium, which would release £9m to enhance East Cambridgeshire and remove the legal and financial risks associated with the project. It also allowed the Council to pursue proper parking enforcement and doubled the funding for environmental activity. Further funding would increase the opportunity for match-funding, shared projects, cross council initiatives, promotional activities and partnership working. A new officer would be funded to advise and support parish councils and community groups on funding opportunities, submitting bids, along with a residual amount for small grants; this would be funded

through setting a prudent expectation of savings in vacant council posts. An increase was not proposed in the District portion of the Council Tax.

Cllr Vellacott raised a Point of Order stating that the amendment proposed to negate a decision of Council made earlier in the meeting in relation to the crematorium project and therefore asked if the amendment was valid.

8:20pm – 8:45pm the meeting was adjourned for the Chair to seek advice from the Officers.

On returning, the Chief Executive explained that Council was in an unusual position, as the opposition had submitted an amendment in good faith and had not presumed the outcome of the crematorium vote. The Council was now in a position where Members had approved the crematorium item, but both parties wished to facilitate a full discussion of the amendment and the motion. For this to take place, two thirds of Members would need to vote to suspend Council Procedure Rule 20 on Recission of Preceding Resolution; this would allow the Council to proceed with debate of the amendment and the motion.

A Motion to suspend Council Procedure Rule 20 for the duration of this item was proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Dupré and approved unanimously.

The Chair then resumed the debate on the amendment.

Cllr Hunt commented that Members should be fully aware of what the amendment implied in relation to Civil Parking Enforcement, as he understood that the Council would have to add all the road lines and signs to ensure the parking scheme was in a legal state prior to implementation, which would be costly.

Cllr Trapp added that Soham was of a similar size to Mildenhall and Mildenhall received approximately £20k in fines annually from the Civil Parking Enforcement carried out; therefore, it was worth considering as the Council would receive money from the fines and it would improve parking in Soham, Ely, Bottisham and elsewhere in the district.

Cllr Inskip highlighted two aspects of the amendment: tackling the climate emergency and responding to residents' concerns about parking enforcement and explained it was these key reasons why he supported the amendment.

Cllr Wilson added that parking was a problem across the whole district. He believed that the signs and road lines needed to be clearer in order for residents to know how and where to park. Cllr Wilson emphasised that helping Parish Councils and Community Groups to source grant funding would be beneficial to smaller parishes and community groups and this would provide better facilities for local residents.

Cllr Sharp explained the amendment effectively proposed a £400k increase in expenditure; as it increased funding for Parish Councils by £100k, the environment fund by £100k, and £200k on Civil Parking Enforcement. Cllr Sharp was of the opinion that good accounting practices had been distorted to achieve the extra funding by proposing a vacancy factor and he did not agree with this from an accounting point of view. Cllr Sharp recalled that other local authorities had decided to carry out Civil Parking Enforcement in 2021 and were still working towards implementation, due to the hidden costs; he did not consider this was the way forward for this District. Cllr Sharp agreed with Cllr Wilson's comments that there was a need to help Parish Councils to source grant funding but did not believe that a fund of £100K was required for this purpose.

Speaking as seconder of the amendment, Cllr Cane reiterated that parking was a problem within the District and residents were fed up with waiting for action to be taken. The enforcement was not meant as an income source but as a service to residents and to make the roads safer. The Council had recognised a climate emergency in 2019 and there was a need to act on it to address the problem. Voluntary Groups should be provided with dedicated support to access grants, and this would also help with match funding. The cost of providing these services would be funded through a vacancy factor and Cllr Cane commended the amendment to Members.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey stated it was pleasing to know that the opposition supported the Council Tax freeze, but it was disappointing that they wanted to increase the budget funding in year four. The amendment required building in £400k via a vacancy factor which she did not consider was appropriate. Cllr Bailey explained that CIL was meant for community infrastructure and not for maintaining lines and signs on highways, which could cost up to £1m, plus the cost of enforcement activity across the district would be approximately £50k; and expressed her belief that free parking was totally incompatible with Civil Parking Enforcement. The Amendment did not state what the additional £100k would be spent on for the Environment Fund. The Council's Environment Plan was already well evidenced and showed the Council reaching net zero by 2036, which was well ahead of many Councils. Cllr Bailey informed Members that she had lobbied the CPCA to provide £50k to fund activity relating to the Council's new biodiversity responsibilities and this was included in the budget. The Council also already had a team that provided help and support to Parish Councils and community groups to source grant funding, and they had no restriction on how they spent their CIL funds (£5.7m to date).

Following a request for a recorded vote, the Amendment was lost with 9 votes in favour, 14 votes against and 0 abstentions:

FOR: (9) Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Dupré, Holtzmann, Inskip, Trapp, Wade and Wilson

AGAINST: (14) Cllrs Ambrose-Smith, Bailey, Brown, Bovingdon, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Huffer, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp and Vellacott.

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

Returning to the substantive motion, Cllr Vellacott explained that the Council could justify its revenue, capital budgets and reserves and successfully balanced the budget two years in advance whilst keeping car parking free, charges low and providing services of a high quality. Surplus savings were utilised from previous years, leaving all other reserves intact for other projects. Cllr Vellacott thanked Council Officers as Council Tax was not being raised for the eleventh year in a row without compromising the delivery of excellent services and therefore, he supported the recommendations.

Cllr Dupré stated that she did not support the budget due to the spending of £9m on a crematorium, the ongoing problem of illegal parking and the under resourcing of action on the environment. She expressed the belief that residents deserved better.

Cllr Sharp commended the budget to the Council, as it was a responsible and prudent approach.

Speaking as seconder of the Motion, Cllr Huffer highlighted the positive points of the budget: balanced budget, no external borrowing, wheelie bins, weekly food collection, new Local Plan. She added that Civil Parking Enforcement would not work in the District.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey commented that the Police had agreed to carry out a Road Safety pilot in the District, creating new roles using Special Constables that would be called Road Safety Police Volunteers. Duties would include speeding enforcement, driver education activities and visiting schools, plus dangerous car parking enforcement action and, if the pilot was successful, it could be rolled out further. Cllr Bailey was proud of the budget and urged Members to support the recommendations.

Following a request for a recorded vote, the recommendations were approved with 14 votes in favour, 9 votes against and 0 abstentions:

FOR: (14) Cllrs Ambrose-Smith, Bailey, Brown, Bovingdon, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Huffer, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp and Vellacott.

AGAINST: (9) Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Dupré, Holtzmann, Inskip, Trapp, Wade and Wilson.

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

It was resolved:

That approval be given to:

- i) The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculated the Council Tax requirement, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
- ii) The draft revenue budget for 2024/25 and MTFs for 2025/26 to 2027/28, as set out in Appendices 2a and 2b of the report.
- iii) A Council Tax freeze in 2024/25.
- iv) The Statement of Reserves, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
- v) The Capital Strategy and financing, as set out in Appendix 4 of the report.
- vi) The 2024/25 Fees and Charges, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report.
- vii) The extension of the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure 75% Business Rate relief (and potentially other reliefs) (which would be fully funded by the Government through Section 31 grants), as detailed in Sections 6.6 to 6.8 of the report.

At 9:23pm Cllr Wade left the meeting and did not return.

52. CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY REPORT

Council considered the report and recommendations of the Constitution Review Working Party .

A motion was proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Pettitt as detailed in Appendix B of the submitted report.

Cllr Bailey thanked the Working Party and Officers for their work in carrying out the review and stated that the administration had worked through the proposed changes to the Constitution and made the recommendations in Appendix B to the report, which were submitted to the Working Group's final meeting. Cllr Bailey highlighted the key changes:

- The appointment of a new Lay Member to the Audit Committee would enable the Council to get ahead of proposed good practice changes
- Clarification on how the Audit Committee could request the attendance of Officers, via a resolution of the Committee.
- The move of ICT and the Environment Plan to Finance & Assets to improve the balance of responsibilities of the two policy Committees without additional cost and bureaucracy.
- Retention of the changes made by the administration a few years ago for the right of Members of the Public and Members of the Council to be

able to ask questions of any Member of the Council as it delivered maximum openness, transparency, and accountability.

- The adoption of the LGA model Code of Conduct, which would help bring consistency across Cambridgeshire.

Cllr Dupré proposed an amendment (attached at appendix 1 to the Minutes) together with supporting appendices, which was seconded by Cllr Cane.

Cllr Dupré commented that she had enjoyed the collaborative working on the Constitution Review Working Party and thanked the Chair and Members of the Working Party. The opposition had considered and deliberated upon the report, with the finding/recommendations falling into three categories; the issues agreed, those deferred to Council and the issues that were agreed by the Liberal Democrat but overturned by the Conservative group. The issues agreed were to remove gender language, a threshold for officer delegation to determine grants, the advance submission of questions, the adoption of the LGA Model Code of Conduct for Councillors and other minor matters. Those issues not agreed upon were the establishment of an additional policy committee, and changes to the Audit Committee. The items that were agreed within the Working Group but were now not put forward for approval were that procuring agency staff should not be exempt from contract procedural rules and that questions from both Members and the Public should be directed only to Councillors responsible for the running of and decisions made by the authority. The Amendment took a clear view on the issues the Working Group agreed to refer to Council and sought to restore the unanimous recommendations agreed by those in the Working Party. The amendment also sought to establish an Audit Committee capable of functioning effectively and to establish an additional Policy Committee to tackle planning, climate, and environmental issues

Cllr Hunt was of the opinion that if a Member had a problem or wanted to understand an issue, then they should speak directly to the relevant officer rather than asking questions in public meetings.

Cllr Trapp stated that he had been a Member of the Working Group and thanked the Chair for his work. He was surprised that recommendations made unanimously by the Working Group were being changed.

Speaking as seconder of the amendment, Cllr Cane stated she had been concerned with how the Audit Committee operated and that it was the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) recommendation that particular officers attend Audit Committee, two Lay Members be appointed to the Audit Committee, that a period of two years lapse before a Chair or Vice Chair of a Policy Committee be a member of the Audit Committee, for Officers and lead Members attend where appropriate and for Audit Committee to recommend the Statement of Accounts to Council and not approve it, as it was for all Members to decide if the accounts were true and fair.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey stated that there was much common ground between the motion and Working Group recommendations. She explained that the reason the Motion supported the

Officers' request regarding the contract procedure rules and agency staff exemption was because Officers needed to recruit the right people with the right skills in a timely manner without the delays of going through contract procedure rules and procurement. The Section 151 Officer had been asked to implement safeguards around the process to ensure that Officers signed-off the requests. Cllr Bailey added that she felt strongly regarding the public being able to hold all Members to account and if Members were concerned or anxious, then a written answer could be given later. Cllr Bailey emphasised that the Audit Committee was not a Scrutiny Committee as the Council ran a Committee System which was inclusive for all Members to take part, with scrutiny happening in Committees. The motion would also provide for Officers to be called to Audit Committee by resolution. Cllr Bailey stated that she could not support the amendment.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was declared to be lost.

Speaking on the Motion, Cllr Dupré believed that the Finance & Assets Committee would be overburdened with the extra business and expressed disappointment that Members of the Finance & Assets Committee would continue to be excluded from membership of the Audit Committee. Cllr Dupré also believed that it was an abuse of time and resources to use Council Question Time to quiz Members about matters that did not involve Council, these should be addressed to Members' directly. For the Audit Committee to be effective, it needed routine attendance from Officers and Members who were responsible for decisions of the Council, committees, and trading companies. Cllr Dupré stated she could not support the Motion.

Cllr Cane added that she also could not support the Motion and was concerned that just one Lay Member would be appointed to the Audit Committee. The procedure of Officers attending Audit Committee via resolution would be impractical. The added responsibilities now directed to the Finance & Assets Committee would overburden the Committee and could reduce the time available for important issues to be discussed. Cllr Cane also was concerned with the change in contract procedure rules which did not improve the transparency and accountability of the process and was disappointed that the Working Group which had worked well had not been allowed to present its unanimous decisions to Council.

Cllr Sharp raised three points:

- Cambridgeshire County Council only had one Lay Member on its Audit and Accounts Committee which worked well.
- At the last Operational Services Committee there had been an opportunity for Members to ask questions on the management accounts and management report.
- gave assurance that Finance & Assets Committee would thoroughly look at every item notwithstanding the additional responsibilities.

Speaking as seconder of the Motion, Cllr Pettitt stated it was important that the Public had the ability to ask any Member a question to hold them to account and to be heard. The recommendations improved the Audit Committee as an

independent non-voting member would be a welcome addition and the Committee could request the attendance of additional officers by resolution. The amendments to the recommendations were a compromise and a commitment to express openness and accountability which Cllr Pettitt supported.

Summing up as proposer of the original Motion, Cllr Bailey commented that the Working Party had not agreed unanimously, there were areas where there had been no agreement. Questions to Members gave the Public the right to question Members in a public forum.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

It was resolved that:

- (i) The annotated version of Council Procedure rules (Appendix B1) be approved, confirming:
 - that non-gender specific language should be used throughout the Constitution and specifically, that the preferred title should be 'Chair' rather than Chairman.
 - the deletion of paragraph 24.2.4.4 (ref: 4(21)) requiring one day's notice for the appointment of substitutes to Planning Committee.
 - amend paragraph 13.1.2 (ref: 4(14)), specifically to remove the Chairman of Council from the process to assess Questions from Members.
 - that a point of clarification must be confined to same material part of a previous speech by him/her in meeting taking place (ref: paragraph 17.1 (ref: 4 (16))).
- (ii) The changes to the Constitution of the Council's Audit Committee be approved as set out In Appendix B1a and the 'modus operandi', specifically:
 - the appointment of one lay member without voting rights to the Committee.
 - clarification on the attendance of officers at Audit Committee, specifically, and in addition to the lead officer, report author and those required by the Constitution to attend in addition, an appropriate officer can be instructed to attend, by Committee resolution, in relation to a specified current or future agenda item.
- (iii) The guidance to members be amended in relation to the submission of written questions to officers, specifically to request that written questions to officers be provided at least two working days in advance of a meeting.

- (iv) The financial regulations be amended (ref: Part 4 paragraph 6.2 p 4(30)), specifically to read:

“Scene Setting

The Finance & Assets Committee will receive a report to its September meeting, updating Committee with changes since the budget was approved in February and providing initial indications of how the future year’s budget will be constructed in advance of this being formally considered by Committee the following January. The Director, Finance will further share this report with all members of the Council.”

- (v) The changes to the Contract Procedure Rules be approved (ref: Part 4 paragraph 3.1.6 p.4 (75)), specifically to add contracts for agency staff as exempt.
- (vi) The changes to the Responsibility of Functions of the Constitution be approved, in relation to Operational Services and Finance & Assets Committee, specifically:
- ICT service plans and associated policy matters (ref: Part 3 section b(i) p3 (6- 13) be transferred from Operational Services to Finance & Assets Committee.
 - Council’s Environment Plan and all climate change/natural environment strategic matters be transferred from Operational Services to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3).
- (vii) The addendum to the Delegation to Officers be approved in relation to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3 Section B (ii)), specifically:

<p>Grants Determination of all grant requests under established grant schemes up to £50,000</p>	<p>Director, Community</p>
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- (viii) The amendments (tracked below) to the Delegation of Officers be approved in relation to Finance & Assets Committee (ref: Part 3 Section B (ii), specifically, ~~as set out in Appendix 2.~~

<p>To write off NNDR debt not exceeding £10,000 (Ref: Part 3 (ii) p 3(20))</p>	<p>Head of ARP or Operations Managers Head of NNDR, Recovery and Enforcement or Head of Benefits and Council Tax Billing</p> <p>With ARP, Operations Managers Revenues Recovery Managers write off debts below</p>
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	£1500 and Recovery — Team Managers Revenues and NNDR Team Leaders —or Senior Recovery Officer to write-off debts below £100 £150.
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To write off Council Tax and Housing Benefit overpayments debt not exceeding £5000.	Head of ARP or Operations Managers Head of NNDR, Recovery and Enforcement or Head of Benefits and Council Tax Billing With ARP, Operations Managers Revenues Recovery Managers write off debts below £1500 and Recovery Team Managers Revenues and NNDR Team Leaders or Senior Recovery Officer to write-off debts below £100 £150.
To write off any individual debt which does not exceed £1000 £3000, after consultation with the Director, Legal, after ensuring that all action for recovery has been taken.	Director, Finance

- (ix) The LGA Model Code of Conduct be adopted, together with a blanket policy to withhold the home address of Councillors, with Members having to 'opt in' to publish.

53. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORT

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority's:

- Skills and Employment Committee (4 September, 6 November 2023 & 15 January 2024)
- Transport and Infrastructure Committee (13 September, 15 November 2023 & 17 January 2024)
- Audit and Governance Committee (8 September, 17 November 2023 & 26 January 2024)
- Audit and Governance Sub Committee (14 November 2023)
- Environment and Sustainable Communities Committee (11 September, 13 November 2023 & 22 January 2024)
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee (18 September 2023 & 9 January, 29 January 2024)

- Human Resources Committee (27 September 2023, 16 November 2023)
- Board (20 September, 13 November 2023 & 15 January, 31 January 2024)

It was resolved unanimously:

That the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council's representatives be noted.

54. ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY

Council considered a report (Y155 previously circulated) to note the action taken on the grounds of urgency in relation changes to the ECTC and ECSS Boards of Directors (Implementation 1 November 2023).

It was unanimously resolved:

The action taken on the grounds of urgency be noted.

The meeting concluded at 21:54pm

Chair.....

Date.....