



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council
held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE
on Thursday 13th July 2023 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Chika Akinwale	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor James Lay
Councillor David Brown	Councillor David Miller
Councillor Charlotte Cane	Councillor Kelli Pettitt
Councillor Christine Colbert	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Caroline Shepherd
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Lucius Vellacott
Councillor Mark Goldsack (Chairman)	Councillor Mary Wade
Councillor Martin Goodearl	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Kathrin Holtzmann	Councillor Christine Whelan
Councillor Keith Horgan	Councillor Gareth Wilson

1 member of the public was in attendance.

18. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A question from an anonymous Stuntney resident was read aloud by the Democratic Services Manager:

“I write as a resident of Stuntney, and specifically in relation to Ben’s Yard. Whilst this is written by myself, I believe from conversations held in the village that similar views are held. I write anonymously because the operators of Ben’s Yard are major land and property holders within the village, and therefore it would be inappropriate for my name, or names of other local individuals, to be placed on public record via this question.

My question is thus: Ben’s Yard recently opened, and it should be congratulated for the quality of design, the excellent play facility provided and the impressive nature walks created. My question does not, therefore, relate to any of these matters, which appear to duly comply with the plans as consulted upon and approved by the Council.

However, what is clearly apparent from the Ben's Yard website is that the operators are using the newly installed facilities, such as car parks and access road, to establish in the fields adjacent to the main operation some form of 'events showground'. The planning permission for Ben's Yard does not include any such form of events showground. Whilst under planning law it is accepted that short term temporary events are permitted without the need for planning permission, such events are limited in law to 28 days in any calendar year. However, Ben's Yard have the following listed:

1. Folk Festival – 3 days, plus set up either side
2. Travelling Fair and 'Beach', comprising 26 large fairground rides and stalls – running for 40 days, plus set up either side
3. Open air cinema weekends – 3 nights, plus set up either side

Therefore, within 3 months of opening, the operators are already planning to run 46 days of public events, attracting hundreds of cars and people each day, plus additional days of delivery vehicles to set up and take down events. In just three months, this is well in excess of the permitted 28 days per year.

Can the Council please confirm:

- a. that they will urgently discuss these events with the operators, reminding them of their legal limit of 28 days per year, and,
- b. that the Council is actively monitoring the number of days the operator is temporarily using the land for major events, and
- c. should the operator continue to proceed with the events, that the council will robustly enforce the law once any permitted development rights have been breached.

As the local community, we trust the Council, having been given advance warning of these events, does not delay in taking action.

Thank you.”

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

“The Council has contacted the applicant's planning agent and we can confirm that the permission does allow for eight seasonal events each year within the red line of the development limit and this includes the grass area to the rear of the car park. The summer beach event will be one of those events as is likely to be the case for some of the events publicised.

Some activity outside the red line does also have the benefit of the 28 day permitted development limits and we would ensure this is the case. The seasonal events can be in operation beyond the hours limitation on the planning permission, so can take place in the evenings. So far there is no expected breach of planning control.

In addition to this, the premises has been visited by both the Licensing Manager and Senior Environmental Health Officer (Commercial) to discuss the licensing requirements and the role of the Safety Advisory Group. I can confirm that no

licensing breaches were observed, and satisfactory discussions were had regarding their future plans.

So we will continue to work with Ben's Yard to ensure that all activities remain lawful from a planning, licensing, food safety and Health and Safety perspective."

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Bovingdon, Huffer, Pitt and Trapp.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Dupré and A Whelan declared an interest in the Motion at Agenda Item 7 "Greater Cambridge Partnership: Making Connections Consultation" due to being members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

21. MINUTES – 25th MAY 2023

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that he had attended various civic functions including a garden party hosted by the Lord High Sheriff.

23. PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

6:11pm Cllrs Dupré and A Whelan left the meeting for the duration of the following item.

24. NOTICE OF MOTIONS UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

Greater Cambridge Partnership: Making Connections Consultation

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Sharp:

That this Council notes the feedback from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) 2022 Making Connections consultation and the key findings that:

- Over 70% of respondents were in favour of the future transport network – with more buses to more locations, cheaper fares and longer operating times supported by better walking and cycling infrastructure to give people faster, cheaper and more reliable travel alternatives to the car.

- 58% of respondents overall, and 59% of respondents from East Cambridgeshire opposed the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) as the means of delivering the future transport network.

This Council also notes the negative impacts of the proposals detailed in the many individually written consultation responses from residents, businesses, public sector employees, charities and voluntary groups from across Cambridgeshire.

Further, this Council notes the discussion by the GCP Assembly at its meeting on 26th June 2023 and the recommendations before the GCP Board at its meeting on 29th June 2023 to:

- a. note the feedback from the 2022 Making Connections consultation, including the public survey, the accompanying opinion polling, organizational submissions, and stakeholder meetings;
- b. informed by the feedback from the consultation, and the comments of the GCP Joint Assembly, note and comment on the range of scenarios for modifying the proposed scheme, set out in this paper in section 9;
- c. request that GCP officers work with Cambridgeshire County Council officers to develop the technical assessment needed to present an Outline Business Case for further consideration by the GCP Executive Board, and by Cambridgeshire County Council, in Autumn 2023;
- d. agree to work with the CPCA, as the Transport Authority, including the provision of resource, to input findings from the Making Connections consultation and technical work into the CPCA's work on bus reform and review of the bus network; and
- e. request that GCP officers develop proposals for the early introduction of a bus and sustainable travel package (as set out in section 11) based on the £50m of city deal funding provisionally allocated for this purpose, for decision at the GCP Executive Board meeting in December 2023.

This Council believes that:

- a. the changes to the STZ under discussion represent a serious erosion of the business model as presented in the Making Connections consultation, leading to increased bureaucracy and cost of implementing and running the road charging elements of the scheme, as well as reducing the income generated, which will result in a reduction in funding for the future transport network and lead to a failure to deliver the promised bus services and sustainable travel improvements;
- b. the GCP has failed to consider or present alternatives to road charging.

This Council therefore urges the GCP, CCC and the CPCA to cease work on the implementation of road charging and, with all partner organisations, MPs, businesses and organisations across

Cambridgeshire, to develop alternative proposals that demonstrate public support, focussing on both early delivery of multiple small improvements as well as accelerating work on larger projects that can and will encourage people away from private vehicle use.

If the GCP and its partners refuse to cease work on the implementation of road charging, this Council urges it to present thorough and detailed cost and feasibility studies for all permutations of the revised scheme under discussion, including necessary arising revisions to the future bus network and sustainable travel improvements.

Speaking as the proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey highlighted the very high number of responses to the GCP's consultation and emphasised that, although people wanted better public transport, it was clear that they did not support road charging to pay for it. 59% of East Cambridgeshire's residents had voted against it. She stressed that the proposals were not necessarily limited to Cambridge; the Combined Authority's new transport plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough included general terms such as "area-wide road user charging", "cordon-based road user charging" and "20-minute neighbourhoods", all of which penalised motorists. Any changes to the original GCP proposals would result in reduced income and therefore fewer bus services and active transport solutions; the already poor transport offer for East Cambridgeshire would then inevitably be worse. Nonetheless, Officers had been tasked with developing proposals based on the £50m of city deal funding, that would be unaffordable under an altered model. When services were cut, rural areas would be adversely affected. No politicians had stood for election on a manifesto of road charging and there was therefore no mandate for its introduction. She urged all Councillors to be united in asking the GCP, County Council, Combined Authority and Mayor to end the work on the implementation of road charging and instead focus on proposals that would benefit all residents. However, if they would not stop the work, then they should provide detailed cost and feasibility studies for the revised scheme to explain clearly the new proposal.

The following Amendment was proposed by Cllr Cane and seconded by Cllr Inskip (additions in bold, deletions crossed through):

That this Council notes the feedback from the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) 2022 Making Connections consultation and the key findings that:

- Over 70% of respondents were in favour of the future transport network – with more buses to more locations, cheaper fares and longer operating times supported by better walking and cycling infrastructure to give people faster, cheaper and more reliable travel alternatives to the car.
- 58% of respondents overall, and 59% of respondents from East Cambridgeshire opposed the proposed Sustainable Travel Zone (STZ) as the means of delivering the future transport network.

This Council notes the acute shortage of public transport in many, particularly rural, areas of East Cambridgeshire, and the greater levels of support for the Making Connections proposals expressed by younger and older people who are among those most adversely affected by the lack of means of travel to education, employment, healthcare, leisure, and other services.

This Council also notes the negative impacts of the proposals detailed in the many individually written consultation responses from residents, businesses, public sector employees, charities and voluntary groups from across Cambridgeshire.

Further, this Council notes the discussion by the GCP Assembly at its meeting on 26th June 2023 and the recommendations before the GCP Board at its meeting on 29th June 2023 to:

- a. note the feedback from the 2022 Making Connections consultation, including the public survey, the accompanying opinion polling, organizational submissions, and stakeholder meetings;
- b. informed by the feedback from the consultation, and the comments of the GCP Joint Assembly, note and comment on the range of scenarios for modifying the proposed scheme, set out in this paper in section 9;
- c. request that GCP officers work with Cambridgeshire County Council officers to develop the technical assessment needed to present an Outline Business Case for further consideration by the GCP Executive Board, and by Cambridgeshire County Council, in Autumn 2023;
- d. agree to work with the CPCA, as the Transport Authority, including the provision of resource, to input findings from the Making Connections consultation and technical work into the CPCA's work on bus reform and review of the bus network; and
- e. request that GCP officers develop proposals for the early introduction of a bus and sustainable travel package (as set out in section 11) based on the £50m of city deal funding provisionally allocated for this purpose, for decision at the GCP Executive Board meeting in December 2023.

This Council believes that:

- a. ~~the changes to the STZ under discussion represent a serious erosion of the business model as presented in the Making Connections consultation, leading to increased bureaucracy and cost of implementing and running the road charging elements of the scheme, as well as reducing the income generated, which will~~ **could** result in a reduction in funding for the future transport network and lead to a failure to deliver the promised bus services and sustainable travel improvements;
- b. **the previous proposals do not provide a sufficiently comprehensive bus service to East Cambridgeshire residents to enable them to use public transport for**

necessary everyday activities, and thus place an undue burden on those who have to rely on a car to commute to work or access healthcare;

- c. ~~the GCP has failed to consider or present alternatives to~~ **should review and reconsider additional revenue generation options to significantly reduce the reliance on road charging.**

This Council therefore urges the GCP, CCC and the CPCA to ~~cease work on the implementation of road charging and, with all partner organisations, MPs, businesses and organisations across Cambridgeshire, to develop alternative proposals that demonstrate public support, focussing on both early delivery of multiple small improvements as well as accelerating work on larger projects that can and will encourage people away from private vehicle use~~ **a substantial improvement in public transport provision for East Cambridgeshire residents to access Cambridge, enabling those without a car to travel into the city as well as providing alternatives for car users to reduce congestion and pollution, so that East Cambridgeshire residents can both travel into Cambridge and continue their journey within Cambridge by public transport.**

~~If the GCP and its partners refuse to cease work on the implementation of road charging, this Council urges it to present thorough and detailed cost and feasibility studies for all permutations of the revised scheme under discussion, including necessary arising revisions to the future bus network and sustainable travel improvements.~~

Speaking as proposer of the Amendment, Cllr Cane explained that a paragraph had been added to address the acute need for public transport and the need to note all responses to the consultation, not just those opposed to the introduction of a charge. In the section regarding the Council's beliefs, an explicit statement had been added about the proposal's poor provision for East Cambridgeshire. The statement about the GCP's failure to consider alternatives had been removed since it did not recognise previous work, for example on the workplace parking levy, and that inaccuracy undermined the Motion as a whole. Finally, revisions had been made to pressure the GCP about the specific requirements for East Cambridgeshire and remove the requirement for feasibility studies on proposals that would not be implemented and would therefore be a waste of public funds. The Amendment would strengthen the Motion and enable a bipartisan approach to engage constructively in representing the range of views of all residents.

During subsequent debate on the Amendment, the importance of elected representatives representing the views of their residents, irrespective of their personal viewpoints, was stressed and the majority of consultation responses being opposed to the charge was highlighted. The practicality of using public transport to travel into Cambridge and onward if needing to transport equipment for work or large quantities of shopping was challenged, although another Member provided personal experience of it working well. A Member expressed concern that the Amendment did not clearly oppose road charging and

explained that a significant concern with the charging proposals was the lack of a properly costed business case, which meant that feasibility studies would be crucial.

Speaking as the seconder of the Amendment, Cllr Inskip stressed the importance of the GCP, County Council and Combined Authority working together in order to address the challenges. The Liberal Democrat Group had been clear in their opposition to the GCP's original proposal as not being fair or equitable for East Cambridgeshire's residents and he encouraged all Members to work together for the best outcomes for the residents. He stressed the poor public transport options in the District, particularly for the villages and rural areas, and agreed with previous speakers that Members should represent all constituents, not just those served by good public transport or who owned a car. The GCP had proposed significant improvements to both frequency and links, but the proposals did not go far enough and the Liberal Democrat Amendment in December 2022 to the Council's response to the GCP's consultation had addressed that. The current Motion rejected the need for a step change and instead indicated that multiple small changes would be acceptable, which risked undermining the Council's message to the GCP. In order to address the climate emergency, alternatives to the car were essential. A range of funding options for public transport were also required and the Amendment sought to improve the Motion in that respect. Members were urged to support the proposal in order to give a united response for the best outcome for all residents.

As the proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey highlighted that GCP Board documents made it clear that potential changes such as free days, increasing exemptions, or reducing the chargeable hours would reduce the income and consequently the transport offer. She considered that the public transport proposals were unambitious and that a "turn up and go" public transport solution was required to provide options that would be cheaper and quicker than using a car. Alternatives such as light rail, autonomous transport and tunnelling under Cambridge should all be explored. She emphasised the Council's work to facilitate local jobs for local people, for example with the expansion of the Lancaster Business Park, and the cross-party work on the bus prospectus and cycle/walk priority routes.

On being put to the vote, the Amendment was lost with 9 votes in favour and 13 votes against with 0 abstentions.

Returning to the Motion, several Members reiterated the importance of representing the views of the electorate who opposed the charge, and of delivering an improved public transport and active travel infrastructure that was suitable for all residents. Expansion of the London congestion charge was cited as evidence of the danger that plans could be expanded once agreed to on an incremental basis, and the presence of appropriate infrastructure before – rather than after – the introduction of charging elsewhere was highlighted.

Other Members considered that the Motion was unambitious for residents and focused almost exclusively on drivers rather than also considering the young

and old who often relied on other forms of transport. The need to address transport issues in order to protect the environment and move towards net zero was highlighted as well as the impact of poor public transport on important life decisions such as which sixth form would best suit an individual. Opposition to the proposed congestion charge in its existing form was stressed, along with the need to look for alternative solutions and compromise positions to address the concerns of all parties. A Member agreed with the proposer's suggestion that alternatives such as light rail should be explored, but highlighted that this was not included in the Motion and neither were the Ely railway junction improvements that were vitally important.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Sharp stressed that the purpose of the Motion was to highlight some of the issues that needed addressing with regard to public transport in Cambridgeshire. Buses would not solve all of the problems and he noted that light rail was once more being discussed at County level. A viable, properly-costed, business plan for the GCP proposals had not been provided which meant they could not be seriously considered. The GCP and the Combined Authority also needed to work together and the Motion encouraged that. Regarding the Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Scheme, he informed Members that it had been discussed extensively at the Rail Summit at Cambridge North Station the previous week and lobbying would take place as a result of that. He encouraged support for the Motion and stressed the importance of lobbying for the interests of residents and a proper solution to transport in the whole of the County.

Summing up as the proposer of the Motion, Cllr Bailey thanked all Members for the interesting debate. She stated that although 1000 East Cambs residents had responded to the consultation, over 4000 had responded to the Conservative Group's pre-election survey and 89% of those responses had opposed the charge. She then read out comments from a number of charities, businesses, and other organisations who considered that a congestion charge would have negative impacts. She urged all Members to listen to those groups, and to local residents, and suggested that opposing the Motion would, in effect, be supporting the imposition of a further burden during a cost of living crisis.

Following a recorded vote at the request of Cllr Goodearl, the Motion was declared to be carried with 13 votes in favour and 0 votes against with 9 abstentions:

FOR: (13) – Cllrs Ambrose Smith, Bailey, Brown, Edwards, Goldsack, Goodearl, Horgan, Hunt, Lay, Miller, Pettitt, Sharp, Vellacott

AGAINST: (0)

ABSTENTIONS: (9) – Cllrs Akinwale, Cane, Colbert, Holtzmann, Inskip, Shepherd, Wade, C Whelan, Wilson

7:17pm Cllrs Dupré and A Whelan returned to the meeting. Cllr Horgan briefly left the meeting.

25. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

Seven questions were received and responses given as follows:

i) Question to Cllr Charlotte Cane from Cllr Lucius Vellacott:

“This morning I visited Littleport Youth Building and the surrounding development with Cllr Ambrose Smith, Littleport’s Youth Worker, and members of the Town Council. I was delighted to see the opportunities this facility enables for local young people to find support and opportunities.

Soham, Littleport and Bottisham are all hosting a wonderful event called Youth Fusion in the coming weeks – a chance for young people to find something to do for leisure or employment and seek advice on the issues we know matter to us. Members will agree that these events are a perfect opportunity to live up to our vision: that the District Council becomes a vehicle to help young people find their essential purpose, and I have been proudly promoting them in the local media this week.

On Monday 19th June, Cllr Cane attended the Operational Services Committee as a substitute member. At this meeting, the Liberal Democrat group submitted 51 questions in advance on the Environment Plan and the Budget Monitoring Report, but just one on the Youth Engagement Plan which I spoke on. That question was Cllr Cane’s on how well advertised the Youth Fusion events were.

What is Cllr Cane doing to raise the profile of these events? How will she ensure that impartial Youth Engagement does not become a sidelined priority for her group as it appears to be currently?”

Response from Cllr Charlotte Cane:

“I thank Cllr Vellacott for his question.

Youth Engagement and opportunities have always been a high priority for me and for the Lib Dem group. That is why, for example, we strongly supported the Mepal outdoor centre, which was used by youth across the district and beyond. Sadly, the Conservatives secretly planned its demolition for several years and finally demolished it in December 2021 to make way for a crematorium despite the public consultation showing 85% against the plans. Interesting that 85% apparently doesn’t count. It’s why we believe the debate over the GCP sustainable transport plans must recognise that 61% of people aged 16-24 supported or strongly supported the sustainable travel zone proposals.

I had been in dialogue with the Youth team about the Fusion events well before the Committee papers were published, to understand what the events were, how I could be involved and how I could best advertise them locally. I questioned the late advertising precisely because it was going to be difficult to publicise the events locally at short notice – village magazines had gone to press with many not publishing in August, in particular the Bottisham one; and schools were

in exam season, and Cllr Sharp acknowledged that at the Committee as well. Cllr Vellacott will no doubt remember that the reason for the late advertising was the late confirmation of grant funding, so the Committee agreed to my suggestion to consider ensuring that future budgets provide for these events to be funded by ECDC if the grant requests were unsuccessful. This will allow the team in future to confirm their bookings and advertise in good time to maximise attendance.

If we are to accept Cllr Vellacott's methodology of counting written questions to show members' priorities we must assume that apart from him, none of the Conservative members of the committee thought any of the items on the agenda were of importance, since they submitted no questions at all. Indeed, Cllr Vellacott himself did not submit any written questions on the Youth Engagement Plan. Cllr Vellacott did speak to that item, as did I and several other members of the Lib Dem Group, but only one other member of the Conservative Group.

I am very confident that Youth Engagement and opportunities is a priority for the Lib Dem Group. Cllr Vellacott appears to have quite a bit of work to do to ensure it is not a sidelined priority for the Conservative Group."

7:21pm Cllr Horgan returned to the meeting.

ii) Question to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group from Cllr Bill Hunt:

"Cllr Dupré will be aware that Liberal Democrat controlled South Cambs District Council and Liberal Democrat led Cambridgeshire County Council increased the 2023/24 Council Tax charges by the maximum allowed.

In contrast, this Council froze Council Tax in 2023/24 for the tenth year running.

Liberal Democrat run South Cambs District Council has also reduced the working hours of staff by 20% through the introduction of a 4 day working week for all staff with no reduction in staff salaries.

I am sure Cllr Dupré is also aware that the Chief Executive of South Cambs District Council is now known to be working on a PHD about the 4 day working week, a fact that was hidden from the general public.

The Government Minister, Lee Rowley, has written to the Lib Dem Leader of South Cambs, Cllr Bridget Smith, requesting that the 4 day working week experiment be ended immediately and advising that removing 20% of the capacity of the workforce is not compatible with a Council seeking to demonstrate best value for money for its taxpayers and residents. He advises that he will be issuing clear guidance for the sector that this should not be pursued by Councils.

Can Cllr Dupre please therefore confirm that she will support the administration at this Council in agreeing that we will not pursue the implementation of a 4 day working week at East Cambs District Council?"

Response from the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr Lorna Dupré:

"I'm sure Cllr Hunt will agree with me that how local authorities choose to run their services is a matter for them, which is what makes the demand from Government minister Lee Rowley all the more inappropriate, especially given the early success of the South Cambridgeshire trial in positively affecting recruitment and retention, filling vacant posts, and already cutting £300,000 from South Cambridgeshire District Council's £2 million per year agency staff costs."

iii) Question to the Chair of the Operational Services Committee from Cllr Chika Akinwale:

"I would like to address the Chair of Operational Services on a matter that is close to my heart and of great importance to our community.

Recently, a concerned Ely resident reached out to me. They questioned whether our community's local playgrounds are designed with the consideration of disabled children in mind. I found myself asking the same question and the more I pondered on it, the more I felt the urgency to champion the cause for inclusive playgrounds. These spaces not only provide an essential area for play and activity but also serve to affirm the rights of disabled children to enjoy their local playgrounds just like their peers.

As someone who grew up alongside an autistic sibling, I understand the crucial role of inclusive public spaces in creating a sustainable community, fostering a sense of belonging and equal opportunity. Our playgrounds should not be an exception to this principle. They should offer every child the opportunity to play, learn, and interact with their peers regardless of their physical or cognitive abilities.

In light of this, I have a few important questions I'd like to put forward:

1. Have we conducted an assessment of the current state of our local playgrounds in terms of accessibility and inclusivity for disabled children?
2. What provisions do we currently have in place to accommodate disabled children's needs in our public spaces, and particularly, in our playgrounds?
3. Are we aware of the Scope's Disability Price Tag research, which shows that disabled households need an additional £975 a month on average to maintain the same standard of living as non-disabled households?

In the face of these findings, free and inclusive local amenities such as playgrounds become essential. They offer recreational opportunities that all

families, irrespective of their income or abilities, should have the right to enjoy, whilst focusing on one of our key priorities in East Cambridgeshire – creating sustainable communities.

Finally, I propose a question for us all to consider: Could we, as the governing Council, commit to championing the cause of inclusivity in our playgrounds, to provide an equal platform for all children to enjoy their local amenities?."

Response from the Vice-Chair of the Operational Services Committee, Cllr Alan Sharp:

"Thank you Councillor Akinwale for your question.

As I understand it, East Cambs is responsible for 25 play areas, but obviously there are a lot more that are managed by Parish Councils and I don't have that number. The Council, as I say, is responsible for a number of playgrounds across the District, the majority of which have been adopted from developers. We continue to work with developers, encouraging them to consider inclusive play equipment, as part of the play space and landscape designs.

When an existing playground, that we own, needs to be replaced, we will take the opportunity to look at inclusive replacement equipment and access improvements. In the Country Park and Jubilee gardens, where the Council had control of the designs of the playgrounds from the beginning, inclusive play equipment and access has been included. The District Council regularly consults users of Ely Country Park to ensure that the needs of the community are provided for and to identify any additional access requirements. The Council aims to make the areas that they manage as accessible as possible and to promote the accessible rights of way around the site. All access improvements led by the District Council have been in consultation with the East Cambs Access Group.

With regard to Scope's Disability Price Tag research, thank you for highlighting this important research. The Council's Housing and Community Advice Team are able to offer advice and support to disabled people and their households.

As the Chairman said, I am answering this on behalf of Cllr Huffer who is sadly not here, but I understand from members of the Planning Committee over the last few years that on every application where there's been an application involving play provisions, Cllr Huffer has advocated that the provision should be inclusive for children with disabilities. As I said at the start, obviously we as a Council don't run probably the majority of play areas that are in this Council area, but I'm happy to discuss how we engage with Parish Councils on this issue in the future and I will certainly discuss it with Cllr Huffer and I am sure it will come back to one of our Operational Services Committee meetings."

iv) Question to the Leader of the Council from Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann:

“I welcome the Council’s decision to develop the Environmental Chapter for the new Local Plan before commencing with the full development of a new Local Plan next year. It is important that the new homes being built make use of the proven technologies we have available to reduce energy use, water consumption and avoid pollution and unhealthy indoor climates. Many of these measures are not more costly or complicated when considered at the planning stage, for example orienting groups of buildings to allow maximum capacity for use of the generation of solar and solar-thermal energy or minimisation of upfront carbon emissions by conscious materials choice but can become insurmountable obstacles when they haven’t been taken into account. We cannot saddle residents with homes that need a retrofit as soon as they have been finished, because developers are lacking ambition.

Addressing such topics with a new environmental chapter will benefit our residents with lower bills and healthier and more comfortable living spaces and help reduce our district’s carbon footprint.

Will this Council reappoint a cross party working group to help develop an ambitious and feasible new Environmental Chapter for the Local Plan that supports our ambition as a district to reach Net Zero by 2035? Given our joint ambitions to care for the environment, will this working group consist of equal numbers of members across the parties to ensure that we make use of the full expertise of the Council?”

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

“I’m very pleased to note Cllr Holtzmann’s support for the proposed new environment chapter in the forthcoming new Local Plan, and of course Member involvement in its preparation will be absolutely vital, as it will be a full Local Plan review when we commence that. It’s worth remembering that Finance and Assets Committee has responsibility for overseeing and agreeing most aspects of Planning Policy in this Council, though the preparation of a formal Local Plan review is reserved for Full Council.

I can advise that Officers are commencing a programme as to how the new environment chapter will be drafted and consulted on. My expectation is that, in line with the Constitution, the Finance and Assets Committee will be utilised to consider and debate the content of that chapter – all Members are welcome to attend meetings where items are on the agenda – rather than establishing a separate Member Working Group at this stage. However, once Government has clarified the new procedures for Local Plan making and, consequently, this Council agrees to commence a full Local Plan review, I envisage a Member Working Group to be established at that stage. That Member Working Group can then advise Full Council at the formal statutory stage of Local Plan making. So, it is coming, it will happen, and clearly it sounds like Cllr Holtzmann has very passionate views on the subject and I really welcome her contributions.”

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

“Many East Cambs residents have been alarmed by the Sunday Times report at the weekend of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) plan, referred to as “Cambridge 2040”, which envisages up to a quarter of a million additional homes being built in and around Cambridge. In addition to major new land allocations for housing, it is reported that large swathes of land will be identified to construct new business parks, laboratories and science hubs.

The same report stated that DLUHC are discussing changes to environmental restrictions that currently oblige developers to show new homes will not lead to more phosphates and nitrates running into rivers and polluting them. Proposals to weaken environmental protections are particularly concerning in a water stressed area such as Cambridgeshire and where our rivers are already suffering from pollution.

What details is the Leader of the Council willing to share publicly on discussions members of the council administration have had with ministers and officials at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities? And what representations has she made about the impact of the Cambridge 2040 plan on East Cambs residents?”

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

“Thank you for the question Cllr Inskip, it’s good to be able to talk on this subject and it came as as much of a surprise to me as it did to everybody else I think. I can confirm that no members of the Council administration have had any discussion with ministers and officials at DLUHC, and no information has been received by the Council about any such proposals.

I suspect though that the focus on Greater Cambridge may well have been fuelled by the greatest proponent of growth in Greater Cambridge which is none other than the Lib Dem Leader of South Cambs District Council, Cllr Bridget Smith, who has been busy promoting and actively engaged in, the Ox Cam Arc project, which itself has plans for 1 million homes. She is also bringing forward a new Local Plan with housing numbers that are far in excess of that currently required by Government.

In February 2020, the Council did submit a response to the “Greater Cambridge Local Plan Consultation” regarding cross-boundary strategic matters, individual sites, which could arise between the two areas.

Unfortunately, the Lib Dem led administration in South Cambs has been failing badly to ensure developers provide the necessary resources and infrastructure to support growth. The failure to extract funds from developers for Waterbeach Railway Station for example is now being picked up by the public purse, and the failure to ensure protection and provision of water resources is, as Cllr Inskip has

highlighted, resulting in catastrophic environmental damage to our chalk streams.”

vi) Question to Cllr Alan Sharp from Cllr Charlotte Cane:

“At Operational Services Committee on 19 June Cllr Sharp, Vice Chairman of the Committee, stated that he had heard that “last week that it was too hot for solar panels to generate electricity”.

According to Prof Alastair Buckley, from the University of Sheffield “It’s not actually a big deal. High temperatures only marginally affect the overall output of solar power – it’s a secondary effect. If it’s sunny and hot, you are going to get good power output. It doesn’t fall off a cliff.”

According to the National Grid, in the 7 days before Cllr Sharp made his statement solar power generated almost 10% of the UK’s electricity. In June 2023, the hottest June on record, the UK generated more solar electricity than in any of the previous 11 months.

Cllr Sharp’s incorrect statement could undermine the Council’s priority of engaging the public in the Council’s environmental aims and put people off installing solar panels to reduce their energy costs and their carbon footprint.

Would Cllr Sharp please:

1. explain why he thought that solar panels stopped generating electricity in hot weather; and
2. confirm that solar panels do generate electricity in hot weather and are already helping to reduce the UK’s demand for fossil fuels and will help remove the need for fossil fuels entirely from the UK’s energy supply.”

Response from Cllr Alan Sharp:

“My comment at the Operational Services Committee was made after seeing a headline from The Daily Telegraph. I support the production of solar energy in appropriate locations, as we have around the District. However, I am 100% opposed to the Sunnica application, as it is not in a suitable location. In the spirit of working together, I will resist from quoting newspaper headlines in the future. I will continue to work on the Operational Services Committee on behalf of all of our residents, which is the most important role that I can undertake.”

vii) Question to the Chair of the Operational Services Committee from Cllr Mary Wade:

“I have the pleasure of representing the Ely East ward which comprises a diverse range of neighbourhoods within Ely: ranging from the market square to the newer houses around Kings Avenue. As you would expect there is an equally diverse range of viewpoints I encounter on the door steps.

There was however one consistent theme across that united all residents and this was a concern around parking and the lack of consequences for vehicles that were parked illegally. I am also receiving emails to express frustration at the problem. The non-compliance with parking rules was reported as impacting residents in a number of ways: disrupting the access of residents with mobility problems or residents with pushchairs and prams, lack of disabled parking spaces for those with blue badges as they were occupied by

vehicles without this privilege, blocking of vision when residents are manoeuvring onto main roads increasing the risk of an accident.

How can the Council reassure residents that they are taking their concerns on this matter seriously?

Is there evidence of successful action or influencing that has been taken by the Council to resolve the problem I could share with my residents?

Looking to the future: what is the Council planning to do about the parking problems and by when?"

Response from the Leader of Council, Cllr Anna Bailey:

"Thank you Cllr Wade, it's an excellent question, highlights massive concerns and I totally share the frustrations of local residents in relation to illegal and anti-social car parking, it's utterly selfish and if everybody stuck to the rules we'd all live much more happily. Of course I think Members will be aware the enforcement of on street car parking in East Cambridgeshire is currently a Police matter and Members will have seen an action regarding this is included in the Council's new Corporate Plan to be presented later this evening.

The Council has ruled out the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement, as it would lead to the introduction of car parking charges in our off street car parks. This has actually been confirmed by Cambridgeshire County Council and the Lib Dem Chairman of the County Council Highways Committee, Cllr Alex Beckett, publicly recognises the need to underwrite financial losses of Civil Parking Enforcement through the introduction of car parking charges – in the case of South Cambridgeshire, this will mean on street car parking charges in the villages of South Cambs. I don't honestly think that's going to go down too well when people really understand that's what's happening after the GCP money runs out. For us here in East Cambs it would mean the introduction of car parking charges in our off street car parks, something that we have promised not to do.

The Conservative administration simply won't put our free car parking policy at risk by the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement. So, what are we doing instead? Instead, we approached the Police about using powers under S38 of the Police and Crime Act 2017. Supt James Sutherland gave the Council a really excellent presentation about his proposals in October 2022 – you can view that presentation on my blog on our Group's website, it's well worth listening to, it's very carefully considered and well set out presentation and he's clearly very committed to this.

What is happening is that the Police have developed a new role, akin to Special Constables which have a long and noble tradition in the UK. The role is one of Road Safety Police Volunteers and they will be uniformed, including body armour and headwear, they'll carry body

cameras and Police radios and they'll have access to unmarked Police vehicles.

As well as capturing evidence of speeding and car parking abuse that will lead to fines, the role will also include an education remit – talking to motorists at the school gates for example, something that simply doesn't happen at the moment.

The Road Safety Police Volunteers will also be able to give real teeth to our Speedwatch Volunteer groups as they will have the necessary latest generation equipment that will lead to fines for speeding as well rather than just a letter through the post and a slap on the wrist.

As Supt Sutherland explained at our meeting in October, the Police vetting department has been very busy vetting new Police recruits. But I am delighted to say that we have recently received a very positive update from Supt Sutherland who has confirmed that following completion of the recent Police recruitment programme, there is now available capacity within the Police vetting department to process more applications. Supt Sutherland is currently seeking the force's final approval of the project plan, and once it's been obtained he confirms that recruitment of volunteers will commence.

I think it's fair to say that that can all happen a lot more quickly than Civil Parking Enforcement which is suffering a lot of delays and a lot of increased cost amongst the authorities that are trying to bring it in Cambridgeshire. I've heard the other day that Fenland DC is now facing just short of £1m up front costs to bring in Civil Parking Enforcement and that there are significant delays and concerns about the budget gaps that are created once it's in place. And of course it is irreversible once it's with us. So I think this innovative solution is really worth a try and the Police are certainly behind it and ready to get on with it."

7:44 – 7:55pm the meeting was briefly adjourned for a comfort break.

26. CORPORATE PLAN

Council considered a report (Y26, previously circulated) detailing the Corporate Plan 2023-27 and the Corporate Actions 2023/24.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Sharp. Cllr Bailey addressed the priorities and actions in the Corporate Plan in turn and highlighted the planned actions for 2023/24. In particular, the Council would continue with its aim to raise Council Tax only as a last resort, having delivered a Council Tax freeze for the previous 10 years. East Cambs Trading Company would continue to focus on projects benefitting the community and supporting the financial position of the Council. A new "Love Your Street" campaign would include replacing benches and other street furniture and there would be a focus on reducing environmental crime. The

next Top 20 Actions from the Council's Environment Plan would be implemented and new black wheelie bins would be introduced together with new hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuelled recycling lorries. The Council would continue its support for GP surgeries, would consider the full business case for a new bereavement centre at the Mepal site, and would continue to build new homes and support community land trusts (CLTs). More affordable homes would be delivered for local people, including more £100k Homes. Work would continue with Sustrans to deliver feasibility studies for priority cycling and walking routes and to prepare the case for investment from the Combined Authority. The Council would also continue to oppose the introduction of congestion charging. She urged all Members to support the plans.

Several Members echoed the Leader's comments. They highlighted recent successes such as the delivery of the Soham to Wicken cycleway and freezing of Council Tax and expressed support for the new proposals such as the Environmental Crime Action Plan and the additional five Sustrans studies. The Director Finance was congratulated for prudent management of the Council's finances that had enabled all that had been achieved in recent years, and he was encouraged to continue in the same vein.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group expressed support for some elements of the Corporate Plan and Actions, including the sustainability aims, the review of the Planning Service, the digitising of the Waste Service, improved street cleaning, and funding for the new Local Plan. They would continue to collaborate in the development of new active travel routes and would work to support the integrated care system and regional health priorities. However, other elements could not be supported. Specifically, the continued lack of an independent advice service, the crematorium project that more than 85% of local people did not want, and the proposed local Police Volunteer scheme rather than introducing Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE). Additionally, although some CLTs were excellent others divided their communities and the lack of effective regulation meant that the Council's reliance on CLTs to deliver affordable housing could not be supported. The assertion that the trading companies were commercial was questioned based upon their previous year's financial reports, as was the plan to focus public realm improvements on city and town centres to the exclusion of villages. Further details were requested about the steps towards a net zero District by 2035. Any positive engagement with partners on road and transport matters would be supported.

Speaking as the seconder of the Motion, Cllr Sharp echoed the earlier thanks to the Finance Director and the policy to raise Council Tax only as a last resort. The Trading Companies were formed to be commercial for community benefit and they had both delivered on that remit. The work with Sustrans had been excellent: he had been proud to Chair the Bus, Cycle, Walk Working Party and looked forward to continue to participate in that work. Regarding the suggestion of CPE for the District, he referenced the issues faced by both South Cambridgeshire and Fenland Councils in their efforts to introduce the scheme in the face of rapidly rising costs.

Summing up as the proposer, Cllr Bailey stressed the importance of innovative ways to deliver affordable housing and stated that Phase 2 of the MOD development in Ely would be focussed on affordable rented properties. Referencing the comments about local opposition to the Mepal Crematorium, she highlighted that only 188 consultation responses had been received, the majority from Sutton, and that the data could be interpreted in different ways. In particular, a large majority of respondents had been in favour of protecting and enhancing the ecological importance of the site and that was a key purpose of the proposal. Alternative proposals to protect the biodiversity of the site would be welcomed but had not been forthcoming. She expressed her pride in the Corporate Plan and its promises to the District's residents and encouraged Members to support it.

It was resolved:

- i) That the new Corporate Plan 2023-27, as set out in Appendix 1 to the Officer's report, be approved.
- ii) That the Corporate Actions for 2023/24, as set out in Appendix 2 to the Officer's report, be approved.
- iii) That the Monitoring Officer be instructed to amend the Constitution (ref Article 1 paragraph 1.05) to make the necessary amendments to reflect the new Corporate Plan.

27. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES

Council considered report Y27, previously circulated, detailing a recommendation from the Finance and Assets Committee as follows:

1. Finance & Assets Committee – 3 July 2023

2022/23 Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review

The Chairman of the Finance & Assets Committee proposed the recommendation and thanked the S151 Officer for his work ensuring that there was no external borrowing and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy indicated that none would be required for the following 3-4 years. Cllr Miller seconded the proposal.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Council's Treasury operations during 2022/23, including the prudential and treasury indicators, as set out in the Annual Treasury Management Review at Appendix 1 of the report to the Finance & Assets Committee, be approved.

28. EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE (ECSS) OBSERVER

Council considered a report (Y28, previously circulated) concerning proposed changes to the Observers on the East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) Board. The Director Commercial explained that Council had previously determined that the Deputy Leader of Council and the Chairman of the Operational Services Committee should be appointed as Observers on the ECSS Board. Both Council positions were now held by one individual and therefore, to maintain two Observers as was the Council's original intention, an amendment to the Shareholder Agreement was suggested to allow the Vice-Chairman of the Operational Services Committee to be appointed in place of the Committee's Chairman.

Cllr Vellacott proposed the recommendations in the report, seconded by Cllr Ambrose Smith.

The Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stressed that their Group had regularly expressed concerns about the role of the Observers because they considered that the Observers were effectively Directors in a position to influence decisions, despite having no vote. The ECSS Shareholder Agreement dated 22nd January 2020, signed on behalf of the Board and the Council, stated that the Observers would be the Leader of Council and the Chair of the Operational Services Committee; no change was therefore needed since they were two separate individuals. Alternatively, if the naming of the Leader (rather than Deputy Leader) was a drafting error on the deed then it raised questions about how an error could occur on an important document that was one of the key controls against risks to the Council.

The Director Commercial informed Members that the previous resolution of the Council had been to appoint the Deputy Leader and the Chair of the Operational Services Committee and the Board had enacted that resolution. Unfortunately, in drafting the Shareholder Agreement there had been an omission of the word "Deputy" which, on discussion with the Director Legal was accepted to be purely a drafting error.

The Leader stressed that the proposal was simply a pragmatic change from the status quo in order to ensure that there were two Observers on the Board. The proposer of the Motion echoed those comments and reiterated that the Observers did not have a vote on Board decisions.

It was resolved:

- i) That the Shareholder Agreement (ref P5 para 4.4) be amended to read "The Deputy Leader of Council and the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of Operational Services are appointed as Observers to the Board."
- ii) That the Vice Chairman of the Operational Services Committee be appointed as an Observer to the ECSS Board.

29. ESTABLISHMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW WORKING PARTY

Council considered a report (Y29, previously circulated) concerning the proposed establishment of a “task and finish” Constitutional Review Working Party with Terms of Reference as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. The Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that, following the recent elections, it was considered timely to review the Council’s Constitution. If Members wished, an IRP could also be run concurrently. The last IRP had taken place in 2021 and was therefore not required until 2025 but it would be opportune to review the remuneration package alongside the Constitution.

The Chairman proposed the recommendation in the report, seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group asked for confirmation that the Working Group’s membership would be balanced with three members from each political group, and sought assurance that since an IRP was not referenced within the report it would not be decided at this meeting.

The Chairman requested that Officers prepare an IRP proposal for consideration at a future meeting and the Democratic Services Manager confirmed the political balance as 3:3.

As seconder of the Motion, the Vice-Chairman welcomed the review as a means to address any conflicts or other issues within the Council’s Constitution following a piecemeal approach to updates in recent years.

The Working Party’s membership was proposed to be Cllrs Goldsack, Lay and Pettit from the Conservative Group and Cllrs Akinwale, Dupré and Trapp from the Liberal Democrat Group.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the establishment of a Constitutional Review Working Party, with the terms of reference set out in Appendix 1 to the Officer’s report, be approved.

30. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORTS

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority’s Audit and Governance Committee (9 June 2023), Overview and Scrutiny Committee (19 June 2023) and the Board (31 May 2023).

Cllr Dupré asked the Council to formally acknowledge that Cllr Cane had been appointed as Chair of the Combined Authority’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

It was resolved unanimously:

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

The meeting concluded at 8:30pm

Chairman.....

Date.....

DRAFT