



# East Cambridgeshire District Council

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee** Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30pm on Thursday 27 March 2025

### **Present:**

Cllr Chika Akinwale  
Cllr Anna Bailey  
Cllr Martin Goodearl  
Cllr Julia Huffer  
Cllr Bill Hunt  
Cllr David Miller  
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chair)  
Cllr John Trapp  
Cllr Mary Wade  
Cllr Alison Whelan (arrived 5:10pm)  
Cllr Christine Whelan

### **Officers:**

Sally Bonnett – Director Community  
Maggie Camp – Director Legal  
Jane Webb – Democratic Services and Elections Manager  
Marta Lotysz-Veiga – Reprographics Manager  
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager  
Nicole Pema – HR Manager  
Ian Smith – Director Finance  
Emma Grima – ECTC Director Commercial  
John Hill – ECTC Managing Director  
Nigel Ankers – ECTC Finance Manager  
Paul Remington- ECTC Chair

## **75. Public Questions**

No public questions received

## **76. Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies were received from Cllr Ian Bovingdon and Cllr Mark Goldsack. Cllr Martin Goodearl and Cllr Julia Huffer attended as substitutes.

## **77. Declarations of interest**

Declarations of interest were received from both Councillors Christine Whelan and Mary Wade regarding Item 9, noting that they are Members of the City of Ely Council.

## **78. Minutes**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 30 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

## **79. Chair's Announcements**

### **January's Public question (Update) - Stuntney to Ely cycle path**

The Combined Authority's Investment Committee approved proposals for funding the development of active travel routes in East Cambridgeshire on Monday, 10 March. £70,000 was awarded to produce a detailed design for the Stuntney to Ely route, and a further £400,000 for the 'Sustrans Study East Cambs routes' project. This is to enable the further development of the Council's Sustrans feasibility schemes to the preliminary design stage for two routes: Ely to Soham and Burwell, Fordham, and wider links.

## **80. ECTC Annual Business Plan 2025/26**

The Committee considered a report (Z155, previously circulated) containing the East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC) Business Plan 2025/26, as approved by the Company Board on 13th March 2025.

The ECTC Director Commercial presented the Business Plan, and the ECTC Finance Manager gave an overview of the company's financial position, as detailed in the Plan.

The recommendation in the report was proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Sharp.

Members appreciated the report's layout and visuals, and congratulated ECTC on securing new business. The ECTC Director explained that the language in the vision statement referred to ECTC's commitment to its shareholders.

The ECTC Finance Manager clarified that two additional flats, identical to the £100k homes, were sold for £250k each. This meant that ECTC had invested a total of £600k in the affordable housing project. The £100k homes were allocated through a points-based scheme, where the level of discount at which the houses were bought also applies when sold, and this level of discount remained with the property in perpetuity.

A Member mentioned that the loan agreement with the CPCA included a profit-sharing arrangement that was due two years after the loan was issued. They enquired about the actual forecast profits and asked how much had been paid to the CPCA, as well as whether the calculations were available. The ECTC Managing Director confirmed that the profit share was included in the agreement and had been fully discharged with the appropriate interest paid.

The ECTC Director Commercial confirmed that the Risk Register would be reviewed and the recent increase in stamp duty and the government's plan to build 1.5 million homes would be considered as part of the review.

Cllr Bailey, as proposer of the recommendation, highlighted that ECTC had been established nine years previously. She expressed pride in its achievements, highlighting its modesty and consistency, and thanked everyone involved. The key points she emphasised:

- Ely Markets – A significant success that brought a great footfall and vibrancy to Ely while generating a modest profit for the company.
- Parks and Open Spaces – Had achieved new contracts and developed expertise in tree surgery services.
- Palace Green Homes – Delivered 135 homes, including 48 affordable units, making a substantial contribution to the district's housing stock.
- £100k Homes – An impressive project benefiting local residents.
- £5.8 million – The benefit provided by ECTC to the operation of East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC).

Cllr Bailey stressed the importance of communicating the benefits of ECTC to a future unitary council, ensuring that the advantages for residents were highlighted. All Members, therefore, have a responsibility to raise awareness of ECTC's achievements.

A vote was taken on the recommendation as follows:

FOR: (6), AGAINST (0), ABSTENTIONS (4)

It was resolved that the ECTC Business Plan 2025/26, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, be approved.

## **81. End of year reports 2024/25 & Service Delivery Plans 2025/26**

The Committee received a report (Z158, previously circulated) containing the End-of-Year Reports 2024/25 and the Service Delivery Plans 2025/26, which cover services within the Committee's responsibility.

Members noted that the phrasing related to the targets of electronic voter registration and paperless processes could be clarified for future plans.

Members expressed appreciation for the excellent Service Delivery Plans, performance reports and thanked staff for their hard work

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

It was resolved unanimously:

That the outcomes in the End of Year Reports 2024/25 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report) be noted, and the Service Delivery Plans 2025/26 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report) be approved for each of the following services:

- i) Democratic Services
- ii) Economic Development
- iii) Finance
- iv) Human Resources
- v) Infrastructure & Strategic Housing
- vi) Information & Communication Technology
- vii) Legal Services
- viii) Open Spaces & Facilities
- ix) Reprographics
- x) Strategic Planning (End of Year Report Only) and
  - a. Climate Change and Natural Environment Services Delivery Plan (to reflect transfer of strategic planning function to the planning team from January 2025)

*Cllr Alison Whelan arrived 5:10pm*

## **82. Asset Management Plan 2025/26 & Assets update**

The Committee considered a report (Z156 as previously circulated) that provided Members with an updated asset spend tracker for 2024/25 and approved the asset planned spend for 2025/26.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions as follows.

Members complimented the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager for his comprehensive attention to the entire district. He confirmed that the Council was committed to improving the environmental performance of all buildings, including those in leased properties, and working with tenants. Additionally, he stated that the timeline for the PIPPA Audit would be announced next week following a meeting he was scheduled to attend.

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

Members resolved unanimously to:

- NOTE the Corporate Asset Management Plan provided in Appendix 1,
- APPROVE the Asset Management spend for 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 2

- NOTE the Asset Management 2024/25 spend to date as detailed in Appendix 3

### **83. Assets in Ely**

*Cllrs Mary Wade and Christine Wheelan left the room for the duration of the item and did not participate in the debate or vote.*

The Committee considered a report (Z1559 as previously circulated), which allowed Members to consider the freehold/leasehold transfer(s) of The Maltings, Maltings Cottage and Oliver Cromwell House, all located in Ely, to the City of Ely Council.

The Director Commercial presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions as follows.

The Director Commercial explained that the freeholds would be sold for £1 because they needed to have a designated value; they could not be given away for free. Since this was a public-to-public transfer intended for community use, a price of £1 was deemed representative of their community value.

Members enquired about the fairness of valuing assets at £1 and the potential risks that the Council or individual Councillors might encounter if assets were transferred at a value considered below fair market value. The Director Commercial explained that when assessing public transfers of buildings, especially under the current circumstances, she and colleagues were confident that the valuation was suitable. This confidence stemmed from the fact that the transfers were public-to-public and involved long-term leases. The Director Commercial confirmed that the buildings needed investment, and the City of Ely Council was aware of this.

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

Members recognised that the future of East Cambridgeshire District Council was uncertain, which necessitated the protection of these assets for the future. The City of Ely had effectively managed the Sessions House, keeping it in public use, and they saw no reason why they would not do the same with these buildings.

The Chair reiterated that the recommendations provided the City of Ely with two options: they could either decide to purchase the properties or continue leasing them, and there was no pressure from the Council regarding this decision. A Member also reminded others that these properties were already under full-repairing leases, meaning the City of Ely was already responsible for the maintenance of the assets. However, opting for a longer lease or the freehold would offer them additional options. She trusts that the City of Ely will handle these buildings responsibly for the benefit of the people of Ely.

Members unanimously resolved to:

- Approve the transfers or, where relevant, extend the leases of the Maltings, Maltings Cottage and Oliver Cromwell House, Ely to City of Ely Council as set out in the report.
- Delegate authority to the Director Legal to complete the relevant legal documentation to implement the above.

*Cllrs Wade and Christine Whelan returned to the meeting.*

#### **84. Annual Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (“RIPA”) Policies**

The Committee considered a report (Z157 as previously circulated), which contained an update on the annual review of the RIPA Policies and provided Members with a report on the use of RIPA powers by the Council.

The Director Legal (Senior Responsible Officer) presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions as follows.

Members resolved to:

- Note the information provided in the Annual Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (“RIPA”) Policies Report.

#### **85. Forward Plan**

The Committee considered its Forward Plan.

Members unanimously resolved to note the forward agenda plan.

#### **86. Exclusion of Press and Public**

It was resolved unanimously:

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

#### **87. ECTC Management Accounts**

The ECTC Finance Manager presented the ECTC Management Accounts for the nine months to December 2024.

It was resolved that the contents of the report be noted.

#### **88. Write-off Unrecoverable Debts**

The Committee considered a report regarding the write-off of irrecoverable debts.

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

It was unanimously resolved:

- i) That the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 of the Officer's report relating to 1 Housing Benefit overpayment write-off be approved.
- ii) That the Council Tax debt and Housing Benefit overpayment debts written off under delegated powers, as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of the Officer's report, be noted.

**89. EXEMPT Minutes – 30 January 2025**

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee held on 30 January 2025.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 5:50pm

Chair.....

Date.....