



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Agenda Item

Minutes of the remote Meeting of East Cambridgeshire
District Council held on Thursday 16 July 2020 at 6.00pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor David Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Mark Inskip
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Alec Jones
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor Daniel Schumann
Councillor Ian Bovingdon	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Charlotte Cane	Councillor Amy Starkey
Councillor Matthew Downey	Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor John Trapp
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Paola Trimarco
Councillor Lis Every (Chairman)	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Simon Harries	Councillor Alison Whelan
Councillor Julia Huffer	Councillor Christine Whelan
	Councillor Gareth Wilson

19. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

No public questions were submitted.

20. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Charlesworth.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Jones reported that Councillor Charlesworth was currently on maternity leave after giving birth to a baby boy Monty, weighing over 8lb.

The Chairman requested that the congratulations and best wishes of Council be passed onto Councillor Charlesworth and her family.

21. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

Agenda Item 7(i) Motion Local Electricity Bill – Prejudicial Interest as unpaid Director and minor shareholder in Reach Solar Farm Ltd (will not be exercising public speaking right).

Agenda Item 9 Corporate Plan – Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) as employed by Wildlife Trust Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire (BCN).

22. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 21 May 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of Minute 17 Covid 19 Update as follows:

Page 12 penultimate paragraph, final sentence to read:

A Member referred to page 2 section 4.1 of the report which said ‘all service leads including the two trading companies...’ and the Member commented that they thought that the Trading Companies were independent of the Council, so were they working together?

Page 12 final paragraph, final sentence to read:

The Chief Executive responded that the comment in the report was accurate, since it was considered appropriate that all activities of both the Council and the Trading Companies were co-ordinated to deal with the challenges of the crisis.

23. **CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Lavinia Edwards joined the meeting at 6.10pm

The Chairman made the following announcements:

John Hill, Chief Executive

The Chairman reported that, as of 3 July, the Chief Executive, John Hill, had served 25 years at East Cambridgeshire, almost 20 of which had been as Chief Executive. She stated that John had led the organisation to achieve many accomplishments and had worked with a large number of Leaders of all political persuasions through both good and challenging times. His excellent leadership skills were demonstrated by his ability to produce focused priorities and objectives and then to empower staff to deliver these. Notable achievements included maintaining a balanced Budget and Council Tax freeze, the establishment of the Council’s two trading companies ECTC and ECSS and more recently becoming joint Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CA). The Chairman expressed the congratulations and thanks of the Council to John Hill.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey, endorsed the comments of the Chairman and expressed her own personal congratulations and thanks to John Hill. John had arrived in the Fens from Birmingham but had adapted well to the ways of the area, leading the Council through a great many changes. He always had been ‘fleet of foot’ and innovative and had a refreshing way of cutting through the

detail to bring clarity. The Leader also commended John's role as joint Chief Executive of the Combined Authority and referred to the significant benefits which the CA was bringing to the County as a whole and to this District.

Councillor Cane, as Liberal Democrat Deputy Leader, also congratulated John Hill and stated that he was a conscientious and committed Chief Executive both to East Cambridgeshire and now the County as a whole via the Combined Authority.

Council expressed their appreciation to John Hill via a round of applause.

Special Council Meeting 31 July 2020

The Chairman reminded Members of the E-mail notification earlier in the week of the remote Special Council meeting to be held on Friday 31 July 2020 to consider an Exempt Asset Management matter in the Parish of Mepal

24. **PETITIONS**

Council received a Petition of approximately 1,229 local requesting the Council to consider the provision of a Splash Pad in Ely. The Chairman highlighted the presentation provided by the petition organisers giving information about Splash Pads which had been circulated to Council Members and published on the Council's website.

One of the Petition Organisers, Ellie Senior, spoke in support of the Petition and explained that she was representing a group of local residents who had completed 12 months of extensive research on the issue. She stated that they were typically zoned into 3 areas catering for toddlers, children and teens. They also were fully accessible for users with a range of disabilities. There were Splash Pads in Cambridge and Newmarket and these represented a good income generator for towns and cities, attracting visitors from surrounding areas. They were environmentally friendly in both their operation and by stopping people driving to other facilities. She had met with Ian Ross, Community Sport and Recreation Manager at Cambridge City Council, which operated 3 successful Splash Pads and Ustigate, the largest waterplay specialists in the UK. The running costs for the facility estimated at £10,000 per annum, could be funded by a refreshment kiosk. The Group also had approached and made a presentation to City of Ely Council, who were considering funding for the project via CIL/S106 monies. A Splash Pad would enable families to spend quality time together, so Ms Senior urged the Council to support the project and the identification of a suitable site.

Ms Senior responded to questions from Members as follows:

With regard to what constituted a suitable site for a Splash Pad, it was reported that this just needed to be flat and close to a water source to minimise costs. Possible sites included: Paradise Centre, Jubilee Gardens, former MOD site, although the group were open to suggestions, preferably with a reasonably central location.

With regard to the estimated number of residents travelling from Ely to other Splash Pads, it was stated that a survey of this had not been carried out at present, but could be undertaken in the future.

With regard to location, it was reported that a balance was needed between walking distance for Ely residents and access to parking for those visiting from outside of the City.

With reference to the period of opening each year, it was stated that Cambridge City Council usually opened their facilities around the Easter Bank Holiday and closed them sometime in October.

The Leader of the Council then responded and stated that she had met with Ellie recently to discuss the detail of the issues. The Leader referred to the fact that it was usual for Town and Parish Councils to provide local play facilities and this had been recognised by the presentation of the Petition to City of Ely Council as well, who were considering the allocation of CIL/S106 funding for this purpose. If this was progressed, the District Council would assist in identifying and facilitating a suitable location for the Splash Pad.

The Chairman thanked Ellie for her attendance and presentation of the Petition to the Council.

25. **MOTIONS**

(i) **Local Electricity Bill**

Councillor Cane left the meeting for the duration of this item.

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

This Council:

- (i) acknowledges the efforts that this council is making to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable energy;
- (ii) recognises that councils can play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of locally generated renewable electricity;
- (iii) further recognises
 - that very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,
 - that making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils and local community co-operatives to be providers of locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and

- that revenues received by councils that became local renewable electricity providers could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;
- (iv) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, currently supported by a cross-party group of 187 MPs, and which, if made law, would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply; and
- (v) further resolves to:
- write to local MPs, asking them to support the Bill, and
 - write to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

Councillor Inskip spoke as proposer of the Motion, highlighting the important step taken by the Council in October 2019 to declare a Climate Emergency and the recent report on progress regarding the Council's Environmental Plan submitted to Operational Services Committee in June. This Motion was another way in which this issue could be addressed. Locally generated renewable community energy had the great potential to contribute towards the target of zero carbon emissions and provide low cost energy to local communities.

The meeting was adjourned at 18.35pm due to technical issues with the livestreaming of the meeting and re-convened at 7.01pm.

Councillor Inskip continued in his proposing of the Motion by stating that 70% of Councils had declared a Climate Emergency. However, community energy currently was blocked by the energy market and legislation, as people could not buy energy at present except from a utility company or supplier. The set-up costs for a local supply network currently were prohibitive, but the Bill aimed to solve this problem by giving the right to local energy suppliers to operate with proportionate costs. The Bill was sponsored by a cross-party group in Parliament and 187 MPs had expressed their support. A large number of Councils already had shown support for the Bill, and Councillor Inskip hoped that cross-party support could be secured here at ECDC to contribute towards a zero carbon future.

Councillor Joshua Schumann, as Deputy Leader of the Council, commended the Bill but stated that it was still in its early stages and was unlikely to progress through the Parliamentary process until at least the autumn, giving this Council time to more fully consider its implications in the context of local energy strategies being developed. Therefore, he proposed and Councillor David Ambrose-Smith seconded that, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4, the Motion be referred to the Operational Services Committee. Upon being put to the vote, this was agreed unanimously.

(ii) Black Lives Matter

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Matthew Downey and seconded by Cllr Charlotte Cane:

Council notes:

1. In the UK 26% of instances of police using firearms are against Black people, despite Black people making up only 3.3% (1) of the population. 51% of young men in custody in the UK are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds, despite these groups making up only 14% (2) of the UK population. The 2017 Lammy Report concluded that “BAME individuals still face bias, including overt discrimination, in parts of the justice system”. Most recently, we’ve seen that BAME people are 54% (3) more likely than white people to be fined under the new coronavirus lockdown laws.
2. Here in East Cambs, Black people face being stopped by police just because they are Black. An example of this happening in Ely was recently posted on social media. Data from Stop Watch shows that in 2018/2019, police officers in Cambridgeshire subjected Black people to stop and search at a rate of 6 (4) times more than white people.
3. The police killing of George Floyd in June 2020, has led to protests against the killing of Black people by police everywhere from Floyd’s home of Minneapolis, to the UK, Japan, and New Zealand. The world knows George Floyd’s name, and his death has fuelled a movement to end police violence against Black people.

(1) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/764894/police-use-of-force-apr2017-mar2018-hosb3018.pdf

(2) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf

(3) <https://www.itv.com/news/2020-06-17/bame-people-50-more-likely-to-receive-coronavirus-lockdown-fines-mps-told/>

(4) <https://www.stop-watch.org/your-area/area/cambridgeshire>

East Cambridgeshire District Council extends our solidarity to the Black Lives Matters movement and believes that:

- A. Racism in all forms, both structural and in individuals, continues to be a serious and often unseen problem throughout the UK, including in East Cambridgeshire. The needs and challenges of Black people may differ from those of Asian people and also those of other minority ethnic groups and the Council will ensure that this is reflected in our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- B. Although progress has been made in combating racism in all its forms, more work is needed to eradicate it entirely.

This Council, representing people in East Cambridgeshire, welcomes its duty to actively lead that work locally.

Council resolves to meet the challenge head-on with immediate action to:

- I. Review and recommend concrete actions on ensuring that we maintain an actively anti-racist outlook within the area of BAME access to housing and to homelessness & welfare support.
- II. Commit to taking an active part in Black History Month.
- III. Write to the Minister for Schools asking the government to provide resources to schools to support them in providing further historical context for events normally only seen through the lens of white British history.
- IV. Produce a report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on BAME communities in East Cambridgeshire by the end of 2020, to be reviewed by the Finance and Assets Committee, and shared with BAME community representatives.
- V. Ask the Police & Crime Commissioner to put in place measures to ensure that arrest and custody measures are proportionate.
- VI. Write to the two MPs in our district to ask that rather than spending money on another race inequality review, the Government implements recommendations of previous reviews - specifically including but not restricted to, the Lammy and Windrush recommendations.

On a long term basis Council believes there is a need to further address racism, and therefore resolves to, over time:

- VII. Ask officers to regularly review our progress on the measures above, report progress to Finance & Assets Committee and recommend to Council any additional steps required to achieve these goals.
- VIII. Review and examine the internal structures of East Cambs District Council to ensure Black Asian and Minority Ethnic people are not disadvantaged. Understand specifically how many minority ethnic people the council employ, where are they working, what barriers, if any exist to their career progression and recommend any changes required to our staff policies and procedures to ensure that they are inclusive.
- IX. Act on any concerns raised about street names which derive from individuals or organisations that have racist links.
- X. Ask the Police & Crime Commissioner to report on what measures have been put in place to reduce the disproportionality of BAME people affected by the use of stop and search powers seen locally and nationally and how often are these measures are reviewed; and to provide a regular report as to initiatives and progress.
- XI. Ask the Combined Authority to produce a toolkit for businesses to help broaden their understanding of race inequality in the workplace, including but not limited to materials, signposts to relevant local groups and training that can be provided for staff, and links to relevant networks.

Speaking as the proposer of the Motion, Councillor Downey stated that the death of George Floyd had sparked a movement across the world. Councillor Downey referred to a Councillor from a neighbouring Council who had needed to remind her black son of the assumptions likely to be made about him by the Police when he was out at night. This was not a conversation

Councillor Downey's parents had needed to have with him. Similarly, Chinese restaurants had experienced a dip in trade since the Covid-19 outbreak. People with 'White Privilege' could take action to overcome such prejudice via a Motion like this. Councillor Downey stated that this Council needed to do everything it could to fix this, fight White Privilege and racism and ensure that it represented all people in East Cambridgeshire. People could become complicit in racism by adopting an institutionalised approach. But we must remember that all lives matter and that we need to help those in need the most.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Downey for submitting the Motion to Council.

Speaking in response to the Motion, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey, stated that this Council condemned all forms of racism in all its manifestations. This was our key commitment in a Motion unanimously agreed by this Council at our meeting in February this year.

That same resolution referred the implementation of that matter to Finance and Assets Committee for inclusion in the Council's updated Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Scheme.

Councillor Bailey stated that this was a wide-ranging Motion which required careful and detailed consideration. The motion acknowledged the need for specific local data. To cite examples, it called for information on employees, data about access to the homelessness prevention service and wider demographic data, all of which were needed to inform actions. It also acknowledged that the Finance and Assets Committee was the appropriate Member body to take this forward for consideration and action.

She had been reminded by the Chairman of Finance and Assets Committee that at their next meeting on 23 July 2020 they would be considering the new Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Scheme, which would be subject to full public consultation.

Therefore, the Leader proposed in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.4, that the Motion be referred to the July Finance and Assets Committee to consider alongside the Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Scheme. She hoped in its deliberations that the Committee would focus on the actions in the Motion where we could make a real difference and take account of how our neighbouring Councils had met the challenges in similar motions.

The proposal for referral to Finance and Assets Committee was seconded by Councillor Joshua Schumann and upon being put to the vote was declared to be carried.

(iii) Balloons and Lanterns

The following Motion was proposed by Cllr Alan Sharp and seconded by Cllr Amy Starkey:

East Cambridgeshire is a rural area with many farm animals, as well as a wide and diverse mix of wildlife.

An estimated 200,000 sky lanterns and many thousands of balloons are sold in the UK each year for release. While they can look mesmerising, many people are unaware of the deadly consequences fallen lanterns and deflated balloons can have for animals and the environment.

Wildlife and farm animals can easily become entangled in lantern frames and balloon strings, not to mention the fatal effect these parts can have on an animal if they ingest any component of these items. Deflated and fragments of balloons are commonly mistaken for food by marine life, and the strings used to tether balloons have been known to cause animals to become entangled or choke and suffer from internal blockages which ultimately leads to their death.

Reports state that balloons are the highest-risk debris item to seabirds; they are 32 times more likely to result in death than ingesting hard plastic. Both balloons and sky lanterns have the potential to travel miles from their original release site before returning to land.

There is a risk to buildings, dry standing crops, forestry, hay/straw stacks and habitats.

Wherever the depleted lanterns may fall, they inevitably litter the area in question.

There is an air safety risk associated with possible "ingestion" of parts into aircraft engines.

This Council resolves to ban the release of all types of helium-filled balloon and sky lantern on property and land owned by the District Council.

This Council resolves to ask all Parish and Town Councils within East Cambridgeshire to pass a similar motion to ban the release of all types of helium-filled balloon and sky lantern on Parish & Town Council owned land.

This Council resolves to engage with businesses, communities, landowners, schools and individuals in East Cambridgeshire encouraging them to sign up to this initiative.

Speaking on the Motion, Councillor Sharp stated that East Cambridgeshire was a rural area with many farms, animals and wildlife. An estimated 200,000 sky lanterns were released each year in the UK and were a wonderful sight to see, but at massive cost to animals. Recent reports included a 6 month old calf in Newark who lost its life due

to a 70th birthday balloon, but there were many other sad examples. This Council should not knowingly contribute to this on our land and should encourage other organisations and businesses within the District to sign-up to this initiative as well.

An amendment then to the Motion was proposed by Councillor Mark Inskip and seconded by Councillor Gareth Wilson as follows:

East Cambridgeshire is a rural area with many farm animals, as well as a wide and diverse mix of wildlife.

An estimated 200,000 sky lanterns and many thousands of helium-filled balloons are sold in the UK each year for release. While they can look mesmerising, many people are unaware of the deadly consequences fallen lanterns and deflated balloons can have for animals and the environment.

Wildlife and farm animals can easily become entangled in lantern frames and balloon strings, not to mention the fatal effect these parts can have on an animal if they ingest any component of these items. Deflated and fragments of helium-filled balloons are commonly mistaken for food by marine life, and the strings used to tether balloons have been known to cause animals to become entangled or choke and suffer from internal blockages which ultimately leads to their death.

Reports state that balloons are the highest-risk debris item to seabirds; they are 32 times more likely to result in death than ingesting hard plastic. Both helium-filled balloons and sky lanterns have the potential to travel miles from their original release site before returning to land.

There is a risk to buildings, dry standing crops, forestry, hay/straw stacks and habitats.

Wherever the depleted lanterns may fall, they inevitably litter the area in question.

There is an air safety risk associated with possible "ingestion" of parts into aircraft engines.

Helium is a finite resource with important medical and industrial uses.

This Council resolves to ban the release of all types of helium-filled balloon and sky lantern on property and land owned by the District Council. This Council resolves to ask all Parish and Town Councils within East Cambridgeshire to pass a similar motion to ban the release of all types of helium-filled balloon and sky lantern on Parish & Town Council owned land.

This Council resolves to engage with businesses, communities, landowners, schools and individuals in East Cambridgeshire encouraging them to sign up to this initiative.

To write to the Members of Parliament for the district requesting that the government review the use of sale of helium for recreational uses.

Speaking in support of the amendment, Councillor Inskip stated that this was an important issue and thanked Councillors for bringing it forward. Many Councils had taken similar action and the amendment was intended to strengthen the Motion through drafting changes to recognise helium as a finite resource which is difficult to capture and source and critical for medical, technological and industrial uses. Therefore, it was a waste of a scarce resource to use it in balloons and also endangered the lives of land and marine animals. It also constituted littering, as no-one knew where they would land. Therefore, Councillor Inskip urged Council to support the amendment.

Councillor Sharp responded by acknowledging that helium was a finite resource, but was concerned that the amendment muddled the issues and he stated that helium was referred to at the end of the Motion.

Councillor Wilson as seconder of the amendment, stated that balloons blown up by people were less of a hazard and were loved by children. That was why it was important to refer to helium balloons and sky lanterns, the latter of which could be a fire hazard as well. Councillor Sharp commented that ordinary balloons still could cause harm if eaten by an animal.

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

Returning to the Motion, a Member stated that it divided into 3 sections, one regarding the potential dangers and littering of the countryside by ordinary plastic balloons; the finite quality of helium used in some balloons; and fire risks associated with sky lanterns. He used the example of a lantern from a party that had caught in the wind in Bruges, potentially causing a fire in a historic wooden city. Other Members stated that they would be supporting the Motion due to the impact on the countryside and animals, although they would have liked to have seen the amendment passed.

As seconder, Councillor Starkey thanked Members for their support of the Motion which had regard to the fact that East Cambridgeshire was a rural area with diverse wildlife, animals and racehorses in the area of the District around Newmarket. Balloons and Sky lanterns could have deadly consequences for these.

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

26. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

Questions from Members were received and responses given as follows:

Councillor Lorna Dupré:

I would like to ask the following question of the Chair of Finance & Assets Committee:

Members of this Council will be aware of the fire at Mepal Outdoor Centre on Sunday 12 July. The Centre was handed back to the Council in February 2017, since when it has lain empty and deteriorating, at some considerable cost to secure, and subject to ongoing incidents of trespass. An exercise to sell or let the Centre to an external bidder in 2018 failed to reach a satisfactory conclusion. What are the Council's plans now for this important but declining asset?

Response by Chair of Finance & Assets Committee, Councillor David Brown

Firstly, I would like to thank Councillor Dupre for her question.

I will start by thanking the fire crews from Chatteris, Manea, Ely, Cottenham and Cambridge who attended the fire on Sunday 12th June and brought the situation under control. I would also like to thank our Building Control team who attended on Monday to inspect and secure the building.

The cause of the fire was deliberate. I would urge anyone with information about the incident to contact police by visiting www.cambs.police.uk to submit an online report or call Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

I can confirm that the Council has been undertaking a number of site investigations and surveys to fully establish future uses of this asset.

I fully agree that this matter is one of urgency and, following on from the Chairman's announcement earlier, I hope Council will be discussing this issue in the very near future.

Councillor John Trapp:

Question 1a) Roughly how many people are currently employed at Lancaster Way Business Park?

Question 1b) We are told that the expected employment at Lancaster Way Business Park will be in excess of 2,000. What is the basis for this assertion?

Response by Leader of the Council, Councillor Anna Bailey:

Around 1,700 people are currently employed at Lancaster Way Business Park. Thorlabs are nearing completion of construction of their new premises and are intending to bring 250 members of staff onto the site, DB Broadcast is due to open their new premises next month which will see 70 – 80 members of staff on site, and Cambridge Nutritional Sciences is due to open by the end of the year, also with 70 – 80 members of staff. So in terms of part 1b of the question, the Business Park is expected to exceed 2,000 jobs on site by the end of this year.

It's worthy of note that the Thorlabs facility has actually been constructed to accommodate around 500 people to cater for their phased expansion plans.

In terms of the phase two expansion of Lancaster Way Business Park, this was the subject of a planning application which was granted permission in 2011. Since then, in April 2016 the site has, thanks to the support of this Authority, been granted status as an Enterprise Zone - it's part of the Cambridge Compass Enterprise Zone, a status which is hugely helpful in bringing new businesses and high-quality jobs to the Park.

The impact of phase 2 expansion is estimated to increase FTE employment on Lancaster Way Business Park to between 2,500 and 3,200 people. This is based on the square footage expansion of the site, but is obviously subject to the needs of individual businesses as they relocate to the site or expand.

27. **CORPORATE PLAN**

Council considered a report containing the updated Corporate Plan 2020-23 for East Cambridgeshire District Council. The Chief Executive highlighted the promises and commitments met during the past 12 months detailed in paragraph 3.1 of the submitted report and the priorities for the next 3 years of the Plan set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council proposed and seconded the recommendations in the report and approval of the new Corporate Plan.

The Leader of the Council spoke in support of the Corporate Plan as follows:

'I am delighted to propose the updated Corporate Plan for adoption by the Council. In the run up to the May 2019 elections, my Group clearly

set out our proposals to the electorate in our manifesto and we were returned as the administration.

I want to thank all our officers for their role in working towards and fulfilling those promises - we are nothing without them.

We must also reflect on the response by this authority to the Covid 19 pandemic, working together with our colleagues in the NHS, the County Council and our City, Town and Parish Councils, but most of all with the volunteers in our communities. Whilst the pandemic has been truly awful, socially and economically, I think we can be proud of the way that East Cambridgeshire collectively has stepped up to look after each other. Our District is fairing better than the regional and national average in terms of rates of infection; East Cambs has the lowest rate of infection in Cambridgeshire, lower than half that of some of the other Districts and almost one third that of Peterborough, but we must work to keep it that way. As we continue to come out of lockdown and more of us go back to our workplaces we must remember the basics – washing hands, using a tissue, keeping your distance and if you have symptoms, to immediately self-isolate and get a test. Members will note a number of important references to Covid 19 in the updated Corporate Plan.

We promised sound financial management. Over the last year we have, for the seventh year in a row, frozen the East Cambs element of Council Tax whilst continuing to deliver great services. Whilst the Liberal Democrat Group at this Council has a long track record of calling for increased levels of Council Tax, the Conservative administration notes that Council Tax is taken from people with the force of law, comes in the main from income that has already been taxed, and is reaching a level that makes up an increasing and significant proportion of household incomes for many. We still have by far the lowest management costs of all Cambridgeshire District Councils.

The Council has stepped up its commercial agenda – being commercial for *community* benefit. The decision to set up the Trading Company has provided £1.6m of financial benefit to our residents to date.

We promised to try to get a better deal for East Cambs residents on bus services, cycling and walking infrastructure and we have completed a District wide survey of our residents – the only District Council in the Combined Authority area to do so - the results of which are getting ready to be presented to the CA and others as we make the case for better services and infrastructure.

We promised to try to land transport infrastructure improvements for East Cambs residents and we have had significant success with a number of schemes that we are contributing to financially. The new A14 is open; Soham Railway Station is all go, with construction due to

begin in 2021; the BP roundabout upgrade is underway, with Lancaster Way roundabout due to follow early next year, facilitating the expansion of the Business Park which will deliver new high quality jobs for our area. And we have retained free car parking in the Council's town and city centre car parks. We support the work of the Combined Authority in its efforts to get junction improvements and dualling of the A10 and in the game changing Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro project. We are pushing for CAM coming to East Cambs, to the south of our District in Burwell, but also to consider CAM in the A10 upgrade proposals which offers a huge opportunity to facilitate the running of CAM from Waterbeach in the future. We continue to highlight the importance of improved rail connectivity and frequency in the south of the district.

We promised to provide better housing options for local people to help them get a home of their own, in their own community. This authority has one of the most open and transparent pro-growth planning services available and it's a matter of huge frustration that we have granted permission for some 7,000 homes in the district that developers have still not built. So, we've set up our own building company that's delivering high quality housing, including truly affordable housing, for local people. Covid 19 notwithstanding that programme continues. The first 7 shared ownership homes at the MoD site are now available to local, working people. Haddenham CLT is delivering 19 CLT owned affordable homes for people with village connections and Kennett Garden Village has received planning permission. East Cambs will also see the first £100k homes in the county to be delivered in Fordham – facilitating 100% home ownership for £100k for local working people – that's truly affordable home ownership.

We promised a Cleaner, Greener East Cambs and we've recently agreed the Council's commitments on the environment and climate change with 20 firm commitments this year. We're going for a 65% recycling rate, and we're in a good place to make the changes from the Government's forthcoming waste and resources strategy.

We promised improvements to social and community infrastructure. We've delivered free Wifi in Ely and Soham centres - Littleport will also be online soon. I personally continue to work with the NHS on landing a re-provided Princess of Wales Hospital for our District and this is slowly moving forward. And the Council is supporting the NHS with increased GP provision for Ely. We've delivered business rates cuts for our local High Street retailers and we look forward to making bids into the Combined Authority Market Towns fund to support delivery of the Market Town Strategies for Ely, Soham and Littleport – this could see investment of around £3m into East Cambs.

This Council, under our administration, has a record of delivery and the Corporate Plan sets out the promise of more. I hope that this will receive unanimous support this evening.'

The Liberal Democrat Leader Councillor Lorna Dupré commented that whilst there were some things in the Corporate Plan that she agreed with, the overall Plan needed a refresh in the light of the Covid-19 outbreak to strengthen the economic and community aspects. There were no real target dates in the Plan just vague promises and commitments and it needed to be more sharply focussed. In addition, a number of initiatives had been dropped without any explanation, e.g. the relocation from The Grange and a Woodland Burial site. Councillor Dupré commented that we needed to be more candid when we did not deliver on our promises and commitments. There was no reference to the urgent need to support people who were likely to lose their incomes and their homes as a result of Covid-19. The role of the Council's Covid-19 Working Party was likely to become increasingly important over the coming months.

During a detailed debate on the Corporate Plan, comments were made by Members as follows:

A Member commented that from his extensive experience of Corporate Plans, this was one of the weakest he had seen. He expressed concern at the reliance on Community Land Trusts (CLTs) in the section of the Corporate Plan on Housing. He stated that whilst some did excellent work others were flawed. He believed that they needed proper regulation and management and to deliver truly affordable housing. He expressed the view that the first units delivered on the former MOD Site at Ely were not truly affordable and that there should be more than 30% rental housing provision in the second phase. He did not believe that the proposed Kennett CLT development complied with the designation as a 'Garden Village' and considered that the former Paradise Pool site at Ely should be used as amenity land rather than Housing. Overall the Plan was woolly, poorly drafted and not deliverable.

A Member stated that Covid-19 had demonstrated the importance of access to parks and open spaces to people's well-being and the expansion of Ely Country Park would contribute to this. He also urged Members to become involved with the Future Parks Accelerator Programme.

With reference to the 'Cleaner, Greener East Cambridgeshire' section of the Plan, a Member commented that this needed more vision and action by the Council. It was bullet point 7 before the Environment and Climate Change Action Plan was mentioned and more ambitious targets were needed for recycling and the Purge on Plastics campaign. Under 'Improving Transport' more action was needed to reduce the polluting nature of vehicles and a zero carbon District was not mentioned. Covid-19 had shown the opportunities for working from home in the future. There were no targets in the Plan for reaching the 2050 goal let alone a more ambitious one.

A Member commented that she was a Member of the Bus Services Working Party and wanted to see fast, positive action of public transport and active travel initiatives. She also queried whether the provision of a Doctors Surgery at the North Ely development had been removed from the Plan. She

also made reference to the need for Broadband improvements for homeworking and education purposes.

A Member commented that it was easy to be critical of the Council's achievements, but it was more difficult to plan and take action for the future. It was important for this Council to plan for recovery from the Covid-19 outbreak. This would include promoting job growth on projects such as the Lancaster Way Business Park, building homes and new infrastructure.

A Member commended the Plan which demonstrated a shared vision for the District by this Council with its other partners. She acknowledged the Council's excellent response during the Covid-19 outbreak and expressed her particular support for the transport improvements in the Corporate Plan. She believed that the Plan was focussed and would deliver tangible results.

A Member referred to the removal of the Haddenham CLT from the Corporate Plan. He expressed concerns regarding its delivery due to the Covid-19 outbreak and stated that it needed support. On the issue of improving transport, he stated that local people cared about speeding and lorries cutting through villages, but this was not addressed in the Plan. He commented that shared ownership was not really affordable housing and that rental housing was needed close to family. He did not consider Kennett CLT as a true CLT as it was not supported by local people.

A Soham Member referred to local criticism of the lack of consultation on the Market Town Strategy and the proposal for a Marina at Soham. A lot of work had been undertaken in local communities in response to the Covid-19 outbreak which now needed to be picked up by the higher tier authorities.

In response, a Member referred to the positive projects in Soham such as the railway station and she believed that there was local support for the Marina project. She also commended ECSS which had continued to deliver a full waste and recycling service throughout the Covid-19 outbreak. This service went from strength to strength and had ambitious recycling targets for the District.

A Member highlighted that Mepal Outdoor Centre was not referred to in the Plan and now had been the subject of an arson attack. She also expressed concern at the commercial activities of the Council and believed that the Plan lacked ambition and a sound financial base.

A Member stated that the Covid-19 Working Party was a positive way forward to break down barriers with local Parish Councils and community groups to help support local communities. Therefore, Members needed to be active on this.

A Member commented that whilst the Corporate Plan contained the 'headlines', it was for the individual committees to develop and implement the detail. The Council should be heralding its achievements, particularly for being

a well-managed and prudent authority. He disagreed with the comments regarding the lack of a sound financial base and welcomed the rail improvements referred to in the Plan.

Littleport Members commended the Market Towns Strategies which were being developed.

A Member stated that the Liberal Democrat Group needed to produce costed, deliverable objectives and projects and act as a 'critical friend' rather than a criticiser. It also was important to acknowledge the Council's successes.

A Member commented that full discussion and consultation on projects was required to ensure the necessary improvements. He welcomed the proposed improvements to bus services, but highlighted the 10% reduction within the District since 2013. He also supported cycling and walking initiatives. But the proposed highways improvements were unlikely to be effective in solving bottlenecks and there still was a lack of commuter parking at Ely rail station. The Council need a holistic Plan with realistic aspirations.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, as seconder of the Motion, stated that the Council did deliver on its promises in the Corporate Plan and that the criticisms of lack of substance were ill-informed and unsubstantiated. No alternatives had been offered, merely criticism. The Council had delivered 7 years of low Council Tax and excellent services. The Plan demonstrated to the public that the Council had done what it had promised and would continue to do so in the future. Therefore, he was delighted to second this ambitious and forward-thinking Corporate Plan.

The Leader of the Council in summing-up, countered arguments regarding the nature and lack of public support for CLTs within the District, as well as the affordability of the affordable housing provision of the CLTs, stating that they delivered 60% market rents. She also highlighted the innovative £100K Homes project. The Council was promoting ambitious recycling targets and a number of transport initiatives, despite not being a transport authority. The North Ely GP surgery provision was referred to in bullet point 2 of the Social and Community Infrastructure section of the Plan. Support also was being given by the Council to the Haddenham CLT. The Council needed to be ambitious in its aspirations and targets, which was why the Leader urged Members to support the Corporate Plan.

It was resolved:

- (i) That the completed actions and progress made during the past 12 months be noted.
- (ii) That the new Corporate Plan set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report be approved.

- (ii) 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 priorities.

28. **COVID-19 IMPACT ON COUNCIL FINANCES**

Council considered a report detailing the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's finances in 2020/21 and the potential impact on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Finance Manager and S151 Officer highlighted the significant impact on the Council's Finances detailed in section 5 of the report, which were likely to be subject to change. He also highlighted the two tranches of grant received from Central Government in response to the pandemic detailed in paragraph 4.2 of the report amounting to £938,258. A third tranche of £121,000 also had been awarded to the Council.

The Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Finance and Assets Committee proposed and seconded the recommendations in the report.

Speaking in support of the recommendations, the Leader stated that:

'This Council went into the Covid 19 pandemic in better financial health than many local authorities, with a balanced budget for the next two years, and a prudent level of general reserves at 10% of operating expenditure.

I think it's important to recognise the Government's significant financial support to Local Government throughout the pandemic. I sit on a number of national forums and I can report that Government has *really* listened to the detail and responded well. We welcome the Government's support to this authority of £938K to date and we look forward to the detail of the latest Government funding announcement of £500m nationally and on the compensation scheme for loss of income from fees and charges.

This authority was fortunate - although clearly it arises from our hard work and choices in the past - in that it has not suffered the financial losses of other authorities arising from increased housing and homelessness costs. We have housed people during Covid 19 that would not normally be housed, but we have done this at nil cost. I believe that for other Districts in Cambridgeshire the costs for this to date are, in some cases, getting up to £1m. We've also not seen the enormous losses from car parking income that other authorities have suffered - again amounting to millions of pounds for some authorities.

We *are* getting more clarity now, on where we stand in this financial year and thank you to Ian for setting that out clearly in the report.

It is important to give space and time to our officers to continue discussions with our Leisure provider GLL, a not for profit, but *national* operator and those discussions need to continue and reach resolution

urgently now.

It's simply not possible to quantify the medium or long-term financial effect of Covid with any real degree of accuracy at this moment in time. The Government has stated that further information on the future funding of local Government will be coming in the autumn, this, among other things, to recognise the issues that are likely to arise with loss of receipts to the collection fund, from decreasing Council Tax and Business Rates receipts. The deferral of the implementation of fairer funding and the business rates retention scheme is certainly helpful to the finances of this Council.

Turning to the recommendations at little (iv) - construction companies across the UK will be talking to their lenders to request changes to their loan agreements and repayment schedules – ECTC is absolutely no different in that.

It is the business of the Combined Authority and this Council to do all it can to provide housing. The MOD housing site, which I am fully aware was not supported by the Liberal Democrats, and the Haddenham CLT site, which I am aware *is* supported by Cllr Wilson, need to be supported to continue – the alternative is to shut up shop and close down the sites. But make no mistake, ECTC is not seeking grant funding or charity handouts, it is simply proposing a re-profiling of the rate of delivery and the necessary loan agreement to support that in recognition of the unprecedented event that has been Covid 19. Not to do so would indeed be extraordinary! Notably, the effect of the request from ECTC for this authority is in fact an *increase* in income from loan interest payments, which will help to support the medium term financial position of this authority – the original interest due prior to Covid 19 was expected to be £813K in total, and under the re-profiling will be £1.09m – some £283K additional support to this authority's financial position.

The sites are proceeding at around 50% speed to facilitate safe working, which equates to around 6 months disruption to the build programme. Current economic uncertainty and the threat of possible significant job losses arising from business failures means there will be an impact on housing sales rates. The build out rate has to be commensurate with sales rates – you can't put all the houses on the market at the same time, and neither would cash flow withstand such an approach. The new business modelling assumes it is likely to be late summer or early autumn until we get real interest, and it takes on average around 12 weeks to get from sale to completion. To put it into relatable terms – the new model assumes 2.25 sales per month in the MoD site compared with 3.35 previously, and 1.3 per month at Haddenham compared with 2.25 previously. This is what drives the re-profiling and the need to restructure the finances and loan agreements. I also note that the ECTC has responded to the fact that the rental market is buoyant, and that 9 properties on the site have been agreed for rental, which is ahead of the

revised schedule and will bring significant supporting income to the project.

Ultimately, the Haddenham project, in the new modelling, is expected to break even and the MoD site, in the new modelling, will be roughly the same in terms of profitability, but it will happen more slowly – which is only to be expected.

As other lenders tighten their lending criteria, these sites become even more important in East Cambs – we could well see a dramatic slowing down of house building, with all the knock on effects of that. East Cambs and the Combined Authority have the opportunity to facilitate continued delivery of housing.

Finally, I support the recommendation for the increase in management fee to East Cambs Street Scene. The increased costs are directly related to Covid and arise from employing agency staff which were needed to cover staff absences due to self-isolating and shielding. I am proud of our team for keeping a full service going throughout the pandemic and they deserve our support – this is a totally appropriate use of our Covid 19 funding.'

The following amendment then was proposed by Councillor Alison Whelan and Seconded by Councillor Charlotte Cane:

That item 2.1 "Members are requested to:" be deleted and replaced with "Officers to request financial information from the trading companies and prepare a revision of the current year finances and the MTFs to demonstrate the impact of Covid-19 and the following actions for discussion at a Members Seminar followed by presentation and approval at a Special Meeting of this Council in no more than 4 weeks time. Such report to clearly demonstrate numerically the impact of these actions in each financial year:"

Speaking in support of the amendment, Councillor Alison Whelan stated that Members needed to ensure that the finances of the Council. And Trading Companies were on a sound footing. However, the report contained insufficient information to make decisions upon. She particularly referred to recommendation (iv) in the report and stated that she had not seen a request to reduce interest rates on loans in this manner before. This represented reducing the rate of return and increasing the risks for the Council with little information or justification. This was why the amendment requested referral back to give further time for the provision of better and more detailed information.

In response, the Leader stated that recommendation (ii) which the Lib Dems sought to remove, already required the Finance Manager to update the Finance & Assets Committee at the appropriate time on the revision to the MTFs. This needed to be after the F & A Committee considered the 2019/20

outturn report, which had positive implications for the MTFS, at its meeting on 23rd July.

The Trading Companies needed a decision from Council, a delay would mean that the 2019/20 accounts could not be finalised as the information needed to be provided to the auditors.

The Leader commented that the amendment did nothing that was not already happening and, worse, took away things that needed to happen in order to realise what it sought to achieve.

A Councillor had given advance notification of a question as follows: 'Agenda item 10 includes an extension of the loan to ECTC of two years, and the rationale included for this mentions reduced pace of work and sales at Haddenham and the Ely MOD site. Can we have figures for the pre-Covid 19, and the post-Covid 19, projected physical completions and projected sales completions for the two sites?' At the invitation of the Chairman, Phil Rose from ECTC read out figures in response to the question and agreed to provide these in writing to all Councillors. Members queried the ability of Mr Rose to speak at the Council meeting and the Chief Executive responded.

A Member commented that Councillor Alison Whelan had made a strong case for acceptance of the amendment on the grounds of good financial practice to safeguard the interests of the shareholders of East Cambridgeshire. He expressed disappointment at the lack of detailed financial information and inadequate evidence of good financial principles being followed, which was why he urged Members to support the amendment.

Councillor Wilson stated that since Haddenham CLT had been referred to during debate, he would abstain from voting.

A Member expressed surprise at the Liberal Democrats expressing support for affordable housing provision, when they had voted against the MOD site project that included affordable housing.

Councillor Cane as seconder of the amendment, clarified that the Liberal Democrats had voted for a higher level of affordable provision on the MOD site and still had not received a response on this. With regard to the amendment, she stated that more financial information had been requested at Finance and Assets Committee and it had been expected that this would be submitted to this Council meeting. But this had not been forthcoming either for this meeting or for the Finance and Assets Committee meeting to be held on 23 July. No information was provided on the detail of the loans or their affect on the Council's cashflow. She was concerned that the additional management fee for ECSS would set a precedent for the future. In order to ensure oversight of finances, information should be submitted to every Finance and Assets Committee meeting. A Member Seminar would enable the issues to be discussed in an informal setting, but it was recognised that the issues were time-critical, which was why it had been requested that the seminar and Special

Council meeting be held in the next four weeks. Councillor Cane requested a recorded vote on the amendment.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: (9) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan.

AGAINST: (16) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Brown, Every, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco and Webber.

ABSTENTIONS: (1) – Cllr Wilson.

The amendment was declared to be lost.

A second amendment was moved by Councillor Cane and seconded by Councillor Dupré, requesting reference back of the recommendations to Finance and Assets Committee for further consideration in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.4. Councillor Dupré requested a recorded vote on the amendment.

A recorded vote was taken on the amendment, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: (10) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan, Wilson.

AGAINST: (16) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovingdon, Brown, Every, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco and Webber.

ABSTENTIONS: (0)

The amendment was declared to be lost.

A Member highlighted that Councillor Wilson had voted on the amendment. Councillor Wilson explained that the amendment merely was to refer back the recommendations, which was why he had voted.

Returning to the Motion, the Leader explained that the repayment arrangements for the loans were set out in paragraph 10.5 of the report.

A Member expressed disappointment at the failure of the two amendments, as she considered that the recommendations were not fit to be voted upon. It was not good practice to vote on open-ended loans without detailed terms, as Members needed to understand the risks and sensitivities

and be reassured that the Council was acting in a prudent way. Therefore, she requested a recorded vote on the Motion.

The Chairman of Finance and Assets Committee, Councillor Brown, as seconder of the Motion, expressed surprise at the earlier comments regarding lack of financial information as this had been provided at Finance and Assets Committee in June.

The Leader of the Council reiterated that information on the loan facilities was contained in paragraph 10.5 of the report and, with the agreement of her seconder, amended her Motion to include reference to this at the end of both of the bullet points in recommendation (iv).

A recorded vote was taken on the amended Motion, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: (16) – Cllrs C Ambrose Smith, D Ambrose Smith, Austen, Bailey, Bovington, Brown, Every, Huffer, Hunt, D Schumann, J Schumann, Sharp, Starkey, Stubbs, Trimarco and Webber.

AGAINST: (9) – Cllrs Cane, Downey, Dupré, Harries, Inskip, Jones, Trapp, A Whelan, C Whelan.

ABSTENTIONS: (1) – Cllr Wilson.

The amended Motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

- (i) To note the current assessment of Covid-19 on the Council's finances detailed in the report.
- (ii) To instruct the Finance Manager to update the Finance & Assets Committee, when appropriate, on revisions to the Medium Term Financial Strategy to take into account Covid-19 and the 2019/20 budget outturn.
- (iii) To request the Finance Manager and Director, Commercial in consultation with the Chairman of Finance & Assets Committee, to negotiate with GLL.
- (iv) To approve new loan facilities for East Cambs Trading Company from 31st March 2021, specifically:
 - original £5m loan (due to be repaid by 31st March 2021) – a new loan with a final repayment date of 31st July 2023 and with a reduced interest rate of 3.50% per annum, this compared to 5.22% for the original loan, as detailed in paragraph 10.5 of the submitted report;

- MOD loan (due to be repaid by 31 March 2021) – a new loan with a final repayment date of 31st March 2023 and with a reduced interest rate of 3.50% per annum, this compared to 5.22% for the original loan, as detailed in paragraph 10.5 of the submitted report.
- (v) To approve an increase in management fee of £91,000 to East Cambs Street Scene, to cover the first six months additional costs of the waste and recycling service.

29. **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

Council considered a report containing a proposed amendment to Council Procedure Rules within the Constitution regarding Budget amendments in response to a request from the Council meeting on 20 February 2020. The Democratic Services Manager highlighted a further proposed amendment to Appendix 1 to include the same wording in same 'track changes' in Procedure Rule 11.9 in Procedure Rule 12.10.1, for the sake of consistency.

Councillor Every proposed and Councillor Sharp seconded the recommendation in the report, as amended.

Some Councillors expressed concerns that the Constitution was being amended to curtail debate and that there were good reasons not to have advance notification of amendments. The view was expressed that the Constitution should be reviewed to identify any inconsistencies and ensure that it facilitated open and transparent debate.

In response, other Members commented that in the case of setting the Council Budget each year, it was important to have sufficient time to consider information fully. Budget Motions and amendments must be legal, so there needed to be sufficient time for them to be checked and verified by the S151 Officer. The proposed Constitutional amendment would allow time for this. A number of dual Members also referred to the practice at the County Council whereby a reserve date was set for the Budget Council meeting, to be used, if necessary.

It was resolved:

That approval be given to the proposed amendment to Council Procedure Rules within the Constitution, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the submitted report, subject to the inclusion of the same wording in 'track changes' in Procedure Rule 11.9 in Procedure Rule 12.10.1, to ensure consistency.

30. **COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE REPORT**

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

It was resolved:

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

31. **ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY**

Council received a report on action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency relating to the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

A Member thanked officers for getting almost £1M in funding from Government out to local businesses during the Covid-19 outbreak.

It was resolved:

That the report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 10.26pm.

Chairman.....

Date