



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 26 June 2025

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Ian Bovington (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Mark Goldsack
Cllr Bill Hunt
Cllr David Miller
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chair)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Alison Whelan
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers:

Sally Bonnett – Director Community
Jane Webb – Democratic Services and Elections Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
Nicole Pema – HR Manager
Jude Anthony – Principal Accountant
Nigel Ankers – ECTC Finance Manager
Lucy Flintham – Community Infrastructure Manager
Kieran Carr – Economic Development Manager
Richard Kay – Climate Change & Natural Environment Manager

1. Public Questions

The Democratic Services and Elections Manager confirmed that one public question had been received before the meeting. The question was from Amanda Halls of Eco Ely, who was not present; therefore, it was read out on her behalf.

“My question is, what is the plan for reducing or eliminating herbicides and pesticides in the ECDC jurisdiction? Are there areas where unwanted growth can be handled, pulled by park employees or volunteers? Apart from the Ely parks, what other areas does the Open Spaces Team manage?”

The Chair responded, “The Council is already committed to reducing its use of herbicides/pesticides, and they are used as little as possible in the open spaces

that the Council maintains. A list of open spaces and play areas that the Council owns and maintains was presented at the March meeting of this committee, and we can forward that to you.”

2. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies were received from Cllr Mary Wade. Cllr Christine Colbert attended as a substitute.

3. Declarations of interest

No Declarations of Interests were received.

4. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025, subject to a correction to the spelling of Cllr Christine Whelan’s name under minute 83.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 27 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

5. Chair’s Announcements

The Chair welcomed Cllr Denney to his first Finance & Assets Meeting.

The Chair announced that the Council had launched a consultation seeking the views of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders on the future of local government, following the government's announcement that the current district, county, and city councils would be replaced with single-tier councils. More information and a link to the surveys were available on the Have Your Say on the Future of Local Councils webpage of the ECDC website. The survey closes at midnight on July 20, 2025. The Chair encouraged members of the public to complete the survey.

6. Climate and Nature Monitoring Report and Action Plan 2025

The Committee received a report (AA19, previously circulated) that provided an update on the Council’s climate and nature activities over the past 12 months.

The Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions.

In respect to the proposed Eco-Flex declaration fee, the Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager assured Members that the £100 cost would not be passed on to homeowners, because homeowners could access a grant covering 100% of their funding. In respect of our carbon footprint calculations, he noted that East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) calculated

emissions differently from some other councils by following internationally agreed-upon methods. While ECDC used a renewable energy tariff, its emissions were based on the national grid's electricity conversion rate, resulting in a carbon footprint tied to its electricity consumption (the location-based method). Other councils claim to be 100% emission-free for electricity when using a renewable energy tariff (market-based method).

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

Members congratulated staff on the successful implementation of HVO refuse vehicles and solar panels at The Hive Centre. They thanked the Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager for the transparent report, agreeing that East Cambridgeshire was "punching above its weight."

Members resolved unanimously that:

- the Climate and Nature Action Plan and Monitoring Report 2025 be NOTED.
- the Climate and Nature Top 20 Actions for 2025/26 be APPROVED.
- a fee of £100 for each Eco Flex 4 or Great British Insulation Scheme Flex declaration provided by this council to appropriate retrofit contractors be APPROVED.

7. Finance Report

The Committee received a report (AA20, previously circulated) containing budget information for services under the Finance and Assets Committee, as well as for the Council as a whole, as part of its corporate remit.

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

The Leader noted that the Council has frozen its Council tax for 12 years and had no external borrowing. However, a Local Government Review would shift funds to the northern part of the county, disadvantaging councils like East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). With funding focusing on deprived areas, ECDC's future was uncertain. She urged Members to maintain efficiency to ensure a strong council that benefited residents.

Members recognised that while a budget surplus was beneficial, effective budgeting was essential. They noted that deprivation takes many forms, and it was disappointing that funds were not redirected to the areas most affected in ECDC.

Members unanimously resolved to **NOTE:**

- This Committee has a year-end underspend of £1,604,245 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £7,016,768.
- The Council has a year-end underspend of £2,621,278 when compared to its approved budget of £18,840,342.

- that the overall position for the Council on Capital is an outturn of £3,653,638, which is an underspend of £4,098,479.
- AGREED to carry forward funding in relation to capital underspends related to slippage, where the funding will be required in 2025/26.

8. Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review

The Committee considered a report (AA21 as previously circulated) that provided Members with the Council's treasury operations during the 2024/25 financial year. The report reviewed Treasury Management activity during the financial year 2024/25 and reported on the prudential indicators as required by CIPFA's Treasury Management guidelines.

The Principal Accountant presented the report and explained that there were currently no proper measures in place to assess the impact of investments and their carbon footprints, but this would be addressed in the future.

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

Members unanimously **RECOMMENDED TO FULL COUNCIL:**

That they approve this report detailing the Council's treasury operations during 2024/25, including the prudential and treasury indicators, as set out in the Annual Treasury Management Review at Appendix 1 to the report.

9. Assets in Ely

The Committee considered a report (AA22 as previously circulated), which provided Members with an update on Council-owned assets.

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

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager confirmed that the audit of ECDC's play equipment had begun. He emphasised that inclusiveness included not just play equipment but also featured sensory gardens. He also noted a strong interest from Parish Councils.

Parish Councils have access to their own CIL funding, precepts, and fundraising to deliver improvements. The Council expected matched funding and could assist in finding additional funding sources.

The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager announced that the recycling area at the Forehill car park would be converted into a cycle and motorcycle parking area. He confirmed that all parking ticket machines accepted cash and noted that potholes in the Newnham Street car park had been temporarily repaired, with further repairs planned shortly.

Members thanked the Open Spaces & Facilities Manager for the works at 70 Market Street, and regarding upgrades to public toilets, requested that these are accessible for all.

Members unanimously resolved to note:

- The update on Council-owned assets and
- The expenditure tracking sheet in Appendix 1 to the report

10. UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Business Grant Funds

The Committee considered a report (AA23 as previously circulated) to approve the Council's proposed UK Shared Prosperity and Rural England Prosperity Business Grant Funds.

The Economic Development Manager outlined the two-stage funding application process. Verification documents were required to confirm job creation and apprenticeships, which may also include site visits. Companies House records, social media, and financial accounts were also reviewed. Later, quotes and invoices were requested, and funding was only awarded after the project was completed. Members asked to be included in the email to potential businesses regarding available financing, along with the Parish Councils, for broader outreach.

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

Members unanimously resolved that:

1. The proposed grant funding arrangements for the two Funds, as detailed in the report be APPROVED.
2. The Business Growth Fund will open on 7 July 2025 and close no later than 23:59 on 5 September 2025, with all projects to be completed by 31 March 2026.
3. The Rural England Prosperity Business grant fund will open early autumn 2025 and be completed by 31st March 2026.
4. If the fund is fully utilised before the close date, the Council reserves the right to close the fund to pending or new applications.

11. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Active Travel Grant

The Committee considered a report (AA24 as previously circulated) to agree the funding and delivery arrangements for the 'Sustrans Study East Cambs Routes' projects.

The Community Infrastructure Manager presented the report and confirmed the routes that are being advanced were:

- Ely – Soham – which has strong local support, particularly Ely to Stuntney, and would link to the Soham – Wicken cycleway which is being delivered by Soham Town Council

- Burwell – Fordham & wider links – Both parish councils keen to progress and would link into the Swaffhams Greenway

The Chair clarified that the Bus Cycle Walk Working Party had identified several routes, which would be presented to funders to narrow down and potentially implement.

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

Members unanimously resolved that:

- The Council accepts £400,000 of funding from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to deliver the 'Sustrans Study East Cambs routes' project.
- The Director Community be instructed to enter into a Grant Funding Agreement with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.
- Cambridgeshire County Council be appointed as the delivery agent for the project.

12. Housing Strategy

The Committee considered a report (AA25 as previously circulated) to consider the Housing Strategy. The Director Community presented the report.

Members enquired whether the Council could promote more affordable shared ownership properties, given the rising demand. The Director Community explained that this could be addressed through Planning and Section 106 agreements, as well as collaboration with Parish Councils.

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

The Leader recognised the document as well-structured, highlighting ECDC's accomplishments in providing affordable housing for local residents, eliminating the use of bed and breakfasts for families since 2012, and achieving Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.

Members praised the Officers for the report, but some disagreed with its classification as a strategy and would not support it. While affordable housing was subjective, there was consensus that there were not enough shared ownership properties, and those available could be unaffordable.

The Leader mentioned that the average price of a house in the area was £389,000. However, East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) provided affordable housing through various means, by offering affordable rental and shared ownership options that were below 60% of market rent prices, as well as homes priced at £100,000, all delivered at no cost to the taxpayer.

Members resolved to APPROVE the Housing Strategy.

13. Annual Report of Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Committee received a report (AA26 as previously circulated) to consider the annual reports on outside bodies from the representatives.

The Democratic Services and Elections Manager presented the report and explained that Councillor Alison Whelan was inadvertently omitted from the distribution list for updates. Consequently, her report was submitted after the papers were published.

Members resolved to **NOTE** the 2024-25 annual reports from the Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the remit of the Finance & Assets Committee

14. Forward Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Plan.

Members unanimously resolved to note the forward agenda plan.

15. 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).

16. ECTC Management Accounts

The ECTC Finance Manager presented the ECTC Management Accounts for the twelve months to 31 March 2025.

The ECTC Finance Manager presented the report.

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

17. Appointments, Transfers & Resignations

The committee reviewed a report on staff appointments, transfers, resignations between 1 January 2025 and 31 May 2025, and a summary of the Exit Survey responses.

The HR Manager presented the report to the Members.

It was unanimously resolved to **NOTE** the information in the report.

18. EXEMPT Minutes – 27 March 2025

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee held on 27 March 2025.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 7:02pm

Chair.....

Date.....