

East Cambridgeshire District Council

NOTICE OF MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Meeting of the **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held on **THURSDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2025** in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** at **THE GRANGE, NUTHOLT LANE, ELY, CB7 4EE**, commencing at **6:00pm** with up to 15 minutes of Public Question Time, immediately followed by the formal business, and you are summoned to attend for the transaction of the following business

Agenda

- 1. Public Question Time** [oral]
The meeting will commence with up to 15 minutes Public Question Time (PQT) – questions/statements can be submitted in advance or placed in the PQT box in the Council Chamber prior to the commencement of the meeting – see Notes below for further information on the PQT scheme.
- 2. Apologies for Absence** [oral]
- 3. Declarations of Interests** [oral]
To receive declarations of interests from Members for any items on the agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.
- 4. Minutes – 22 May 2025** Page 1
To confirm as a correct record.
- 5. Chair's Announcements** [oral]
- 6. To receive Petition(s) (If any)** [oral]
- 7. Notice of Motions under Procedure Rule 10** [oral]

Local Government Reorganisation

The Council notes that:

1. Since the Government's White Paper on English Devolution was published in December 2024, Leaders and Officers of the six principal Councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been working together to produce an agreed proposal, or an agreed set of proposals, in time for the final submission deadline in November 2025.
2. The initial work undertaken to support the business case includes a detailed analysis of the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on Adults, Children and SEND services; a financial analysis of the relative funding allocation from Government; analysis of demand across other services such as homelessness and environmental services; and analysis of the viability of the

tax base (business rates, Council Tax, and other income) to support each Unitary configuration.

3. This work has led to the development of three different options all of which are for a two Unitary solution across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. See below the three options.

Proposal A North-West/South-East

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, Huntingdonshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

Proposal B North/South

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Huntingdonshire District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District along with County Council functions

Proposal C East/West

- i. **Unitary 1** Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils along with County Council functions
- ii. **Unitary 2** Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire District Councils along with County Council functions

4. Each Council across the region has directly input into the development of a suite of baseline data to be used in each business case and is now directly inputting into a chosen business case. Based on the shared data and analysis undertaken to date, at this stage East Cambs District Council officers are inputting directly into the development of the Proposal B business case and indirectly (through sharing of data) into Proposals A and C.
5. The business case for Proposal A is being led by Cambridgeshire County Council. This proposal is currently the preferred option of the County Council's Administration. District Councils are not directly inputting into the development of this business case.
6. The business case for Proposal B is being led by Cambridge City Council and is the only business case that has direct input from all District Councils and an upper tier authority, namely Peterborough City Council.
7. South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council Leaders have given public support for the creation of a Greater Cambridge Unitary – The Greater Cambridge Unitary comprises of the geography covered by these two Councils only, which forms part of Proposal B.
8. The business case for Proposal C is being led by Huntingdonshire District Council but is not receiving direct input from either of the upper tier authorities or any other District Councils at this stage. For clarity, HDC offered to lead on this piece of work as collectively the Leaders felt it was too soon to narrow down the options to just two.
9. A fourth Unitary option, which proposes the creation of three Unitaries across the region, is being developed by Peterborough City Council, however this does not have the backing of any other Council within Cambridgeshire, as a three unitary option was shown to be unlikely to be a financially sustainable solution longer term.
10. The Council can only endorse one or none of the Unitary proposals at the point of submission to Government in November 2025.

The Council believes that:

1. Each proposal has benefits and disbenefits for our residents, businesses, visitors and communities in general; however the early analysis shows that some proposals will have a greater impact than others.
2. Proposal A
 - Appears to have a logical geographical alignment due to areas in the south of our district bordering Greater Cambridge.
 - However, this option could see East Cambridgeshire being folded into the Cambridge Growth Company which is required to build 150,000 new homes in the Cambridge area with the Government directing where those homes will be located, rather than local people.
 - Would see East Cambridgeshire residents grouped with the highest Council Tax charging areas and see the biggest increase in Council Tax of all Unitary options for our residents.
 - Would also mean East Cambridgeshire would be joining an area where the existing District Councils have decided to permanently adopt a 4 day working week for 5 days' pay funded by tax payers.
3. Proposal B
 - Protects our district from over development and handing over control of the planning of new homes to the Cambridge Growth Company.
 - Brings rural districts that share similar characteristics and challenges together, giving them a stronger voice, while still being economically underpinned by a vibrant city.
 - By virtue of its geographic and population size will need to maintain a council footprint presence and service delivery model in the northern Unitary, rooted in the local communities it serves, like the successful North Yorkshire Unitary established in early 2023.
 - Meets the Government's ambition to deliver growth by forming a Greater Cambridge region in a southern Unitary that has the scale required to be financially sustainable, given its high tax base and future growth.
4. Proposal C
 - Would align similar geographies and Councils with similar housing growth ambitions and constraints.
 - However, it may lead to a northern Unitary that has such a low funding base, it would struggle to support an aging population and increased demands in Social Care and SEND services.

The Council resolves to:

1. Continue to actively and directly participate in the development of the Proposal B business case.
2. Consider all three business cases (A, B and C) at a meeting of the Council on 20th November 2025 prior to submission to Government.

Proposer: Cllr Anna Bailey

Seconder: Cllr Julia Huffer

Motion to Oppose Proposed Changes to Council Tax Powers

Council notes:

1. The Government is considering proposals to allow local authorities to set their own Council Tax bands, rates, and property valuations.
2. These changes would dismantle the nationally consistent framework that currently governs Council Tax, introducing significant regional variation.
3. Council Tax already exhibits stark disparities across the UK:
 - a) The average Band D bill in England is £2,171 but varies from £829 in Westminster to £2,226 in Nottingham. (see note 1)

- b) Residents in poorer areas pay a higher percentage of their income on Council Tax — up to 10.3% in places like Blackpool and Teignbridge — compared to just 2% in wealthier boroughs like Westminster. (see note 2)
- c) The poorest 10% of households pay 7% of their income on Council Tax, while the richest 10% pay just 1.2%. (see note 1)
- d) Council Tax arrears have reached a record £8.3 billion, with 4.4 million people behind on payments — a third of whom live below the poverty line. (see note 1)
- 4. Nine out of ten councils in eastern England, including those in East Anglia, have already opted for the maximum allowable Council Tax increase of 4.99% for 2025–26. (see note 5)
- 5. If councils gain full control over rates and valuations, this could lead to even steeper increases, especially in areas facing financial pressure or service demand.
- 6. East Cambridgeshire District Council has frozen its share of Council Tax for the 12th consecutive year, maintaining Band D at £142.14. (see note 6)
- 7. This contrasts sharply with neighbouring districts, and under a decentralised system, such disparities could widen—leading to confusion and perceived unfairness among residents.

Council believes:

- A. Council Tax should remain a nationally regulated system to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability.
- B. The valuation of properties is a complex and sensitive process that should remain under the purview of an impartial national body, not subject to local political pressures.
- C. Local autonomy over tax bands and valuations risks deepening regional inequalities, as wealthier areas with high property values can raise more revenue, while poorer areas face greater financial strain. (see note 3)
- D. The administrative burden of implementing localised valuations and banding would be substantial, requiring new systems, staff training, and oversight — diverting resources from essential services. (see note 4)
- E. A fragmented system would confuse taxpayers, reduce public trust, and make it harder to compare services and costs across regions.

Council resolves to:

- A. Oppose the proposed changes that would allow councils to set their own Council Tax bands, rates, and property valuations.
- B. Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government to express our concerns and urge the Government to retain a nationally consistent Council Tax framework.
- C. Request that our local MPs raise this issue in Parliament and advocate for a fair and transparent taxation system.
- D. Collaborate with other councils, the Local Government Association, and relevant stakeholders to build a coalition against these proposals and promote alternative reforms that enhance fairness without fragmenting the system.

Proposer: Cllr Keith Horgan

Seconder: Cllr Christine Ambrose-Smith

Sources:

- 1. <https://moneyweek.com/personal-finance/council-tax-burden-highest-lowest-uk>
- 2. https://www.taxpayersalliance.com/mapping_britain_s_council_tax_burden
- 3. <https://www.bing.com/search?q=impact+of+local+Council+Tax+autonomy+on+regional+inequalities&toWww=1&redig=791556156BA44C6BABE461EA99D19A08>

4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax/modernising-and-improving-the-administration-of-council-tax>
5. <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/national/24946349.analysis-shows-nine-10-areas-facing-maximum-council-tax-rise-england/>
6. <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/finance-and-budget/council-tax/council-tax-bands>

New Homes Ombudsman

This council notes that

1. The New Homes Ombudsman Service exists to help customers resolve issues with their new homes, which the registered developer has been unable or unwilling to fix.
2. The remit of the New Homes Ombudsman Service covers the whole period from the reservation and legal completion of a property through to after-sales and complaints management for issues during the first two years of a new home purchase.
3. The primary purpose of the service is to provide a free and independent redress service to customers, which can impartially assess and adjudicate on issues that have arisen that fall within the Ombudsman's scope. This includes complaints around the reservation, legal completion and complaints management processes, or issues or defects that have arisen at or after occupation and which are not major defects.
4. The New Homes Ombudsman Service can resolve complaints through early resolution, negotiation, mediation, and adjudication.

This council further recognises that

- a) If a developer is not on the register of developers, or the customer reserved their property before their registration date, the Ombudsman will be unable to help.
- b) The New Homes Ombudsman is also unable to help with homes that are sold as affordable homes, or those under a shared ownership scheme or bought as part of a buy-to-let scheme.

This council expresses concern that

- i. Its own developer Palace Green Homes is not a registered developer for the purposes of this scheme, meaning that its customers will not be able to make use of the New Homes Ombudsman Service should they need to.
- ii. A number of other developers building homes locally are also not registered developers under the scheme.

This council therefore

- A. Calls upon its wholly-owned company East Cambridgeshire Trading Company to register its developer arm Palace Green Homes as a registered company with the New Homes Quality Board and agree to accept the New Homes Quality Code, thereby entitling their customers to use the services of New Homes Ombudsman.
- B. Resolves to encourage developers building in East Cambridgeshire to register under this scheme.

Proposer: Cllr Lorna Dupré

Seconder: Cllr Chika Akinwale

Ely Junction capacity improvements

This council expresses its grave concern that the Government's announcement in June of progress on fifty rail and road schemes once again failed to include Ely Junction.

The congestion at this bottleneck means it is unable to handle the demand for both freight and passenger services. Solving this would return £4.89 for every £1 spent; remove 98,000 HGV journeys; enable an additional 2,900 freight services a year from Felixstowe; reduce carbon emissions by 1.7 million tonnes of CO2 over sixty years; and reduce traffic congestion by 5.6 million hours a year.

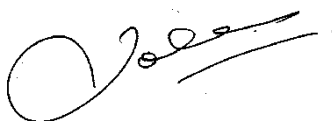
It is now twenty-three years since the first business case for upgrading the junction was made, and yet successive governments have failed to make the investment in this vital piece of infrastructure for our region and for the country.

This council calls on the Government to release funds for planning the project, conduct a rapid departmental review of the scheme and its benefits to present to the Treasury, and listen to the concerns of the local MP, businesses, and stakeholders including this council at the effect of further delay.

Proposer: Cllr Mark Inskip

Seconder: Cllr Christine Colbert

- 8. To answer questions from Members** **[oral]**
- 9. Schedule of items recommended from Committees and other Member bodies:**
Finance & Assets Committee – 26 June 2025
 - 2024/25 Treasury Operations Annual Performance Review
- 10. Appointment of Finance Director/Section 151 Officer**
- 11. Establishment of a Chief Executive Appointments Panel**
- 12. Corporate Plan**
- 13. Local Government Reorganisation - Public and Stakeholder Survey Findings**
- 14. Local Government Reorganisation Update**
- 15. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority:**
 - (a) Update report – June 2025
 - (b) Update report – July 2025



J Hill
Chief Executive

To: All Members of the Council

NOTES:

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. Admittance is on a "first come, first served" basis and public access will be from 30 minutes before the start time of the meeting. Due to room capacity restrictions, members of the public are asked, where possible, to notify Democratic Services (democratic.services@eastcambs.gov.uk or 01353 665555) of their intention to attend a meeting.

The meeting will be webcast and a live stream of the meeting will be available. Further details can be found at <https://eastcambs.gov.uk/node/1406> Please be aware that all attendees, including those in the public gallery, will be visible on the livestream.

Public Questions/Statements are welcomed on any topic related to the Council's functions as long as there is no suspicion that it is improper (e.g. offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosures of Exempt or Confidential information). Up to 15 minutes is allocated for this at the start of the meeting. Further details about the Public Question Time scheme are available at: <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/committees/public-question-time-scheme>

The Council has adopted a 'Purge on Plastics' strategy and is working towards the removal of all consumer single-use plastics in our workplace. Therefore, we do not provide disposable cups at our meetings and would ask members of the public to bring their own drink to the meeting, if required.

Fire instructions for meeting: The instructions in the event of a fire at the venue will be announced at the commencement of the meeting.

Reports are attached for each agenda item unless marked "oral".

If required, all items on the agenda can be provided in different formats (e.g. large type, Braille or audio tape, or translated into other languages), on request, by calling Main Reception on (01353) 665555 or e-mail: translate@eastcambs.gov.uk

If the Committee wishes to exclude the public and press from the meeting, a resolution in the following terms will need to be passed:

"That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no(s). X because it is likely, in 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 item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category X of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."