



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 25 September 2025

Present:

Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Ian Bovingdon (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Charlotte Cane
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
Emma Grima – ECTC Director Commercial

1. Public Questions

No Public Questions had been received.

2. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies were received from Cllr Chika Akinwale and Mary Wade. Cllrs Colbert and Cane attended as substitutes.

3. Declarations of interest

Cllr Bailey declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as a trustee of the East Cambs Community Land Trust.

4. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025, subject to a correction in the change of word from “county” to “country” in Minute 7 – Finance Report, third paragraph.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 26 June 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Jude Antony, Finance Director and Section 151 Officer, to his first meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee.

6. Gender Pay Report

The Committee received a report (AA62, previously circulated) that provided Members with measurable data on gender pay at the Council. Nicole Pema, the HR Manager, presented the report.

Members commented that a further breakdown into quartiles might prove more helpful, and it was a shame that ECSS numbers were not included. They also asked how the pay of Council toilet cleaners compared to that of the refuse collectors. The HR Manager stated this information could be circulated after the meeting.

It was noted that South Cambridgeshire had the opposite issue to East Cambridgeshire, prompting questions about whether the four-day work week and part-time roles could benefit East Cambridgeshire. The Leader mentioned attending a meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, where the State of the Region Report was discussed. This report showed that South Cambridgeshire's gender pay gap had in fact doubled in 2024 compared to other councils.

Members resolved to NOTE:

1. The content of information within the report.

7. Health and Safety Annual Report

The Committee received a report (AA63, previously circulated) to consider the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2024/25. Spencer Clark, the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager, presented the report, highlighting that an updated Health & Safety Annual Report had been published and circulated, as injuries from 2025 were included in the 2024 report; these have now been removed.

The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager confirmed that:

- Councillors' accidents were captured within the accidents reported.
- The physical assaults were against housing staff within the reception area; this incident had followed the process and procedures, and a police

investigation had followed. There had been no need to change processes, as no one was hurt; it was a near-miss.

- Other accidents had included being stabbed by a rose bush, an accident with a saw, and dust in the eye from machinery.
- Injury by animal – one dog bite, and an arborist was stung by a swarm of bees.

Members praised the report, noting that incidents were gradually decreasing, with a significant reduction in lost working days, which marked considerable progress. They expressed their gratitude to the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager for the excellent work done in addressing near misses, as these efforts helped prevent more serious accidents from occurring.

Members unanimously resolved to NOTE:

1. The Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

8. Health and Safety Policy

The Committee considered a report (AA64, as previously circulated) to approve the Health and Safety Policy 2025. Spencer Clark, the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager, presented the report.

The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager provided the following clarifications:

- Directors were members of the Health and Safety Working Group.
- A security system was in place to support lone workers from various departments.
- First aid provisions were available to Councillors to address any future concerns, and he would provide further clarification on this.

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

Members unanimously resolved to **APPROVE**:

1. The Health and Safety Policy 2025

9. Assets Report

The Committee considered a report (AA22 as previously circulated), which provided Members with an update on Council-owned assets. Spencer Clark, the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager, presented the report.

Members raised concerns about the lack of signage in the car park indicating that payments made via the app, rather than at the ticket machine, incurred a 15p charge. In response, the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager explained that this charge was a bank fee that had always been applicable; however, he agreed to look into the issue.

The Open Spaces and Facilities Manager reported that the Lake View Bereavement Centre Project was still in its early stages, and Members would receive key updates as they became available. The Chair suggested that Members should be informed about the specific triggers that would lead to the project returning to the committee for further discussion and enquired about the minutes of the monthly commercial meetings.

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

Members praised the well-organised department that addressed numerous issues, reflecting great credit on the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager and his team.

The Leader mentioned that she had visited the Bereavement Centre, which was progressing well, with construction machinery on-site and a perimeter fence installed. She confirmed that updates would be provided on important milestones through this committee and added that Members were encouraged to ask questions of the Director at any time.

Members unanimously resolved to **NOTE:**

1. The update on Council-owned assets, and
2. The expenditure tracking sheet in Appendix 1 and **APPROVE** expenditure of £215,000 as set out in the report.

10. **East Cambs Trading Company Financial Statement 2024/25 and Annual Governance Statement**

The Committee considered a report (AA66 as previously circulated) to receive the East Cambs Trading Company Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25. The ECTC Finance Manager and ECTC Director Commercial presented the report.

The ECTC Finance Manager clarified the following:

- All loans with the CPCA were repaid by the end of March 2025. Note 14 referenced remaining charges that should have been removed by the solicitors at the end of March, despite the loans having been repaid. This was an oversight, and those charges have not yet been removed.
- The sale contract for 2 Arbour Square was a binding agreement, with specified dates for payments.
- All the houses in the inventory have now been sold.

Members resolved to **NOTE:**

1. The East Cambs Trading Company Financial Statement 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1
2. The East Cambs Trading Company Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 2.

11. **Appointment of Trustee to East Cambs Community Land Trust**

The Committee considered a report (AA67 as previously circulated) to consider the nomination of a Councillor to East Cambs Community Land Trust (ECCLT).

Cllr Bailey was nominated by Cllr Goldsack and seconded by Cllr Bovingdon.

Cllr Trapp was nominated by Cllr Christine Whelan and seconded by Cllr Alison Whelan.

Cllr Bailey received 6 votes and Cllr John Trapp received 6 votes. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote which he used to vote for Cllr Bailey.

Members resolved that:

- Cllr Anna Bailey be appointed Trustee to East Cambs Community Land Trust

12. Affordable Housing Grant to East Cambs Trading Company

The Committee considered a report (AA68, as previously circulated) to consider a grant payment to East Cambs Trading Company for the delivery of 100% affordable housing at Phase 2 of Arbour Square, Ely. The Director Community presented the report.

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

Cllr Bailey announced that the Council was committed to providing over 30% affordable housing in Phase 2 of Arbour Square and had achieved 100% affordable housing for 27 homes. She thanked Emma Grima and her team for their efforts in securing the agreement with Haverbury Housing.

Members welcomed the 100% affordable housing, although others were surprised that the grant was being given retrospectively.

Cllr Bovingdon stated that it was great to see the affordable housing coming forward, and he looked forward to seeing further developments. The ECTC Director Commercial confirmed that the grant had not been put into a binding contract.

Cllr Bailey summarised that these funds were part of the business case and must be allocated to affordable housing, specifically where they were generated in Ely.

At the request of Cllr Cane, a recorded vote was taken.

FOR (6) Cllrs Bailey, Bovingdon, Goldsack, Goodearl, Miller, Sharp

AGAINST (6) Cllrs Cane, Colbert, Denney, Trapp, Alison Whelan,
Christine Whelan

ABSTENTIONS (0)

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote which he used to vote in favour of the recommendations.

Members resolved to APPROVE the grant to East Cambs Trading Company of £72,142.61 as a contribution towards a housing development scheme delivering 100% affordable housing at Phase 2 Arbour Square, Ely.

13. MTFS Update

The Committee received a report (AA69 as previously circulated) to provide an update on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) since the 2025/26 budget was approved in February 2025. The Director Finance presented the report.

Cllr Bailey highlighted that East Cambridgeshire District Council, despite its significant business growth, was negatively impacted by the "so-called" fair funding review, which she believed unfairly penalised well-managed councils. Since 2015, fifteen councils have raised council tax to the legal maximum each year, including many Labour-run councils. In contrast, East Cambridgeshire had kept its council tax frozen for twelve years, maintaining stable finances and avoiding external borrowing. Cllr Bailey noted that the fair funding review would divert funds from responsible councils to those that had overspent. She also expressed her gratitude to outgoing Section 151 Officer Ian Smith for his oversight of the council's finances, stressing that any increase in council tax would be a last resort.

Members agreed on the need to raise awareness of Internal Drainage Boards, their importance, and the necessity for volunteers.

Members resolved to NOTE:

1. The information within the report.

14. Finance Report

The Committee received a report (AA70 as previously circulated) to provide budget monitoring information for services under the Finance & Assets Committee and then, as part of its corporate remit, for the Council as a whole.

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

All members agreed with the report but expressed their disagreement with Recommendation 2.2, as they felt that the public should not be charged for small planning enquiries.

Members unanimously resolved to NOTE:

1. The Committee had a projected year-end underspend of £21,000 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £7,969,054.
2. The Council had a projected year-end underspend of £331,000 when compared to its approved revenue budget of £19,249,383.
3. The overall position for the Council on Capital is a projected out-turn of £15,970,684, which is an overspend of £1,200,000 when compared to the revised budget.
4. The Treasury Management Update Report at Appendix 5 to the report, and

Members unanimously voted AGAINST the introduction of an additional planning fee as detailed in the report.

15. East Cambridgeshire Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme

The Committee received a report (AA71 as previously circulated) to receive a report regarding the Council's requirement to review its Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS), and an annual review of the 2026/27 scheme. The Director Finance presented the report.

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

Members felt it was challenging to value a free service; therefore, it should have a cost.

The recommendation received 6 votes in favour and 6 votes against. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote which he used to vote in favour of the recommendation.

It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL:

1. That the annual review of the LCTRS be approved and that the Scheme for 2026/27 remain unchanged.

16. Outside Bodies Update – A10 Ely to A14 Improvements Scheme Working Group

The Committee received a report (AA72 as previously circulated) to appoint representatives to the resurrected A10 Ely to A14 Improvements Scheme Working Group and re-add the Group to the Outside Bodies List. The Democratic Services and Elections Manager presented the report.

The recommendations within the report were proposed by Cllr Bailey and seconded by Cllr Goldsack.

Cllr Alison Whelan proposed replacing the nomination of Cllr Sharp with that of Cllr Denney, citing proportionality and the area involved.

A vote took place on the amendment to appoint Cllrs Denney and Hunt to the working group.

The amendment received 6 votes in favour and 6 votes against. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote which he exercised to vote against the amendment. The amendment fell.

A vote took place on the recommendations within the report; the vote received 6 votes in favour and 6 votes against. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4, the Chair had a casting vote, which he exercised to vote in favour of the recommendation.

Cllr Bailey received 6 votes and Cllr Christine Whelan received 6 votes. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4, the Chair had a casting vote, which he exercised to vote in favour of Cllr Bailey.

It was resolved that:

1. Councillors Alan Sharp and Bill Hunt be appointed to the A10 Ely to A14 Improvements Scheme Working Group and
2. The A10 Ely to A14 Improvement Scheme Working Group be re-added to the Council's Outside Bodies List

17. Forward Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Plan.

Officers informed Members that the NERC Act s40A BioDiversity Report would now be moved from the November to the January meeting.

The Leader confirmed that it was standard practice to include any savings and income identified by officers in the Budget report.

Members enquired whether a report would be available on the Mepal Bereavement Project; officers indicated that this would be discussed further.

It was unanimously resolved to NOTE the forward agenda plan and move the NERC Act s40A BioDiversity Report to January's meeting.

18. 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).

19. ECTC Management Accounts

The ECTC Finance Manager presented the ECTC Management Accounts for the three months to 30 June 2025. The ECTC Finance Manager presented the report.

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

It was resolved to NOTE the management accounts covering the 3 months to 30 June 2025

20. Write-Off of Unrecoverable Debts

The Committee received a report (AA744 as previously circulated) to consider the write-off of unrecoverable debts.

The Chair proposed to defer recommendation 2.1 to the next meeting and to note recommendation 2.2, and Cllr Cane seconded this proposal.

It was unanimously resolved that:

1. The write-off of three Business Rate debts as detailed in the report be DEFERRED
2. A Council Tax debt and a further Business rate debt had been written off using delegated powers.

21. EXEMPT Minutes – 26 June 2025

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes from the meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee held on 26 June 2025.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 6:38pm

Chair.....

Date.....