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East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Council – 24 February 2026 – Decision List

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
1.	-	Public Question Time	To answer questions from members of the public.	No public questions were received.	-
2.	-	Apologies for Absence	To receive apologies for absence from Members.	No apologies for absence were received.	-
3.	-	Declarations of Interests	To receive declarations of interests from Members in respect of any items on the Agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.	<p>Councillors Christine Ambrose Smith, Ian Bovingdon, David Brown, Christine Colbert, Lorna Dupré, Lavinia Edwards, Mark Goldsack, Martin Goodearl, Kathrin Holtzmann, Keith Horgan, Bill Hunt, David Miller, Alan Sharp, John Trapp, Lucius Vellacott, Alison Whelan, Christine Whelan and Gareth Wilson all declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, as members of an Internal Drainage Board.</p> <p>Cllr Alan Sharp declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, as a member of the Special Interest Group of the LGA.</p> <p>Under agenda item 12, Council Tax, councillors were advised by the Director Legal and Monitoring Officer that whilst being a council taxpayer or being eligible for a discount under the Council tax support scheme was a pecuniary interest, it was not a disclosable pecuniary interest and they did not have to apply for a dispensation to participate in the debate or vote on the item.</p>	-

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
4.	-	Minutes – 20 November 2025	To agree the minutes of the meetings held on 20 November 2025.	It was resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025 be agreed as a correct record.	Democratic Services and Elections Manager
5.	-	Chair's Announcements	Announcement of items of interest.	None	-
6.	-	Petitions	To receive and petitions	There were no petitions for Council to receive.	-
7.	-	Notice of Motions under Procedure Rule 10	The following Motion was received and considered: I. Internal Drainage Boards. Text of motion at the end of the Decision List Proposer: Cllr Lucius Vellacott Secunder: Cllr Alan Sharp	Motion was carried.	Director Community
8.	-	To answer questions from Members.	To receive questions from Members of Council.	Four questions from members were received and the response was given as detailed at the end of the Decision List	-
9.	AA141	Pay Policy Statement	To present the Council's Pay Policy Statement 2026-27, a requirement under the Localism Act 2011.	It was resolved: To approve and adopt the 2026-27 Pay Policy Statement.	HR Manager

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
10.	AA145	Schedule of Items Recommended from Committees and Other Member Bodies	To consider the Five-Year Revision of the Licensing Policy To consider the Treasury Operations Mid-Year Review 2025/26 To consider the 2026/27 Annual Treasury Management Strategy and CIL funding of the Bereavement Centre Project.	It was resolved: a) To approve the Statement of Licensing Policy b) To note the mid-year review of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26. c) To approve i. The 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy ii. The Annual Investment Strategy iii. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement iv. The Prudential and Treasury Indicators d) To approve up to £300,000 of CIL funding towards the project, for risk contingency	Licensing Manager Director Finance Director Finance Director Operations
11.	AA142	The Making of the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan	To receive an update on the referendum on the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan on 12 February 2026.	It was resolved: a) To congratulate Witcham Parish Council on its preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, and a successful referendum outcome; and b) Formally make the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan (Appendix 1 to the report) part of the development plan for East Cambridgeshire with immediate effect.	Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager
12.	AA146	Revenue Budget, Capital Strategy and Council Tax 2026/27	To receive the Council's proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required levels of Council Tax in 2026/27. The report assesses the robustness of the budgets, the adequacy	It was resolved to approve: a) The formal Council Tax Resolution which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in Appendix 1 b) The draft revenue budget for 2026/27 and MTFs for 2027/28 to 2029/30 as set out in Appendices 2(a) and 2(b)	Director Finance

Item No.	Report Ref.	Item	Issue	Decision	Action by
			of reserves and updates the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) A Council Tax freeze in 2026/27 d) The draft Statement of Reserves as set out in Appendix 3 e) The draft Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 4 f) The 2026/27 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 5 g) The application of Business Rate reliefs for 2026/27, including those announced in the Autumn Budget and fully funded by Government through Section 31 grant, as detailed in sections 6.6 to 6.7 of the report. h) The changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and premiums for Long-Term Empty and Second Homes as detailed in sections 11.8 and 11.9 of the report. i) To delegate authority to the Finance and Assets Committee to approve the fees and charges for the new Bereavement Centre. 	
13.	AA144	Local Government Reorganisation Statutory Consultation	To request delegation to respond to the Government's Statutory consultation in relation to Local Government's Reorganisation (LGR).	It was resolved: To delegate authority to the Director Operations, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, to respond to the LGR statutory consultation.	Director Operations
14.	AA147	Community Infrastructure Levy Governance Arrangements	To consider changes to the infrastructure List and Governance Arrangements	It was resolved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To approve the draft Governance Arrangements as set out in Appendix 2 to take effect from 1 April 2026. b) To instruct the Community Infrastructure Manager to bring forward criteria for approval by 	Community Infrastructure Manager

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				<p>the Finance and Assets Committee in accordance with 3.15-3.17 of the report.</p> <p>c) To delegate authority to the Finance and Assets Committee to commit CIL receipts to schemes that meet the criteria flowing from the recommendation in (b) above.</p>	
15.	AA143	Constitutional Update – Further Amendments	To review the proposed amendments to the Constitution	<p>It was resolved:</p> <p>To approve the amendment of the Terms of Reference for the Operational Services Committee to include two additional services – Digital Services and Bereavement Services.</p>	Director Legal & Monitoring Officer
16.	-	Combined Authority Update Report	To receive the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority update report.	<p>It was resolved:</p> <p>To note the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority update reports for the months of November, December and January.</p>	Democratic Services and Elections Manager

1. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

7. Notices of Motion

Internal Drainage Boards

East Cambridgeshire District Council, hereinafter referred to as ‘the Council’, in support of the Fens’ c.£3bn agricultural economy and the rural communities of our District, notes that:

- The work of our Internal Drainage Boards (hereinafter ‘IDBs’) is essential to the Fen-based economy, irrigation and flood prevention in East Cambridgeshire

- The East of England is one of the most water-stressed regions in the United Kingdom (per the Water Resources East Regional Water Resources Plan, 2022)
- Major infrastructure solutions are required to alleviate the projected water shortage, such as the cutting-edge agricultural reservoirs project championed by the Council (per Eastern Powerhouse, 'A network of local reservoirs' report, July 2025)
- The Council offers a £1,000,000 pot of Community Infrastructure Levy funding for District-Wide Water Management and Flood Prevention
- DEFRA and MHCLG are undertaking an IDB funding and costs research project led by ICF and Logika consultants, the aim of which is to analyse the funding mechanisms and costs of IDBs and determine the economic and social value of their work. ICF intend to contact relevant stakeholders for comment, and a dissemination event is planned after publication
- DEFRA have proposed an additional £16m (now up to £91m in total) to improve farm and rural flood resilience, however, they have also proposed a three-band system of capital funding allocation effective April 2026 (all of which also encourage co-funding from local contributions) (table taken from public report to Middle Fen and Mere IDB dated to 30th September 2025, but information also available publicly via DEFRA website):

Band	Project Type	Typical Grant Range	Indicative Grant Rate (% of eligible costs)
A	Small-scale works (e.g. culvert repairs, pump upgrades)	Less than £250k	Up to 85%
B	Medium-scale infrastructure (e.g. embankment reinforcement, sluice upgrades)	£250k-£2m	60-75%
C	Large-scale or strategic schemes (e.g. new pumping stations, catchment-wide interventions)	More than £2m	40-60%

- It has a representative (Cllr Alan Sharp) on the LGA Special Interest Group on IDB reforms

The Council believes that:

- Whilst the additional £16m provided to improve farm and rural flood resilience is welcome, the banding restricts the ability of IDBs to make the necessary large-scale infrastructure investments for the optimal performance of their functions

- IDBs and Councils should not be forced to rely too heavily on the Special Levy alone, in the long term
- The proposed Fens Reservoir, whilst a welcome step, will not alleviate the need for action to protect the work of our IDBs in the immediate term
- Local action is necessary to protect and champion the work of our IDBs, especially in light of recent challenges to water supply due to below average rainfall

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- Take account of the estimated 6% increase to the IDB Special Levy paid by the Council
- Invite its representatives on the IDBs to gather information about how the Council might best support their work, and about their views on the proposed changes and research by DEFRA, and also to relay these to the LGA Special Interest Group via its representative (Cllr Alan Sharp)
- Instruct the Director (Community) and Director (Finance), as they have been doing, to continue to engage with IDBs on the financial impact of future changes to their governance
- Instruct the Director (Community) to write to DEFRA on behalf of the Council, as an interested stakeholder, to request the opportunity to provide input into the work undertaken by ICF on the future of IDBs
- Actively communicate with IDBs regarding the circumstances in which CIL (or other ECDC) funding may be applied for to support infrastructure used by IDBs for the purposes of water management and flood prevention for the benefit of the District's residents and businesses
- Monitor and engage with IDBs and DEFRA as further information about the future of IDBs emerges
- Promote widely its agricultural reservoirs project, especially with the regional Mayor, Paul Bristow, and the Cambridge Growth Company, as well as supporting other efforts to improve sustainable water management (as per its Climate and Nature Strategy to 2028)

Proposer: Cllr Lucius Vellacott

Secunder: Cllr Alan Sharp

8. To Answer Questions from Members

Question from Cllr Mark Inskip to the Chair of Operational Services Committee

At the full council meeting held on Thursday 20 November 2025 the Council resolved to direct officers to develop a new Empty Homes Strategy by July 2026. Can the Chair of Operational Services committee update the Council on the work already undertaken and confirm whether officers are on track to complete the work by July 2026.

Response from Cllr Julia Huffer, Chair of Operational Services Committee

“Thank you, Councillor Inskip, for your question.

“The Waste and Environmental Services Manager, Nick Baker, was tasked with taking this work forward in late 2025.

“He has since met with a number of officers undertaking similar work in other local authorities, and attended a recent workshop hosted by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health to examine good practice in this area. Work has been undertaken with the Policy Lead at the Empty Homes Network in bringing together a paper which outlines various options open to the council, for initial discussion with senior officers in March.

“It is anticipated that this would allow recommendations to be considered by members before a final Empty Homes Strategy is produced.

“The work remains on track for completion by July 2026.”

Question from Cllr Lorna Dupré to the Chair of Operational Services Committee

Many residents in new developments in East Cambridgeshire will be interested in the Government consultation currently under way on reducing the prevalence of private estate management arrangements <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/leasehold-and-private-rented-sector/reducing-the-prevalence-of-private-estate/>

The consultation focuses on tackling the growing issue of unadopted amenities on privately managed housing estates in England, where roads, drainage systems, green spaces, and other communal infrastructure is maintained by private estate management companies rather than public authorities. This trend has led to unfair charges, poor transparency, and limited homeowner rights, creating significant consumer detriment.

As the local planning authority responsible for negotiating management arrangements on new developments in East Cambridgeshire, what response is the council making to this consultation?

Response from Cllr Julia Huffer, Chair of Operational Services Committee

“Thank you, Councillor Dupré, for your question. The Council recognises the issues that can occur when amenities on housing estates are maintained by private estate management companies rather than those adopted by public authorities and supports the aim to address this. The Council supports the proposal that more of these amenities be adopted by public authorities, and the suggestion of the introduction of common standards for adoptable infrastructure to make it easier for this infrastructure to be adopted. The Council also supports the proposal for resident-controlled management and through our Trading Company has set

up a resident's management company at Eden Square in Ely so that the residents are fully in control of how the open space and shared areas are maintained, what service charge is payable and how this is spent. Officers will draft a response to the consultation, which will be circulated to all Members for comments before it is submitted.”

Question from Cllr Chika Akinwale to the Chair of Finance and Assets Committee

Can the Chair of Finance & Assets provide a clear update on the delivery of the Council's Accessible Play motion, passed in May 2024, which I proposed and you seconded?

For context, the motion committed the Council to an independent audit of play areas under its control, invited parish councils to submit their sites for the same audit (Council-funded), and brought the audit outcomes to F&A, alongside developing an Inclusive Playground Strategy, Toolkit, and Communications Strategy.

Given that the last couple of F&A updates have included the same update along the lines of 'no significant updates', with no further information on the specifics, can you therefore confirm in your answer to the above:

- Exactly, how many parish sites have been audited to date, and how many remain?
- What is the exact date of the audit's completion?
- When exactly will a detailed report on the audit outcomes be provided to F&A, noting that no audit report has been received for the sites already completed?
- When will the Inclusive Playground Toolkit be published?
- When can we expect a communications strategy to promote Inclusive Playgrounds?
- What practical guidance and support have been provided to these parish sites to complete the audit?
- What benchmark cost range are cost officers using for an inclusive playground?
- When can we expect to see the inclusive playground strategy, which needs to be in place before we can start awarding inclusive play grants?
- When can we expect the CIL grant criteria to be brought to F&A?
- What support and guidance will be made available to applicants for the grant?
- When can we finally expect this audit to move to delivery?

Response from Cllr Alan Sharp, Chair of the Finance and Assets Committee

“Thank you, Cllr Akinwale, for your question. I am aware of your passion for this issue.

Members have been receiving updates at every Finance and Assets committee meeting. We were told early on that PiPA Play has limited resources to conduct the audits, but we did agree that it was important that it was important to use an independent organisation that sits outside of the play industry.

- “19 Parishes expressed an interest in an audit of their play areas, 15 attended an information seminar with PiPA Play and 7 submitted information for an audit, all of which have been completed. Three reminders about the audit offer have been sent to parish councils since the seminar took place.
- There is no end date for audit's completion, parishes can still request an audit. The Council prioritised the parish audits and so the audit of ECDC managed play areas is due to complete in the spring.
- A date for the audit report for the ECDC managed sites to be presented to a meeting of Finance and Assets committee will be confirmed once the final report is received.
- The Inclusive Playground Toolkit will form part of the Inclusive Playground Strategy.
- Once the ECDC managed play areas audit has completed, there will be a review of what communications will be issued.
- PiPA Play, the company conducting the audits, have supported parishes throughout the audit process.
- Making a play area inclusive isn't just about providing appropriate play equipment, it is also about making the play area accessible to all and costs for this will vary. Officers will follow the Council's procurement rules to establish costs.
- A draft strategy will be presented to the September meeting of Finance and Assets committee.
- Subject to the decisions made later this evening, CIL criteria will be presented to Finance and Assets committee in March.
- Officers will offer guidance and signpost parishes to other sources of support.
- Discussions with developers providing new play areas about making these more inclusive is already taking place. Two recent examples of this are in Kennett and Little Downham. Once the ECDC audit report is received, a plan for what adjustments can be made to these to make more accessible will be developed.”

Question from Cllr John Trapp to the Chair of the Audit Committee

External auditor EY's annual audit report to the Council's Audit Committee meeting of 20 January for the year 2024/25 noted that:

- “The first version of the draft financial statements published by the Council had significant internal inconsistencies, typographical and arithmetic errors, that should have been identified through internal quality review prior to publication.”
- “Working papers and requested evidence were not provided in line with the agreed timetable and were generally not to the expected standard.”
- This caused “significant slippage to the agreed project plan and inefficient use of the planned audit resources.”
- “Because of the significance of the matter described... [they] have not been able to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to provide a basis for an audit opinion.”
- Balance sheet figures did not agree with the council's own records, leading to misstatements across pension assets, property, plant and equipment, and capital grants.

EY warned: “If we are not satisfied with the pace and substance of improvements ... we would be minded to issue Statutory Recommendations”, and cited the “recurring inability to prepare robust financial statements and support the audit process”.

What plans does the Chair of Audit have to ensure an improvement on this dire audit judgement?

Reply from Cllr David Brown, Chair of the Audit Committee

“Thank you for your question, Cllr Trapp. I can confirm that meetings have taken place with External Audit to agree on actions going forward. This was reported to the Audit Committee on 20 January. A recruitment process has also taken place for the role of Principal Accountant and I can confirm to Council that the final audit opinion was received at 8:34 pm on 20 February and that opinion found that External Audit did not need to issue any statutory recommendations.”