

Agenda Item 8 – Questions from Members

1. 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.

2. Cllr Dupre 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?

3. Cllr Akinwale to the Chair of Finance & Assets:

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 change', 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?

4. Cllr John Trapp to the Chair of Audit:

"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?"