

East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Annual Council

21 May 2026

**Agenda
Minutes and Recommendations**

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR VISITORS TO THE GRANGE

Parking

Limited visitor parking is available during the daytime at the access area to The Grange, for people making short visits on Council business of up to 30 minutes. Ample free public car parking is available nearby for longer visits and location plans can be forwarded on request. On-site car parking is available for evening meetings after 5.00pm.

Access and Security

If you are visiting The Grange during normal office hours you should report to the main reception desk, where you will be asked to fill in a visitor's pass that must be worn at all times whilst you are in the building. Please remember to return your pass before you leave.

This will not apply if you come to an evening meeting: in this case you will enter via the rear access doors in the glass atrium at the back of the building and a Facilities Assistant will direct you to the room in which the meeting will take place.

Emergencies

In the event of a fire or any other emergency during the day, you will hear a continuous alarm. The designated officer or their deputy as set out in the displayed plans for each floor will take charge of any evacuation and try to ensure that no one is left within the areas for which they are responsible.

You should leave the building by the nearest available exit and go to the assembly point near to the exit barrier in the front car park. **Do not** use the lifts, and **do not** re-enter the building until someone advises that it is safe for you to do so.

If you discover a fire immediately operate the nearest fire alarm call point, inform reception or another member of staff, leave the building and go to the assembly point.

In the event of a fire or another emergency during an evening meeting, a member of staff will direct you to the nearest available exit.

First Aid

If someone feels unwell or needs first aid, please let a member of staff know.

Access for People with Disabilities

The Council Chamber and majority of Committee rooms are accessible to wheelchair users via the lift. There are specially adapted toilets on the ground floor (in main reception) and on the first floor of the building.

In the event of a fire or another emergency, wheelchair users will be guided to an area near to an exit to await the arrival of the emergency services.

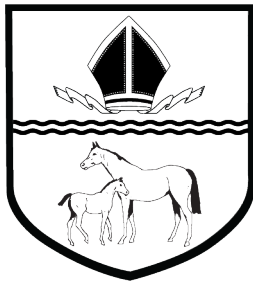
Toilets

Public toilets are on the ground floor in the main reception area.

If you are visiting The Grange for an evening meeting, the toilets in close proximity to the Chamber and Committee rooms are all clearly signposted.

Smoking

The Council operates a NO SMOKING policy in all its office buildings, including the car park to The Grange.



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 21 MAY 2026** 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

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, prayers will be delivered by Reverend Eleanor Whalley from Soham Parish Church

A minute's silence will be observed as a mark of respect following the death of two former Councillors:

Allen Alderson, District Councillor for The Swaffhams Ward from 2004 to 2019
Brian Hayes, District Councillor for the Littleport Ward from 1999 to 2003.

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. Election of Chair 2026/27** **[oral]**

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Nomination Cllr Kelli Pettitt | Proposed by Cllr Anna Bailey | Seconded by Cllr Julia Huffer |
|---|--|---|

- 3. Apologies for Absence**

- 4. 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.

- 5. Minutes – 24 February 2026** **Page 11**
To confirm as a correct record.

- 6. Election of Vice-Chair 2026/27** **[oral]**

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Nomination Cllr Keith Horgan | Proposed by Cllr Anna Bailey | Seconded by Cllr Julia Huffer |
|--|--|---|

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| 7. Chair's Announcements | [oral] |
| 8. To receive Petition(s) (If any) | [oral] |
| 9. Notice of Motions under Procedure Rule 10 | [oral] |

a) **Future of the A10**

East Cambridgeshire District Council, hereinafter referred to as 'the Council', notes that:

- The A10 corridor between Ely and Cambridge is a strategically important route for commuters, freight, agricultural traffic and local communities across East Cambridgeshire and the wider region
- The road currently carries more than 18,000 vehicles per day and remains largely single carriageway, resulting in congestion, delays, safety concerns and reduced reliability for residents and businesses
- The need to upgrade the A10 corridor has been recognised for decades, with studies dating back to the 1970s examining options to increase capacity and improve connectivity between Ely and Cambridge
- More recently, Cambridgeshire County Council undertook extensive option development work considering highway capacity improvements, junction upgrades, modal shift, and active travel measures, the outcome of which was a recommendation for full dualling of the corridor with a parallel active travel route
- This work was subsequently taken forward by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), culminating in a Strategic Outline Business Case in 2020, which proposed a range of primarily road-based improvement options, including online and offline dualling of the A10, with associated cycling and walking infrastructure
- Public engagement undertaken in 2020 demonstrated strong local interest in addressing congestion and improving connectivity along the corridor
- The A10 corridor is critical to supporting planned growth across the region, including up to 17,000 new homes and 14,000 new jobs, and is essential to maintaining the economic vitality of East Cambridgeshire and neighbouring areas
- The importance of the A10 upgrade is recognised by Homes England, which is planning a further study of the route through the Strategic Place Partnership, with work having begun in January 2026.

The Council believes that:

- Full dualling of the A10 between Ely and Cambridge is the most effective long-term solution to address congestion, improve safety, and provide the capacity required to support the sustainable growth of the region
- Failure to progress the scheme risks constraining economic development, worsening congestion for residents and businesses and undermining confidence in the delivery of essential regional infrastructure
- Given the public funds spent over decades, the years of technical work already undertaken and the clear strategic importance of the route, the A10 dualling project must remain a priority within regional transport planning.

Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- Reaffirm its strong support for the full dualling of the A10 between Ely and Cambridge, including provision for high-quality active travel infrastructure

- Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of the CPCA requesting that the A10 dualling scheme remains a strategic transport priority and that work to progress the project continues without delay
- Instruct the Leader of the Council to request that the CPCA provide clarity on the programme for further development work, including the study by the Strategic Place Partnership and the pathway towards delivery of the scheme
- Instruct the Director (Community) to share this motion with neighbouring local authorities, Members of Parliament representing communities along the A10 corridor, and relevant regional stakeholders, in order to invite them to demonstrate their support for progressing the scheme on a cross-area basis

Proposer: Cllr Lucius Vellacott (Soham South and Wicken)

Seconder: Cllr Lee Denney (Stretham)

b) High Street Bank Closures and Financial Inclusion in East Cambridgeshire

Council notes that:

- There has been a sustained withdrawal of high street banking services across East Cambridgeshire, leaving many communities without access to in-person financial services.
- Recent and historic bank branch closures in the district include:
 - o NatWest – Ely (17 Market Street), closed September 2025
 - o Barclays – Ely (28 High Street), closed April 2024
 - o HSBC – Ely (11 High Street), closed July 2020
 - o Barclays – Burwell (High Street), closed 2016
 - o Barclays – Littleport (Main Street), closed 2014/15
- These closures mean that many residents and businesses now have no access to a local bank branch and must travel outside the district.
- While the Post Office network provides “everyday banking” services under the current Banking Framework (2026–2030), including withdrawals, deposits, and balance checks, these services are limited in scope and do not replace full banking provision.
- Post Office services do not provide:
 - o Dedicated financial advice,
 - o In-depth fraud and safeguarding support,
 - o Full business banking services,
 - o Reliable capacity for larger or more complex transactions (e.g. cash deposit limits and branch constraints).
- Banking hubs, coordinated by LINK, are expanding nationally but:
 - o Are currently limited in number,
 - o Are primarily triggered by “access to cash” assessments,
 - o Require strict criteria such as population thresholds, business density, and absence of any remaining bank branch.

Council further notes that:

- The current regulatory system places significant weight on access to cash, rather than the full range of banking needs, including advice, support, and relationship banking.
- Digital banking is not a universal solution. Many residents are digitally excluded, including:
 - o Older people,
 - o Residents with disabilities,
 - o Those on low incomes,
 - o Rural communities with poor broadband or mobile connectivity.
- The impact of closures is compounded in rural areas, where:
 - o Public transport is limited,

- o Distances to alternative branches are greater,
- o Physical barriers further restrict access.
- Small and independent businesses rely on in-person banking for:
 - o Cash deposits and coin supply,
 - o Relationship banking and lending discussions,
 - o Day-to-day financial management.

Council believes that:

- Access to in-person banking is a vital component of financial inclusion, not simply a matter of cash access.
- The current national framework underestimates the importance of:
 - o Face-to-face advice,
 - o Fraud prevention and safeguarding,
 - o Support for digitally excluded residents.
- Rural districts such as East Cambridgeshire face structural disadvantages under current banking hub criteria, including population thresholds and reliance on standardised metrics.
- Post Offices play an important role but are not a substitute for full banking services and are themselves under threat.

Council resolves to:

1. Call for Government Action

- Write to HM Government, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, calling for:
 - o A broader definition of banking access beyond “cash access”,
 - o Reform of banking hub criteria to include:
 - Digital exclusion,
 - Rurality and transport limitations,
 - Wider service needs such as advice and business banking,
 - o Stronger regulatory protections to prevent the loss of the last bank branch in a community.

2. Engage with the Banking Sector

- Write to major banks operating in the UK to:
 - o Highlight the cumulative impact of closures in East Cambridgeshire,
 - o Request consideration of:
 - Shared banking facilities,
 - Mobile banking services,
 - Increased outreach and community banker provision.

3. Tackle Digital Exclusion Locally

- Expand council and partner initiatives to:
 - o Improve digital skills and confidence,
 - o Increase access to devices and connectivity,
 - o Provide assisted digital support through council facilities such as libraries and community hubs.

4. Support Residents, Local Businesses and Charities

- Work with local business groups to:
 - o Assess the economic impact of closures,
 - o Identify specific banking needs of SMEs.
- Work with local charities to:
 - o Identify specific banking needs of charities,
- Provide clear guidance to residents on available services, including Post Office provision, while acknowledging their limitations.

5. Monitor and Report

- Request a report to Full Council within 6 months setting out:

- o Progress on engagement with Government and banks,
- o Opportunities for banking hubs or alternative provision,
- o Further recommendations to improve financial inclusion.

Proposed: Cllr Mark Inskip

Seconded: Cllr Christine Colbert

c) Fair access to employment for care-experienced and disabled applicants

Council notes that:

1. Employment is one of the most important routes to independence, dignity and opportunity.
2. Care-experienced people often face significant barriers in education, employment and wider life chances as a result of the disadvantage that can arise from time spent in care.
3. Disabled people also continue to face barriers in recruitment and employment, despite the skills, experience and value they bring to the workplace.
4. A guaranteed interview scheme is a practical and proportionate way to reduce unfair barriers at the first stage of recruitment, while maintaining proper standards.
5. Such a scheme does not guarantee a job offer; it guarantees an interview where an applicant meets the essential criteria for the role.
6. As a local authority, East Cambridgeshire District Council should seek to be a fair, inclusive and exemplary employer.

Council believes that:

1. Recruitment should be fair, open and based on merit.
2. Fairness does not mean pretending that everyone starts from the same position; it means recognising structural disadvantage and ensuring people are not unfairly excluded.
3. A guaranteed interview scheme for care-experienced applicants and disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for a post is a reasonable and achievable step that supports equality of opportunity without lowering standards.
4. East Cambridgeshire District Council should lead by example in promoting inclusive employment practices across the district.

Council resolves to:

1. Introduce a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for:
 - o applicants who declare themselves to be disabled, and
 - o applicants who declare themselves to be care-experienced.
2. Ask officers to prepare a report for member consideration, setting out:
 - o how such a scheme would operate in practice
 - o the proposed definition of care experienced for recruitment purposes
 - o how applicants would be able to declare disability or care experience confidentially
 - o how the Council would ensure that applicants must still meet the essential criteria for the role
 - o any relevant legal, equality, HR and administrative implications
3. That, once developed, the scheme be clearly published on the Council's website, recruitment materials and job advertisements.
4. Encourage the Council also to consider wider steps to support the recruitment, retention and progression of disabled and care-experienced employees.

Proposer: Cllr Charlotte Cane MP

Secunder: Cllr Alison Whelan

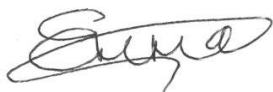
10. To answer questions from Members (If any) [oral]
11. Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders Page 33
12. Political Proportionality Page 35
13. Membership of Committees and Sub-Committees (including Substitutes) 2026/27 Page 39
14. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for all Committees and Sub-Committees 2026/27: [oral]
- Finance and Assets Committee
 - Operational Services Committee
 - Audit Committee
 - Licensing Committee
 - Planning Committee
 - Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee
 - F&A (Ethical Governance) Sub-Committee
 - Licensing Sub-Committee (Statutory)
 - Licensing Sub-Committee (Non-Statutory)
15. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority:
- (a) Appointments to Combined Authority To Follow
- (b) Update report – February & March 2026 Page 43

Exclusion of the Public, including representatives of the Press

That the Press and Public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining items 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 items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1 and 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

16. SECTION 113 BUSINESS CASES - FRAUD SERVICES ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP (ARP)

E GRIMA
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 will be available. Further details are available 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 ask members of the public to bring their own drinks if required.

Fire instructions for the meeting: Instructions in the event of a fire at the venue will be announced at the start 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. 16 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 Categories 3 & 4 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council
held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE
on Tuesday 24 February 2026 at 6.00 pm

Present

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Councillor Chika Akinwale | Councillor Julia Huffer |
| Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith | Councillor Bill Hunt |
| Councillor Anna Bailey | Councillor Mark Inskip |
| Councillor Ian Bovingdon | Councillor James Lay |
| Councillor David Brown | Councillor David Miller |
| Councillor Charlotte Cane | Councillor Kelli Pettitt (Chair) |
| Councillor Christine Colbert | Councillor Alan Sharp |
| Councillor Lee Denney | Councillor John Trapp |
| Councillor Lorna Dupré | Councillor Ross Trent |
| Councillor Lavinia Edwards | Councillor Lucius Vellacott |
| Councillor Mark Goldsack | Councillor Mary Wade |
| Councillor Martin Goodearl | Councillor Alison Whelan |
| Councillor Kathrin Holtzmann | Councillor Christine Whelan |
| Councillor Keith Horgan (Vice Chair) | Councillor Gareth Wilson |

30. Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

31. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

32. Declarations of Interest

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.

Cllr Alan Sharp also declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, as a member of the Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association.

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.

33. Minutes – 20 November 2025

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 November 2025 be agreed as a correct record.

34. Chair's Announcements

There were no announcements.

35. Petitions

No petitions had been received.

36. Notice of Motions Under Procedure Rule 10

(i) Internal Drainage Boards

Cllr Lucius Vellacott proposed, and Cllr Alan Sharp seconded the following motion.

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)

Cllr Lucius Vellacott amended the word "Instruct" to "Invite" on the second bullet point in the final section of the resolution to Council. He explained the importance of Internal Drainage Boards in preventing flooding, protecting farmland and supporting the local economy. Funded by rates from residents and landowners, it was vital for the Council to respond positively to the Government's research project to ensure the work of the Internal Drainage Boards continued.

Cllr Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Christine Whelan seconded the following amendment, replacing the motion with:

"Under procedure rule 12.3.1, the Council resolves to refer the motion to the Finance & Assets Committee for its consideration."

Cllr Lorna Dupré stated that the motion was unclear and lacked well-defined solutions to the issues faced. She highlighted the absence of a plan for how the Internal Drainage Boards were expected to respond. She also noted the omission of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Flood and Water Partnership, meetings of the Internal Drainage Boards' Chairs and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committees by the Environment Agency. Furthermore, she suggested that the impact of Climate Change should be included. Concluding that the motion was too flawed to be amended at Council, she recommended sending it to the Finance and Assets Committee for a more comprehensive revision.

Cllr John Trapp highlighted the confusion between the roles of the Internal Drainage Boards in flood prevention and the construction of reservoirs. He urged a review of the full report on the reservoirs, as the summary from the Eastern Powerhouse was inadequate. He had consulted Andrew Newton, chief engineer of the Internal Drainage Board. Whilst he supported the concept, he could not endorse the motion in its current form.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that reservoirs were linked to drainage systems and clarified their roles in relation to the Internal Drainage Board. She regularly met with Andrew Newton and Internal Drainage Board representatives who support plans to increase reservoirs in the area. The motion sought to gather the opinions from these Boards and report to the Government. She urged Council not to refer the matter to the Finance and Assets Committee as the Government were already requesting stakeholder feedback and any delay might hinder the Council's influence.

Cllr Charlotte Cane stated that this issue should be referred to the Finance and Assets Committee for proper wording. She explained that those councillors on the Internal Drainage Boards were appointed members, not Council representatives, making the motion's wording incorrect. Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith explained that she had been a member of the Littleport and Downham Internal Drainage Board for many years and she acted as a member of the Board and not as a representative of the Council.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott thanked the proposers of the amendment for their wording but suggested earlier communication of concerns could have fostered a cross-party motion, similar to past ones. He acknowledged contributions of councillors on drainage boards and clarified that he did not believe the motion implied otherwise. He stressed the importance of sharing the Internal Drainage Board's views with the Government, cautioning that delays could hinder this.

A vote was taken on the amendment and with 14 votes in favour and 14 votes against, the vote was tied. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote, which she used to vote against the amendment and so the amendment was lost.

The discussion returned to the substantive (original) motion.

Cllr Christine Colbert explained that this was a complex issue and suggested that Cllr Lucius Vellacott could have notified members of the forthcoming motion earlier, which would have allowed all councillors to work together on this matter.

Cllr Keith Horgan supported cross-party working and he had worked with Cllr Mark Inskip to produce a motion on empty homes, which had been agreed at the last meeting of Council. However, in this case, time was limited and he feared that if Council had deferred this matter to the Finance and Assets Committee, the resulting motion would have been agreed too late to be considered by the Government.

Cllr Mary Wade explained that clear, accurate and unambiguous wording on a motion was vitally important. Cllr Kathrin Holtzmann agreed.

Cllr John Trapp understood that the plan for reservoirs had depended on the water treatment plant moving to Honey Hill, which was no longer going ahead. He asserted that it was vital for the Environment Agency to be involved in

drainage issues and he expressed disappointment that there had not been more time to consider the motion's wording.

Cllr Alan Sharp explained that he sat on the Local Government Association Special Interest Group, which liaised with the Government on drainage issues, and he was keen to support the motion. He explained that the work conducted by Internal Drainage Boards was of national importance but their funding was the responsibility of a small number of councils and this was unsustainable. The Government's review was likely to have a huge impact on drainage issues in the district and so it was imperative that the Council responded to the Government as soon as possible.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott expressed his support for cross-party collaboration, but noted that the motion had been published nearly two weeks ago, and he had only been contacted by opposition councillors that morning. He chose Cllr Alan Sharp to second the motion due to his membership of the LGA Special Interest Group. Cllr Vellacott cautioned that delaying the decision to improve the wording could cause the authority to lose its opportunity to influence the Government's policy and he urged Council to agree the motion.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott proposed and Cllr Alan Sharp seconded the motion. A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 14 abstentions the motion detailed above was carried.

37. 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 to use an independent organisation that sits outside of the play industry. I am a Trustee of the Ellesmere Centre in Stetchworth and we asked PiPA Play to do something and it took a while, so I know that their resources are stretched.

- “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 them 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. I did spot some arithmetic errors as well."
- "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.”

38. Pay Policy Statement

Council considered a report (AA141, previously circulated) that presented the Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2026/27, which was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011.

Cllr Kelli Pettitt proposed and Cllr Keith Horgan seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed

to resolve:

to approve and adopt the 2026-27 Pay Policy Statement.

39. Schedule of Items Recommended from Committees and Other Member Bodies

Council considered a report (AA145, previously circulated) which considered the recommendations made to Council by both the Licensing Committee and the Finance and Assets Committee.

Cllr David Miller left the meeting at 53:41.

Council were invited to agree the Statement of Licensing Policy, which was recommended by the Licensing Committee. Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded the recommendation. A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed

to resolve:

to approve the Statement of Licensing Policy.

Cllr David Miller returned to the meeting at 55:03.

Council were invited to note the Council’s Treasury Management Strategy on the recommendation of the Finance and Assets Committee. Cllr Alan Sharp proposed and Cllr Ian Bovingdon seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed

to resolve:

To note the mid-year review of the Council’s Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26.

Council were invited to agree the recommendations from the Finance and Asset Committee regarding the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy, the Annual Investment Strategy, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and the Prudential and Treasury Indicators on the recommendation of the Finance and Assets Committee. Cllr Alan Sharp proposed and Cllr Ian Bovingdon seconded the recommendations. A vote was taken and Council unanimously agreed

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

Council were invited to approve up to £300,000 of CIL funding towards the Bereavement Centre project for risk contingency, as recommended by the Finance and Assets Committee.

Cllr Anna Bailey stated that the Finance and Assets Committee had thoroughly discussed this matter. She explained that previously undiscovered underground structures required additional funding for mitigation. Normally contingency funds for such projects were 10%-15% of the total cost, but with the additional £300,000, this would represent 4.7%. She emphasised that not approving the recommendation could delay the project, lead to contractual issues, and result in a loss of income, with potential costs surpassing the £300,000 requested.

Cllr Lorna Dupré stated that nine months ago the Council was informed that the Bereavement Centre contract had been set at a fixed price. She raised concerns that the price had not been fixed and that £300,000 was needed to proceed. The total cost was approaching £14m, far more than the original cost of £9m.

Cllr Charlotte Cane asked for what she was about to say to be minuted in full: "I would like a recorded vote on this. So, as Cllr Dupré said in May 2025 when we agreed the budget for this project we were told in the paper that went to Council, in clause 5.13: "following the procurement process, using the national framework, the Council is required to enter into a Joints Contracts Tribunal Design and Build Contract with the successful contractor. The terms and conditions of the contract are in a standard form and will commit the Council to the build programme. The cost returned through the tender is a fixed price, however as with all contracts of this nature does make provision for exceptional circumstances but remains low risk." I stress the contract is of standard form. Then we were told in feedback to the Finance and Assets Committee that under the standard and nationally recognised joint contract the risk of existing site conditions generally rests with the contractor, but we agreed amendments, which meant that the district Council took on a share of those risks. That is not what we were told when we approved the budget and other things keep changing and I am not convinced that we as members are being given all the information. As Cllr Dupré says, the costs of this project have ballooned and

now we are being asked to set aside another £300,000 from money, by the way, that as we shall see later on in the agenda, we don't yet have all that money and we are being asked to set that aside for this project. I cannot support it. I don't think that it is responsible to support it until we properly understand what is going on with the contracts, the terms of the contracts and what we as councillors are being asked to approve."

Cllr Martin Goodearl stated that projects often exceeded their budgets making a contingency fund essential. Since the project had been agreed by Council, delaying it would be financially irresponsible. If any contingency funds were unspent, they would be returned to the CIL budget.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott argued that rejecting the £300,000 funding could lead to higher costs for the Council due to project delay. He pointed out that more money than expected was being added to the CIL Fund and that any unspent contingency funds would be returned to it.

Cllr Bill Hunt stated that the interests of the residents would not be served by a costly delay to the project and he suggested that those opposed to the proposal should abstain.

Cllr Mark Inskip expressed concern regarding the management of both the contract and the developer carrying out the work. The Council had been informed last May that the risk was low and the cost was fixed. It was now clear that the risk was higher and the cost was not fixed. He concluded that the £300,000 could be of greater benefit to residents across the district to deliver the services they wanted.

Cllr John Trapp accepted the project would proceed but suggested the extra cost could have been offset by reducing other expenses and asked why this had not been considered.

Cllr Alan Sharp explained that the Finance and Assets Committee discussed the matter thoroughly. He mentioned that provisional costs were standard in building projects and assured the Council that the £300,000 contingency funding would be used only if necessary. He stressed the importance of avoiding project delay.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that the project's cost would have been far higher if all potential risks had been addressed. She warned that any delay would incur costs and loss of income not covered in the proposed budget or the opposition's alternative budget. Cllr Bailey highlighted that residents had voted for an administration committed to establishing a bereavement centre.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed, and Cllr Alan Sharp seconded the proposal. A vote was taken and were cast as followed:

For (14): Cllrs Christine Ambrose Smith, Anna Bailey, Ian Bovingdon, David Brown, Lavinia Edwards, Mark Goldsack, Martin Goodearl, Keith Horgan, Julia Huffer, Bill Hunt, David Miller, Kelli Pettitt, Alan Sharp and Lucius Vellacott.

Against (14): Cllrs Chika Akinwale, Charlotte Cane, Christine Colbert, Lee Denney, Lorna Dupré, Kathrin Holtzmann, Mark Inskip, James Lay, John Trapp, Ross Trent, Mary Wade, Alison Whelan, Christine Whelan and Gareth Wilson.

Abstain (0)

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4 the Chair had a casting vote, which she used to vote in favour of the recommendation. Therefore, Council agreed

to approve up to £300,000 of CIL funding towards the project, for risk contingency.

40. The Making of the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan

Council considered a report (AA142, previously circulated) which stated that the Witcham Neighbourhood Plan had been approved in the recent referendum, with 141 votes in favour and 14 against.

Cllr Mark Inskip stated he admired the residents' enthusiasm for creating their own plan to shape their future. The Witcham Neighbourhood Plan aimed to enhance the parish while considering the conservation area, small businesses and ecological significance. He was impressed by the turnout on a wet day in February and the overwhelming vote in favour of the Plan.

Cllr Lorna Dupré congratulated Witcham parish council and their residents on their Neighbourhood Plan. She welcomed the fact that three of the villages in her ward now had Neighbourhood Plans.

Cllr Mark Inskip proposed and Cllr Lorna Dupré seconded the recommendation in the report.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed

to resolve:

- 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.

41. Revenue Budget, Capital Strategy and Council Tax 2026/27

Council considered a report (AA146, previously circulated) to receive the Council's proposed revenue budget, capital strategy, and the required levels of Council Tax in 2026/27. The report assessed the robustness of the budgets,

the adequacy of reserves and updates the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Director Finance explained that appendix 1 had been circulated after the agenda had been published, as the Council had to wait for all the information to be received from all the preceptors in the district.

Cllr Anna Bailey expressed her pride that this authority was the only principal council in the country not to have increased Council Tax in the last 13 years. Services had been maintained with a new food waste collection service launching in June, to boost recycling rates. Free parking remained available in district car parks, the East Cambs trading company remained profitable and affordable housing was being delivered by Haddenham Land Trust. This was impressive, especially given the reduced funding from the Government's Fair Funding review, which has favoured urban areas. She concluded by thanking officers for their hard work in saving money and delivering services.

Cllr Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Christine Whlean seconded the following amendment:

To approve:

- i) The formal Council Tax Resolution, which calculates the Council Tax requirement as set out in Appendix 1
- ii) 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) (LDI amend), specifically to reflect the following proposals:
 - To fund the initial capital cost (£600,000) and then ongoing revenue costs to implement Civil Parking Enforcement within the District (£40,000 in 2027/28 and future years) (Capital cost to be funded from Surplus Savings Reserve)
 - To increase the Environment Fund from £100,000 to £200,000 per year
 - To provide funding for Arts, culture and tourism £100,000 per year
 - To provide revenue funding to support further provision of community facilities, £75,000 per year
 - To provide revenue funding to establish a Citizens Advice presence in Ely- £45,000 per year
 - To build in a £200,000 turnover allowance on staff costs in recognition that there will be staff vacancies throughout the year
 - To revise projected interest income by an additional £160,000 per year in recognition that actual interest in previous years has been greater than the assumptions made at the time of budget approvals
- iii) A Council Tax freeze in 2026/27
- iv) The draft Statement of Reserves as set out in Appendix 3 (LDI amend)
- v) The draft Capital Strategy and financing as set out in Appendix 4 (LDI amend)
- vi) The 2026/27 Fees and Charges as set out in Appendix 5

- vii) 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 this report.
- viii) 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 this report.
- ix) To delegate authority to the Finance and Asset Committee to approve the fees and charges for the new Bereavement Centre.

Cllr Lorna Dupré explained that the opposition group proposed a Council Tax freeze, redirecting funds for improvements. She noted that Civil Parking Enforcement, already in place in many areas, was necessary due to ongoing parking concerns among residents. The alternative budget proposed funding for Civil Parking Enforcement and included an extra £100,000 for environmental projects. It also suggested promoting tourism and supporting local artists, as well as establishing a Citizens Advice Bureau in Ely, funded through current staff vacancies and projected interest rate savings

Cllr Lucius Vellacott welcomed the opposition group's support for freezing Council Tax but raised concerns about their budget calculations. He questioned the assumption of higher interest rates and the reliability of savings from staff vacancies. He noted that the capital cost of Civil Parking Enforcement in Fenland had been approximately £1m and so the proposed £600,000 was inadequate. He suggested that the County Council should take on this work and expressed concern about the one day notice given to councillors for these proposals, which he felt was inadequate for public funds.

Cllr Bill Hunt was pleased that the opposition agreed that Council Tax should be frozen.

Cllr John Trapp stated there had been an annual surplus of approximately £2m, which he believed should be used for residents on projects such as Civil Parking Enforcement. He reported that many departments were understaffed and these savings should not simply increase the Council's surplus.

Cllr Mark Inskip supported the amendment, calling it practical and community focussed. He stated that investing £600,000 in Civil Parking Enforcement and £45,000 annually in ongoing revenue would address dangerous parking in the district. An additional £100,000 would promote biodiversity and reduce carbon emissions. He also mentioned that funding arts, culture and tourism initiatives and establishing a Citizens' Advice Bureau to assist with the rising cost of living, would greatly benefit residents. Cllr Inskip noted that there had been consistent underspending in the staffing budget, making these proposals both beneficial and affordable. He expressed pride in supporting them.

Cllr Charlotte Cane asserted that unsafe parking in the district was of great concern to the district's residents and should be addressed through Civil Parking Enforcement. Some residents were able to go to Newmarket for advice but many others could not and would benefit from a Citizens' Advice Bureau in Ely. She supported the amendment as it would support others.

Cllr Alan Sharp argued against funding Civil Parking Enforcement, as this was the County Council's responsibility. He noted that drivers were usually given five minutes to move a poorly parked car, so Civil Parking Enforcement would not completely solve the problem. He did not believe that the Council could rely on staff vacancies to fund the proposed projects. He highlighted the benefits of the authority freezing Council Tax, which reduced costs for taxpayers, whilst providing more affordable housing, a sports centre in Ely and a Bereavement Centre in Mepal.

Cllr Christine Whelan supported the amendment, which made practical improvements, whilst freezing Council Tax in 2026/27. She welcomed the proposed doubling of the environmental funding to promote biodiversity and tackle climate change. Residents clearly wanted action taken on poorly parked cars and the amendment funded ongoing Civil Parking Enforcement. A Citizens' Advice Bureau in Ely could advise those falling into debt due to rising living costs. Funding for arts, culture and tourism would encourage civic pride and more money for community facilities would help youth groups and local projects. She concluded that these projects were fully costed and would help the district's most vulnerable residents.

Cllr Anna Bailey welcomed the opposition's shift away from funding a 100% Council Tax reduction scheme and their acceptance of income from the Bereavement Centre as part of the budget. She asserted that the County Council were responsible for Civil Parking Enforcement and pointed out that the funds in the amendment seemed insufficient, based on Fenland District Council's experience. She explained that the budget savings allowed the authority to freeze Council Tax and any underspend in the staffing budget or due to lower interest rates should not be relied upon to fund additional services. She cautioned that approving the amendment could create a budget gap, leading to increases in Council Tax.

Cllr Lorna Dupré proposed and Cllr Christine Whelan seconded the motion. A vote was taken were cast as followed:

For (14): Cllrs Chika Akinwale, Charlotte Cane, Christine Colbert, Lee Denney, Lorna Dupré, Kathrin Holtzmann, Mark Inskip, James Lay, John Trapp, Ross Trent, Mary Wade, Alison Whelan, Christine Whelan and Gareth Wilson.

Against (14):

Cllrs Christine Ambrose Smith, Anna Bailey, Ian Bovingdon, David Brown, Lavinia Edwards, Mark Goldsack, Martin Goodearl, Keith Horgan, Julia Huffer, Bill Hunt, David Miller, Kelli Pettitt, Alan Sharp and Lucius Vellacott.

Abstain (0)

The vote was tied and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4, the Chair had a casting vote which she used to vote against the amendment detailed above, and so the amendment was lost.

Cllr Vellacott stated that the authority will freeze Council Tax for a 13th consecutive year whilst maintaining a balanced budget, which was an unprecedented accomplishment. He expressed pride that the authority was poised to make a decision that would benefit low-income residents, emphasising that Council Tax increases should only follow thorough exploration of efficiencies and income generating options. He doubted that this could have been achieved if a different party had been running the Council. He thanked officers for their efforts and congratulated the Director Finance on his first budget.

Cllr Lorna Dupré reported that she was proud to have successfully lobbied for inclusive play areas and empty homes and for unsuccessfully campaigning for the funding of Civil Parking Enforcement, arts, culture and tourism and a Citizens' Advice Bureau, instead of choosing to fund a bereavement centre that would have to compete with the private sector.

Cllr Alan Sharp commended the budget, which was freezing Council Tax for a 13th consecutive year and still managing to deliver essential services for its residents.

Cllr John Trapp stated that the Council's reserves had increased by £3m over the past five years. He suggested this money should be spent on projects that would benefit residents, whilst maintaining Council's reserves.

Cllr Julia Huffer expressed pride in the Council's achievement in freezing Council Tax for the 13th consecutive year. The administration did not support funding Civil Parking Enforcement, which was a County Council responsibility, but was happy to support a balanced, prudent and well-thought out budget.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that the Council used CIL funding to build new community buildings, roads, footpaths, cycleways, a leisure centre, a country park, a new GP surgery in Stretham, a youth centre in Littleport, a new theatre in Soham, museums, a new bereavement centre and allocated millions of pounds to town and parish councils to support their own projects, all whilst freezing Council Tax for 13 consecutive years. She concluded that these achievements had been made without support from the opposition party.

Cllr Anna Bailey proposed and Cllr Julia Huffer seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and were cast as follows:

For (14): Cllrs Christine Ambrose Smith, Anna Bailey, Ian Bovingdon, David Brown, Lavinia Edwards, Mark Goldsack, Martin Goodearl, Keith Horgan, Julia Huffer, Bill Hunt, David Miller, Kelli Pettitt, Alan Sharp and Lucius Vellacott.

Against (14): Cllrs Chika Akinwale, Charlotte Cane, Christine Colbert, Lee Denney, Lorna Dupré, Kathrin Holtzmann, Mark Inskip, James Lay, John Trapp, Ross Trent, Mary Wade, Alison Whelan, Christine Whelan and Gareth Wilson.

Abstain (0)

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

resolve 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)
- 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.

42. Local Government Reorganisation Statutory Consultation

Council considered a report (AA144, previously circulated) to request delegation to respond to the Government's Statutory consultation in relation to Local Government's Reorganisation (LGR).

Cllr Lucius Vellacott stated that Council had agreed Option B at its meeting on 20 November to keep rural economies together, to avoid housing growth in the district and to allow councillors to represent local interests. He supported the recommendation, which allowed the Council to submit its views to Government.

Cllr Lorna Dupré recognised this was a procedural matter and the Council needed to delegate authority to individuals to respond to the Government's consultation. However, half of the councillors did not support Option B, which would create one of the largest councils in the country with Peterborough, which was 60 miles away from some residents. She supported Option A, which would link the area to villages in South Cambridgeshire and to Cambridge City, where the majority of residents study, work, shop and access healthcare. For this reason, opposition members could not support the recommendation.

Cllr Keith Horgan thanked the Director Operations for her exemplary work on this contentious matter. He supported this recommendation, which ensured the Council could respond to the Government's consultation.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott stated that Council had agreed to support Option B and the recommendation allowed the authority to convey this view to the Government. He asserted that whatever decision the Government made with regarding LGR, the administration would strive to get the best deal for its residents.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott proposed and Cllr Keith Horgan seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, none against and 14 abstentions

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.

43. Community Infrastructure Levy Governance Arrangements

Council considered a report (AA147, previously circulated) which proposed changes to the infrastructure List and Governance Arrangements.

Cllr Martin Goodearl explained that the Community Infrastructure Levy had funded various infrastructure throughout the district, without resource to borrowing or increasing Council Tax. Requests for expenditure were brought to the Finance and Assets Committee, which would allocate funds to those schemes that met the criteria. He was proud to support the report's recommendations, which would allow this work to continue.

Cllr Mark Inskip proposed and Cllr Lorna Dupré seconded the following amendments:

Add at the end of 2.2 'subject to an Inclusive Play Strategy, including the availability of experienced advice and support for applicants, having first been adopted by the Council'.

Add new 2.5 'add Civil Parking Enforcement to the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy Infrastructure List of schemes which may be funded from the Community Infrastructure Levy'

Cllr Mark Inskip stated that Civil Parking Enforcement should be added to the list of schemes so that money from the Community Infrastructure Levy could be used to help address a major concern for residents. He also suggested that play equipment funded by the Levy should be inclusive, to help social interaction and promote mental well-being.

Cllr Anna Bailey explained that approving the report's recommendations would secure funding for play parks and support to parish councils. She noted that the amendment would cause delays. She reiterated that Civil Parking Enforcement was the responsibility of the County Council and it did not meet the Community Infrastructure Levy funding guidelines. She therefore opposed the amendment.

Cllr Alan Sharp stated that the report recommended the scheme take effect from 1 April 2026 and the proposed amendment would delay implementation and project funding. He emphasised that funding for Civil Parking Enforcement would take resources from other projects. He recommended that the amendment be rejected and the original recommendations be agreed without delay.

Cllr Charlotte Cane pointed out that Community Infrastructure Levy funds were being used to pay for the Bereavement Centre, which also resulted in less money being for other projects.

Cllr Lorna Dupré explained that the aim of the amendment was to fund inclusive play equipment after the strategy had been agreed and to help prevent dangerous parking, which was a major concern of residents.

Cllr Martin Goodearl stated that money from the Community Infrastructure Levy should not be used to fund parking enforcement measures, as this was the responsibility of the County Council. Town and parish councils had conducted play structure audits and were waiting for funding. The Community Infrastructure Levy rules were in place and if the Finance and Assets Committee was unsure, they could refer a decision to full Council.

Cllr Mark Inskip proposed and Cllr Lorna Dupré seconded the amendment. A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour and 14 votes against, the vote was tied. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 9.1.4, the Chair had a casting vote which she used to vote against the amendment and so the amendment was lost.

Cllr Alan Sharp explained that funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy had already greatly benefited residents and he hoped that Council would agree the recommendations.

Cllr Martin Goodearl proposed and Cllr Alan Sharp seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and with 14 votes in favour, none against and 14 abstentions

it was resolved:

- 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 the Finance and Assets Committee in accordance with 3.15-3.17 of the report.

- 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.

44. Constitutional Update – Further Amendments

Council considered a report (AA143, previously circulated) which proposed amendments to the Constitution.

Cllr Kelli Pettitt proposed and Cllr Keith Horgan seconded the recommendation in the report. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed

to resolve:

To approve the amendment of the Terms of Reference for the Operational Services Committee to include two additional services – Digital Services and Bereavement Services.

45. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority – Update reports

Council received the reports (previously circulated) from the Combined Authority’s meetings in November 2025, December 2025 and January 2026.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott asked for an update from the Combined Authority Skills Committee regarding investment in Soham. Cllr Mark Goldsack reported that the heads of terms had been agreed for premises in Soham for West Suffolk College to provide apprenticeships and academic support for 16 to 18 year olds. He explained that premises were being sought for a similar institution in Ely and he invited the councillors for Ely to either contact him or Cllr Lucy Nethsingha, Chair of the Skills Committee, if they could help.

It was resolved:

that the reports on the activities of the Combined Authority from the Council’s representatives be noted.

The meeting concluded at 8:52 pm

Chair.....

Date.....

LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, GROUP LEADERS AND DEPUTIES

Committee: Annual Council
 Date: 21 May 2026
 Author: Democratic Services & Elections Manager
 Report No: AB1

Contact Officer:
 Jane Webb, Democratic Services & Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
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1.0 ISSUE

To receive details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Group Leaders and Deputies for the forthcoming year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and Group Leaders and Deputies for the forthcoming municipal year, as reported at the Annual Council meeting, be noted.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

The Council’s declared Political Groups and their Leaders and Deputies are as follows:

| <u>Conservative & Independent</u> | <u>Liberal Democrat & Independent</u> |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Anna Bailey (Leader) | Lorna Dupré (Leader) |
| Julia Huffer (Deputy) | Christine Whelan (Deputy) |

In accordance with Article 2.03(b) of the Council Constitution, the declared Leader of the Council is Councillor Anna Bailey as Leader of the Conservative & Independent Group. In accordance with Article 2.03(c) of the Council Constitution, the declared Deputy Leader of the Council is Councillor Julia Huffer as Deputy Leader of the Conservative & Independent Group.

4.0 APPENDICES

None

Background Documents

None

POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY

Committee: Annual Council
Date: 21 May 2026
Author: Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Report No: AB2

Contact Officer: Jane Webb, Democratic Services & Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer jane.webb@eastcambes.gov.uk , 01353 616278

1.0 ISSUE

To review the allocation of seats to Political Groups on Committees following formal notification received by the Democratic Services and Elections Manager of a change in the membership of Political Groups.

The Council is required to review the representation of different Political Groups on Committees as soon as practicable following a change in the membership of a Political Group and approve the necessary amendment to committee sizes to facilitate a proportional and efficient decision-making structure.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council:

- a. Notes the revised political balance of the Council as follows:
 - Conservative and Independent Group: 15
 - Liberal Democrat and Independent Group: 13
 - Total: 28
- b. Approves the revised sizes of the Committees, Sub-Committees and as detailed in Table 1 of this report or agrees an alternative (on a Nem Con basis, if necessary), and authorises the Monitoring Officer to make the consequential amendments to the Council’s Constitution.
- c. Approves the allocation of seats to Political Groups as set out in Table 1 of this report.

3.0 BACKGROUND/LEGAL PRINCIPLES

In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council is under a duty to review the representation of different political groups. The following four principles must be applied to the allocation of seats, in priority order:

- (a) That not all the seats on the body are allocated to the same political group.
- (b) That the majority of the seats on the body is allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership.
- (c) That the number of seats on the ordinary committees allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the total as the membership of that group bears to the Council.
- (d) That the number of seats on each body allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all seats on that body.

The Conservative and Independent Group has 15 seats and is the majority Group. Therefore, Principle (b) of Section 15 of the 1989 Act applies. This principle requires that the majority of seats on every individual committee be allocated to the majority group.

4.0 THE PROPORTIONALITY CALCULATIONS

The total number of seats on the Committees is 53. The calculations for the overall entitlement to seats (Principle c) are as follows:

| Political Group | Number of Members | Proportion of Council | Entitlement (Strict) | Final Allocation |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Conservative and Independent | 15 | 53.57% | 28.39 | 30* |
| Liberal Democrat and Independent | 13 | 46.43% | 24.61 | 23* |
| TOTAL | 28 | 100% | 53 | 53 |

* **Note:** The final allocation deviates from strict proportionality (Principle (c)) to satisfy the mandatory requirement of Principle (b), which dictates that a group with an absolute majority of the Council must have a majority on every individual committee.

5.0 TABLE 1: REVISED ALLOCATION OF SEATS

To satisfy Principle (b) while maintaining the global aggregate of 53 seats, the revised allocation is proposed as follows:

| Committee | Total Seats | Conservative & Ind (15) | Lib Dem & Ind (13) |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Finance & Assets | 11 | 6 | 5 |
| Operational Services | 11 | 6 | 5 |
| Planning | 11 | 6 | 5 |
| Audit | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Licensing (Non-Statutory) Sub | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| F & A Ethical Governance Sub | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| Personnel Appeals Sub | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 53 | 30 | 23 |

* **Note on the Aggregate:** While strict proportionality (Principle (c)) suggests a 28/25 split, the mandatory requirement for a majority on every committee (Principle (b)) necessitates a 30/23 split. In this instance, the Conservative and Independent Group is allocated 30 seats to ensure Principle (b) is satisfied across all bodies.

| Committee (Others)* | Total Seats | Conservative & Ind (15) | LibDem & Ind (13) |
|----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Licensing | 11 | 6 | 5 |
| Licensing (Statutory) Sub | 3 | 2 | 1 |

*The 'Other' committees listed are governed by separate statutory requirements (such as the Licensing Act 2003); however, the Council has applied the principles of proportionality to these bodies voluntarily to ensure consistency and democratic oversight across all functions

6.0 ARGUMENTS / CONCLUSIONS

The allocation set out in Table 1 complies with the statutory requirements of the Act. Principle (b) is satisfied as the majority group is allocated a majority of seats on committees. Principles (c) and (d) are satisfied as the total allocation of seats reflects the overall political balance of the Council.

Background Documents

Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 15)

Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES (INCLUDING SUBSTITUTES) 2026/27

Committee: Annual Council

Date: 21 May 2026

Author: Democratic Services & Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Report No: AB3

Contact Officer:

Jane Webb, Democratic Services & Elections Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
jane.webb@eastcamb.gov.uk, 01353 616278, Room 214B, The Grange, Ely

1.0 ISSUE

To consider the appointment of Members and substitutes to Committees and Sub-Committees for 2026/27.

This report follows the statutory review of political proportionality (Item 12) and seeks to ensure that the Council's decision-making structure is fully populated and operationally ready for the municipal year, while allowing for the conclusion of ongoing cross-party discussions.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council:

- a) Approves the appointment of Lay Member (Stephen Joyce) to the Audit Committee.
- b) Approves the appointments of:
 - Two Independent Persons (Gillian Holmes and Stuart Webster), and
 - Two Co-Opted Town/Parish Councillor Members (Cllr Rosemary Aitchson (Soham TC)/Vacancy), on the Finance & Assets (Ethical Governance) Sub-Committee.
- c) Delegates authority to the Democratic Services and Elections Manager to populate the membership of committees and sub-committees, upon receipt of formal notification from the respective Political Group Leaders as soon as practically possible.

3.0 BACKGROUND

At the Annual Meeting, the Council is required to appoint the membership of its committees to ensure the effective discharge of its functions. Under Section 16 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council has a statutory duty to give effect to the wishes of the political groups when appointing individuals to the seats allocated to them.

Under Item 12, there are proposed changes to the numbers and make-up of committees and sub-committees to reflect changes to the political make-up of the Council.

Delegation is sought to the Democratic Services and Elections Manager to receive notification from Political Group Leaders on the individual membership of committees and sub-committees to reflect the decision made in Agenda Item 12.

This administrative delegation ensures that committees are legally constituted and can begin their scheduled work for the new Municipal Year immediately upon the conclusion of political negotiations.

Background Documents

ECDC Constitution – Part 3: Responsibility for Functions (A) Council, (B) Policy Committees, (C) Regulatory Committees & (D) Other Committees/Joint Committees

Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Sections 15, 16 & 17)

AGENDA ITEM 15 (a)

**CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED
AUTHORITY**

(a) APPOINTMENTS TO THE COMBINED AUTHORITY

TO FOLLOW

**Due to the pending receipt of the CPCA's proportionality
calculations.**



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

PAUL BRISTOW MAYOR
OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH

Reports from Constituent Council Representatives on the Combined Authority

The following meetings have taken place in February 2026

Staffing Committee, 16 February 2026

Councillor Anna Bailey

Decision Summary Link: [Staffing Committee \(February\)](#)



Reports from Constituent Council Representatives on the Combined Authority

The following meetings have taken place in March 2026

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 3 March 2026

Councillors Lucius Vellacott and Christine Whelan

Decision Summary Link: [Overview and Scrutiny Committee \(March\)](#)

Transport Committee, 4 March 2026

Councillor Alan Sharp

Decision Summary Link: [Transport Committee \(March\)](#)

Audit and Governance Committee, 5 March 2026

Councillor Christine Colbert

Decision Summary Link: [Audit and Governance Committee \(March\)](#)

Skills Committee, 9 March 2026

Councillor Lucius Vellacott

Decision Summary Link: [Skills Committee \(March\)](#)

Growth Committee, 11 March 2026

Councillor Martin Goodearl

Decision Summary Link: [Growth Committee \(March\)](#)

Combined Authority Board, 18 March 2026

Councillor Anna Bailey

Decision Summary Link: [Combined Authority Board \(March\)](#)