

Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance & Assets Committee
Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30pm on
Thursday 26 March 2026

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Ian Bovingdon (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Julia Huffer (Sub)
Cllr Bill Hunt
Cllr David Miller
Cllr Alan Sharp (Chair)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Mary Wade
Cllr Alison Whelan
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers:

Sally Bonnett – Director Community
Maggie Camp – Director Legal
Jude Antony – Director Finance
Isabel Edgar – Director Operations
Jane Webb – Democratic Services and Elections Manager
Spencer Clark – Open Spaces & Facilities Manager
Emma Grima – Chief Executive and Managing Director ECTC
Isabel Edgar – Director, Operations
Nicola Pema – HR Manager
Marta Lotysz-Veiga – Reprographics Manager
Marisa Rogers-Jones – Crematorium and Bereavement Centre Manager
Nigel Ankers – Senior Finance Manager, ECTC
Paul Remington – Chair, ECTC
Lucy Flintham – Community Infrastructure Manager
Kieran Carr – Economic Development Manager

58. Public Questions

No Public Questions had been received.

59. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies were received from Cllr Mark Goldsack, who was substituted by Cllr Julia Huffer.

60. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

61. Minutes

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2026.

Members unanimously resolved:

That the Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 20 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

62. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded Members to confirm their attendance at the new Bereavement Centre visit.

63. ECTC Annual Business Plan 2026/27 (EXEMPT Appendices)

The Committee received a report (AA167, previously circulated) containing the East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC) Business Plan 2026/27, as approved by the Company Board on 5 March 2026. The ECTC Managing Director presented the Business Plan as detailed therein.

Members made comments and received responses as follows.

- Concerns were raised about the risks associated with LGR and the contingency plans if a future unitary council decided to dissolve the company. The Managing Director noted that ECTC would be automatically transferred in accordance with regulations, but the new council will determine the company's role. An exit strategy is necessary in case the company is not continued. While specifics of potential changes were unclear, ECTC will support the transition, and no significant risks are expected in the upcoming year.
- A concern was raised about PGH's projected turnover of £4.7 million in 2025/26, £4.4 million in 2026/27, and £4.6 million in 2027/28, which remained stable despite a drop in housing construction costs. The Finance Manager noted some value in the remaining land at Kennett, which had no associated costs under a promotional agreement, and expected slightly higher profits from future developments. One Member stated that these inconsistencies, along with others in the exempt paper, prevented them from supporting the recommendations. The Chair offered to discuss the issue in an exempt session, but the Member declined.

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

Cllr Bailey, as the proposer of the recommendation, expressed regret that a Member opted out of an exempt session to receive an answer to their concerns. She highlighted ECTC's accomplishments:

- The markets have transformed into a thriving success.
- Grounds maintenance saved ECDC over £300,000 and has developed expertise in tree maintenance.
- PGH delivered 190 homes, including fifty-five affordable units, and forty-four in partnership with the CLT, which were reserved for local people.
- ECDC and taxpayers benefited by £6.2m, which contributed to ECDC freezing Council Tax.
- 100% affordable housing on the Phase 2 MOD site.

Cllr Bailey highlighted the importance of the new unitary authority understanding ECTC's purpose and successes. She noted that ECTC benefits both the Council and taxpayers, supporting the communities, and thanked those who contributed to its success.

Cllr Sharp, as seconder of the recommendation, stated that he was pleased with the amount of work done and ECTC's record. He thanked all involved.

A vote was taken on the recommendation as follows:

FOR: (6),
AGAINST (6),
ABSTENTIONS (0)

With six votes in favour and six against, the vote was tied. In accordance with Council Procedure 9.1.4, the Chair had the casting vote, which he used to vote in favour of the recommendation.

Members resolved to **APPROVE** the ECTC Business Plan 2026/27, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

64. End of Year Reports 2025/26 and Service Delivery Plans 2026/27

The Committee received a report (AA168, previously circulated) containing the End-of-Year Reports 2025/26 and the Service Delivery Plans 2026/27, which cover services within the Committee's responsibility. The Director Community presented the report.

Members made comments and asked questions as follows:

Infrastructure & Strategic Housing

Q - What was the recovery process for the four older overdue CIL payments?

A - There is a three-stage recovery process, and if not received, the debt is passed to the legal team to recover the debt via the courts.

Climate Change & Natural Environment

Q – Who absorbs the cost of the biodiversity net gains requirements?

A – These costs of delivering the biodiversity net gains are the responsibility of the developer.

Finance Services

Q – In view of the Auditor’s comments, the Statement of accounts published on time should read “in a state whereby there is still improvement needed.”

A – Accounts were published on time, as per the statutory requirement; improvement is ongoing based on the recommendations provided by the Auditors

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Bovington.

The Leader, Cllr Bailey, added that these were an excellent and successful set of reports and thanked all staff involved for their hard work.

Cllr Sharp, as proposer of the recommendations, thanked officers for their hard work on a successful set of reports.

A vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:

FOR: (6),

AGAINST (0),

ABSTENTIONS (6)

Members resolved to **NOTE** the outcomes in the End of Year Reports 2024/25 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer’s report), and **APPROVE** the Service Delivery Plans 2025/26 (as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer’s report) for each of the following services:

- (i) Climate Change and Natural Environment Services
- (ii) Democratic Services
- (iii) Economic Development
- (iv) Finance
- (v) Human Resources
- (vi) Infrastructure & Strategic Housing
- (vii) Information & Communication Technology
- (viii) Legal Services
- (ix) Open Spaces & Facilities
- (x) Reprographics

65. Asset Update and Asset Management Plan 2026/27

The Committee considered a report (AA169, previously circulated) that provided Members with an updated asset spend tracker for 2025/26 and approved the planned asset spend for 2026/27. The Open Spaces & Facilities Manager presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions as follows.

- Most parts for the broken lift have been received, and repairs will begin once the Council has all components.

- Future Asset Management Spend charts will provide clearer explanations for any projects that exceed their budget.
- The Cloisters toilets will be managed carefully during peak times by using the family room and possibly the disabled toilet. If closures are necessary, the ladies' and gents' facilities will be shut at different times. The hand dryers have been replaced, but the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager is willing to review their decibel levels.
- The Play Audit reviews focus on play equipment as well as parking, access, toilets, and sensory areas. The Draft Play Strategy will be presented at the September meeting.

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

Cllr Hunt, as the proposer of the recommendations, praised the report's professionalism and was surprised by the nine-page list of assets managed by the Open Spaces and Facilities Manager. He remarked that the assets were well organised and in excellent condition for the new unitary council.

Members resolved unanimously to:

- **NOTE** the Corporate Asset Management Plan provided in Appendix 1,
- **APPROVE** the Asset Management spend for 2026/27 as detailed in Appendix 2
- **NOTE** the Asset Management 2025/26 spend to date as detailed in Appendix 3

66. Local Infrastructure Fund and Inclusive Play and Open Spaces Grant Fund Criteria

The Committee considered a report (AA170, as previously circulated) that informed Members of the eligibility and scoring criteria for two new CIL grant funding schemes. The Community Infrastructure Manager presented the report, and Members provided feedback and asked questions as follows:

- If the fund is oversubscribed, an additional funding source could be used.
- Parishes that are unable to provide the 10% match funding can enhance their scores in other areas.
- This was a special opportunity and such a benefit to many of the communities; it was hoped that all Members would support it.
- The equality impact assessment for inclusive play and the scoring matrix were currently being finalised.
- Each parish that has completed the audit will receive a copy of their audit report and support from a play company. Parishes that have not undergone an audit have the option to either complete an audit or seek advice from play companies. The Council will provide support to the parishes throughout the process.
- CIL regulations mandate that CIL funds must be used to support growth.

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

Cllr Hunt, as the proposer of the recommendations, stated that this initiative exemplifies a District Council's role in promoting community engagement. He noted it was remarkable that the Council could contribute to these efforts to ensure the district remained a pleasant place to live and work. Cllr Hunt encouraged all Members to vote in favour of the recommendations.

Members agreed and welcomed this initiative, noting the need to support other areas that would not benefit from it.

The Leader stated that, unlike other Councils criticised for failing to use Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, East Cambridgeshire has effectively supported the use of such funds. She thanked Cllr Akinwale for introducing the Play Audit motion and noted that the upcoming Play Strategy item, which will be presented in September, would benefit the community. With more CIL funds expected, there was no application deadline. She assured that Parishes unable to access CIL funds would receive assistance in finding alternatives, and that payments would be made only upon receipt of invoices.

Cllr Miller, as the seconder of the recommendations, emphasised that the two funding streams aimed to simplify the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding process and avoid complexity. He expressed hope for unanimous support from all Members.

Members resolved unanimously to:

- **APPROVE** the scheme eligibility criteria for the Local Infrastructure Fund in Appendix 1,
- **APPROVE** the scheme eligibility criteria for the Inclusive Plan and Open Spaces Fund in Appendix 2,
- **AGREE** that the funding schemes will open on 13 April 2026, with no close date set at this time; projects will need to be completed by March 2028.

67. Bereavement Centre Project Progress Update

The Committee considered a report (AA171, as previously circulated) providing Members with a Progress Update on the Bereavement Centre Project. The Director Operations presented the report and highlighted further updates since the report was published, as follows:

- The proposed risk contingency costs for underground structures have been reduced from £250,000 to £150,000, significantly lowering the associated risk.
- The costs for the power connection have been negotiated down from £32,000 to approximately half that amount.
- All the savings will be achieved from the topsoil that has been imported into the site.

- In the upcoming update report, Members will be informed about the current budget status, as it was anticipated that the new cost plan would be in place by that time.

Members resolved to **NOTE** the progress towards completion of the Bereavement Centre.

68. Lake View Bereavement Centre, Crematorium and Burial Fees and Charges 2026

The Committee considered a report (AA172, as previously circulated) on the Lake View Bereavement Centre, Crematorium and Natural Burial Fees and Charges Schedule, which will establish the pricing structure for cremation services, burials, memorialisation, and associated services delivered at the Centre. The Bereavement Centre Manager presented the report.

The Bereavement Centre Manager addressed the following questions from Members:

- The report was based on a thoroughly debated business case previously presented at Full Council, and soft market testing had been conducted. Benchmarking was conducted to ensure that the pricing balanced affordability, sustainability, and market position.
- The details regarding the costs of pet cremations will be included in the report scheduled for the June meeting, alongside considerations for residents facing financial hardship.
- Catering services will be outsourced to local providers, and families will coordinate with them directly, with assistance from the team. A list of recommended local suppliers will be made available.
- There is a national scheme to cover the cost for those under eighteen.
- Residents will benefit from a lower charge for natural burials.

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

Cllr Bailey, as proposer of the recommendations, praised the new logo, describing it as modern yet simple and sympathetic. She expressed her support for the Bereavement Centre Manager, noting that, after reviewing fees and charges at other facilities, Lake View would be very competitively priced. It would also offer a 60-minute service, compared with the usual 45 minutes, thereby avoiding the “sausage machine” approach typical of most crematoria. Cllr Bailey was pleased that this would provide excellent support to people during a difficult time.

Cllr Huffer, as seconder to the recommendations, expressed her delight that the crematorium would have only one morning and one afternoon service, allowing for a more relaxed experience. She urged all Members to support this recommendation for the benefit of East Cambridgeshire residents.

A vote was taken on the recommendations as follows:

FOR: (6),
AGAINST (0),
ABSTENTIONS (6)

Members resolved to:

- **APPROVE** the Lake View Bereavement Centre Fees and Charges Schedule (Appendix 1) for the period up to March 2027.
- **Delegate** authority to the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager, in consultation with the Director Operations, to make minor operational adjustments to the pricing schedule where required, including adjustments arising from supplier pricing changes relating to memorial products, provided these remain consistent with the Council's approved fees and charges framework.

69. ANNUAL REVIEW OF REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 ("RIPA") POLICIES

The Committee considered a report (AA173, as previously circulated) that provided an update on the annual review of the RIPA Policies and on the Council's use of RIPA powers. The Director Legal (Senior Responsible Officer) presented the report.

Members resolved to:

- **NOTE** the information provided in the Annual Review of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ("RIPA") Policies Report.

70. The Hive Leisure Centre Contract (Exempt Appendix)

The Committee considered a report (AA174 as previously circulated) to exercise the contract extension clause in the Leisure Management Agreement for The Hive Leisure Centre. The Director Community presented the report, and it was confirmed that officers had taken into consideration that a Local Government Review (LGR) was imminent.

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

Members resolved unanimously to:

- **APPROVE** the extension of the Leisure Management Agreement for The Hive Leisure Centre
- **Instruct** the Director Community and Director Legal to amend the contract end date to 1 May 2035.

71. Land at River Close, Mepal

The Committee received a report (AA175, previously circulated) to consider the licence for the allotment land adjacent to 10 River Close, Mepal, Cambridgeshire, granted to Mepal Pantry. The Director Legal presented the report.

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

Cllr Hunt, as proposer of the recommendations, stated that this was good news and would benefit the Mepal community and save the Council £150 on lawn-mowing services.

Cllr Bailey, as seconder of the recommendations, thanked the Director Legal and the local resident concerned. She wished both him and Mepal Pantry the best of luck in the future.

Members resolved unanimously to:

- **AGREE** the licence to Mepal Pantry of the allotment land adjacent to 10 River Close, Mepal, on the terms set out in paragraph 4.2 of the report, and
- **Authorise** the Director Legal to proceed accordingly.

72. Forward Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Plan. The Director Community stated that two extra items would be added to the Forward Plan: Draft Inclusive Play Strategy and the Rural Prosperity Fund Business Grant Scheme

It was unanimously resolved to **NOTE** the Forward Plan and add two extra items:

- Draft Inclusive Play Strategy
- Rural Prosperity Fund Business Grant Scheme

73. Appointment to Outside Bodies: Local Government Association

The Democratic Services and Elections Manager informed the Committee that the Leader had requested a change to the LGA representative, and for this reason, as well as to follow procedural rules, it needed to be submitted to the Finance and Assets Committee for nominations and a vote by Members.

Cllr Bailey proposed, and Cllr Huffer seconded the nomination of Cllr Vellacott as the LGA representative.

Cllr C Whelan proposed, and Cllr Akinwale seconded the nomination of Cllr Trapp as the LGA representative.

A vote was taken as follows:
Cllr Vellacott (6) Cllr Trapp (6)

With the vote tied. In accordance with Council Procedure 9.1.4, the Chair had the casting vote, which he used to vote in favour of Cllr Vellacott.

Members resolved to:

- **Appoint** Cllr Lucius Vellacott as the Council's representative on the Local Government Association for the remainder of the municipal year.

74. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was resolved unanimously:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the following item because it was likely, in the view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

58. EXEMPT Minutes – 29 January 2026

The Committee received the Exempt Minutes of the Finance & Assets Committee meeting held on 29 January 2026.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

59. EXEMPT – ECTC Management Accounts

The ECTC Finance Manager presented the ECTC Management Accounts.

Members resolved that the contents of the report be **NOTED**.

60. EXEMPT – Write Off of Unrecoverable Debts

The Committee considered a report regarding the write-off of irrecoverable debts. The Director Finance presented the report.

The Chair proposed an amendment to the recommendation, to state that 2.1 should read that the business rate debt should be discussed with CMT and ARP, and that a report should be provided to the next Finance and Assets Committee; this was seconded by Cllr Miller and agreed by all Members.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Cllr Sharp and seconded by Cllr Miller. It was unanimously resolved:

Members resolved to:

- **Allow** the Chair, in conjunction with Officers, to discuss the Business Rate debt of £28,055.85 with both CMT and ARP, and a further report be brought back to the next Finance and Asset Committee meeting.
- **NOTE:** three Council Tax debts have been written off using delegated powers, to the total value of £27,776.13.

The meeting concluded at 6:32 pm

Chair.....

Date.....

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